

THE COSTS OF MODERNIZING VOTER REGISTRATION SYSTEMS



A CASE STUDY OF CALIFORNIA AND ARIZONA

Faced with questions concerning the costs of modernizing voter registration systems, the American Civil Liberties Union engaged the Social Science Research Council to conduct research on the topic. This report resulted from that work.

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Sarah Burd-Sharps and Patrick Nolan Guyer
Brooklyn, New York



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
1. Cost Savings of Modern Voter Registration	4
2. Arizona and California Costing Case Studies	10
a. Startup and Annual Maintenance Costs in Arizona and California	12
b. Cost Savings in Arizona	12
c. Cost Savings in California	14
d. California's Costs for Improving Accessibility	15
e. Protecting Privacy in Voter Registration	17
3. Additional Benefits of a Modern Voter Registration System	18
4. Conclusion	20
Sources Consulted	21
Experts Consulted	23
Endnotes	24



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Even though the Internet makes it possible for us to pay bills, bank, shop, and read books without the use of paper, registering to vote, whether in person or by mail, still involves filling out paper applications in most states. However, this is steadily changing as more and more states move their voter registration systems online. Through this process, they are realizing substantial cost savings, greatly reducing the administrative burden on elections officials, decreasing the potential for fraud, and making the voter registration process more accurate, efficient, and convenient.

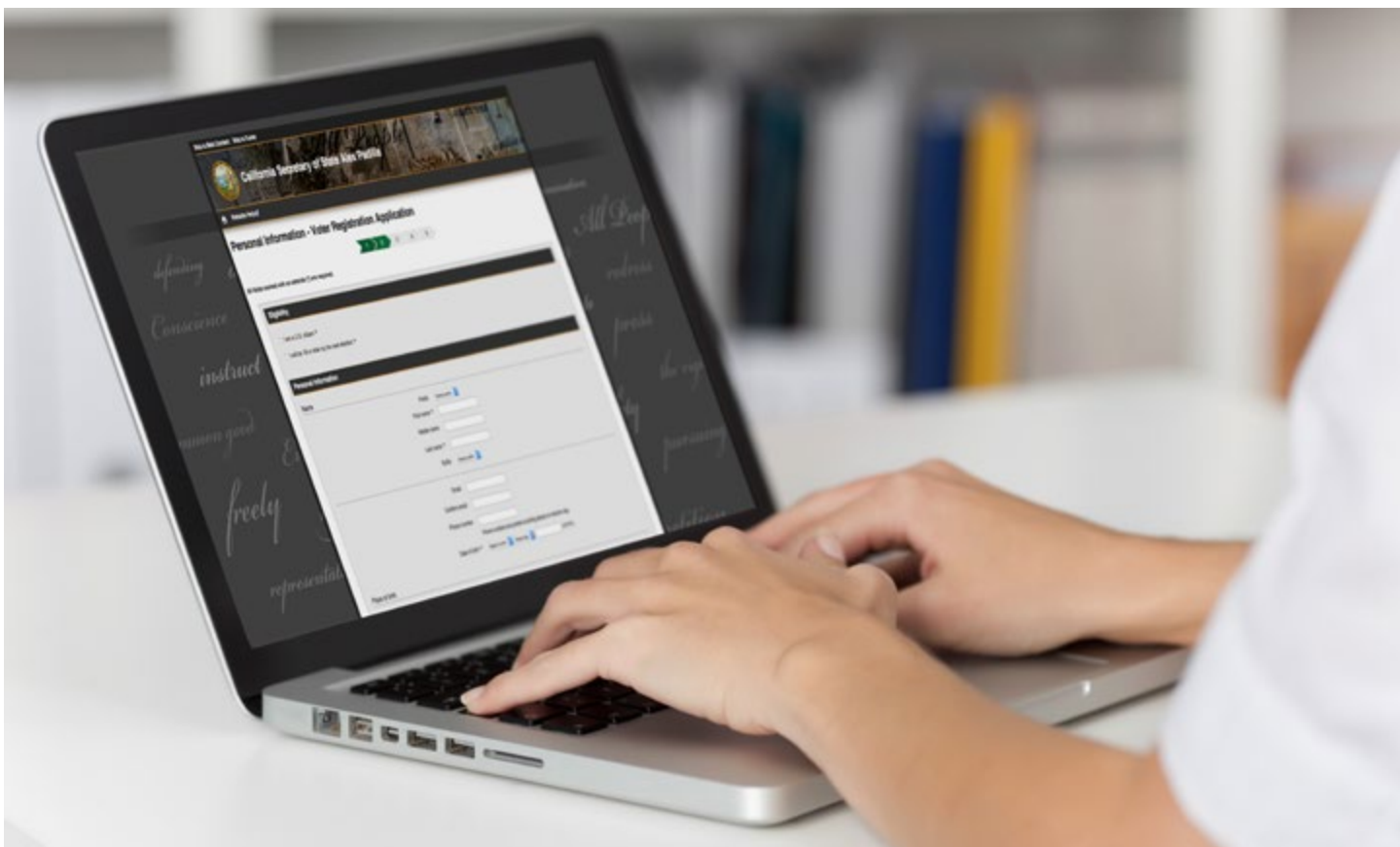
**Online registration is
more accurate, efficient,
and convenient.**

This report presents cost savings that resulted from voter registration reforms with a focus on Arizona and California. Arizona is of interest for this case study because it was the first state to begin the process of building a modern voter registration system (it began in 2002). Furthermore, its largest county, Maricopa, has been innovative in terms of modernization efforts and studying the resulting cost savings. California is a focus for this case study because it is one of the most advanced states in terms of online voter modernization efforts and because it reports reliable cost figures in a significantly more populous state than Arizona. In addition, California's system offers a way for those without a driver's license or state-issued ID to register online, an important innovation that eliminates a major impediment to ballot access for certain populations.

In most states, primary responsibility for registering voters and administering elections falls to county and local officials. Since the passage of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002, state governments have the additional responsibility of maintaining a unified statewide record of registered voters. States, counties, municipalities, and other local jurisdictions share the cost of registering voters.

What constitutes a modern voter registration system? For the purposes of this report, a modern system has five important features. No state today has a system with all of these features, but an increasing number are moving toward systems incorporating several of these five features:

1. **A secure website for remote paperless registration.** Citizens can submit—and in many cases, check and update—applications to register to vote using a website or portal created for this purpose from any computer. In some states, this process is entirely paperless, including pulling an individual's electronic signature from existing Department



of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records. In many states, however, one or several stages of voter registration still require paper.

2. **Automated/paperless registration.** Thanks to the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), citizens can register to vote during a visit to a government office by typing information electronically or by providing it to a government service worker. This information is then transferred to elections authorities through a secure online system (this was formerly done by sending a paper application). As with voter registration websites, in some states this process is only partially paperless, especially where a registrant's signature must be transmitted.
3. **Access for those without state-issued identification.** Internet-based voter registration is available to people regardless of whether they have a driver's license or state-issued ID.
4. **Online availability at all government service agencies.** A government agency allows paperless voter registration of consenting individuals during their interactions with that agency. In most states, this feature is available only at the DMV; few states have expanded this option to other agencies.
5. **Accessibility for people with disabilities.** An online system designed to accommodate the needs of people with limited literacy or English proficiency and those with disabilities, including those who are blind or have limited vision; those with cognitive disabilities; and those with other disabilities that can make interacting with websites a challenge.

1. COST SAVINGS OF MODERN VOTER REGISTRATION

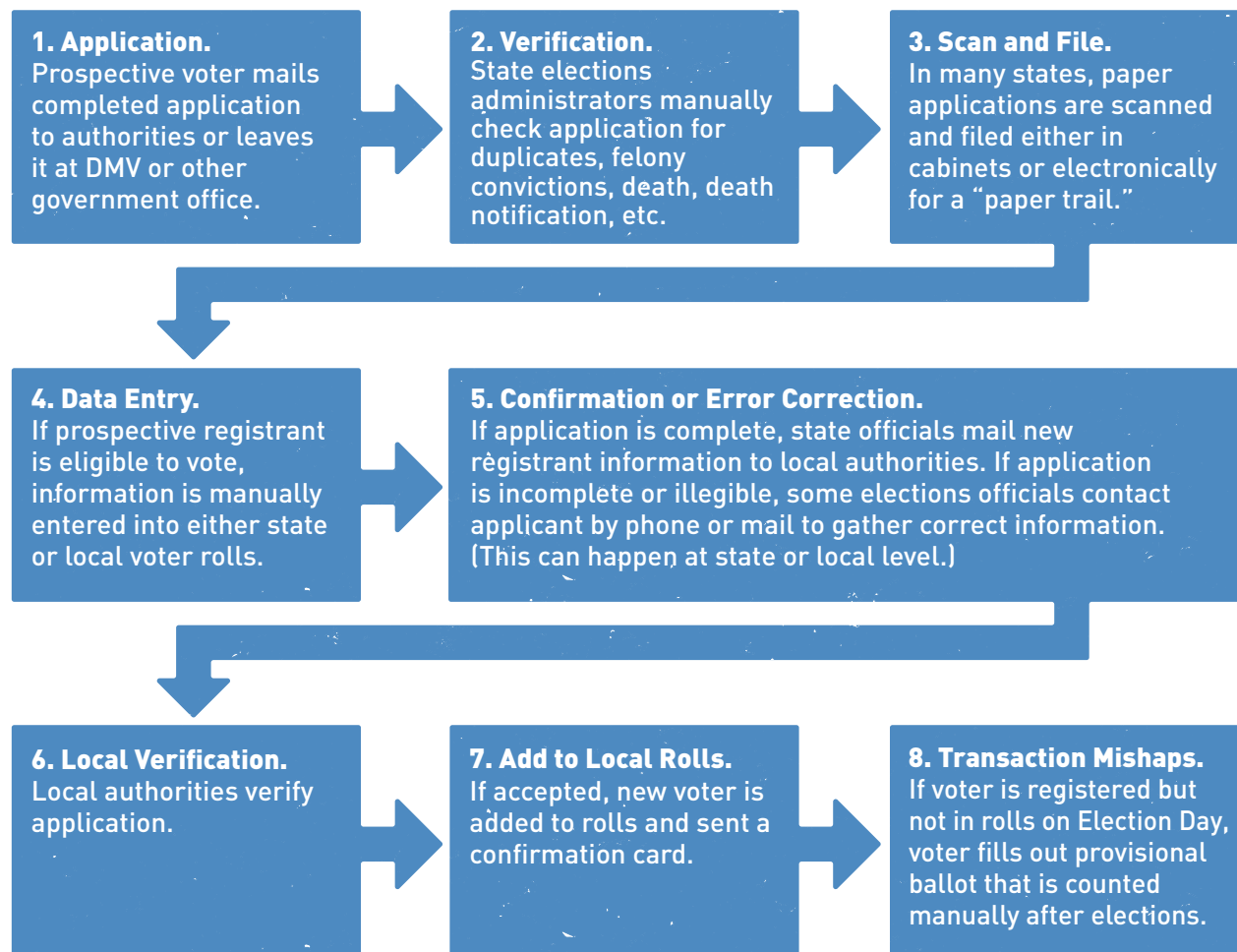
How much does it cost to register American voters, and who pays for voter modernization efforts? Because registration systems vary widely across the country, and the costs for financing elections are shared between county and state governments, exact costs are difficult to calculate. However, the annual county-level cost nationwide for voter registration is estimated to be at least \$1 billion, or roughly one-third of the total county-level cost of administering elections.¹

The opportunities for cost savings by moving from a paper-based to a paperless system become readily apparent when examining the steps involved in the two systems, particularly with regard to staffing implications. While specifics vary from state to state, the following flow chart outlines

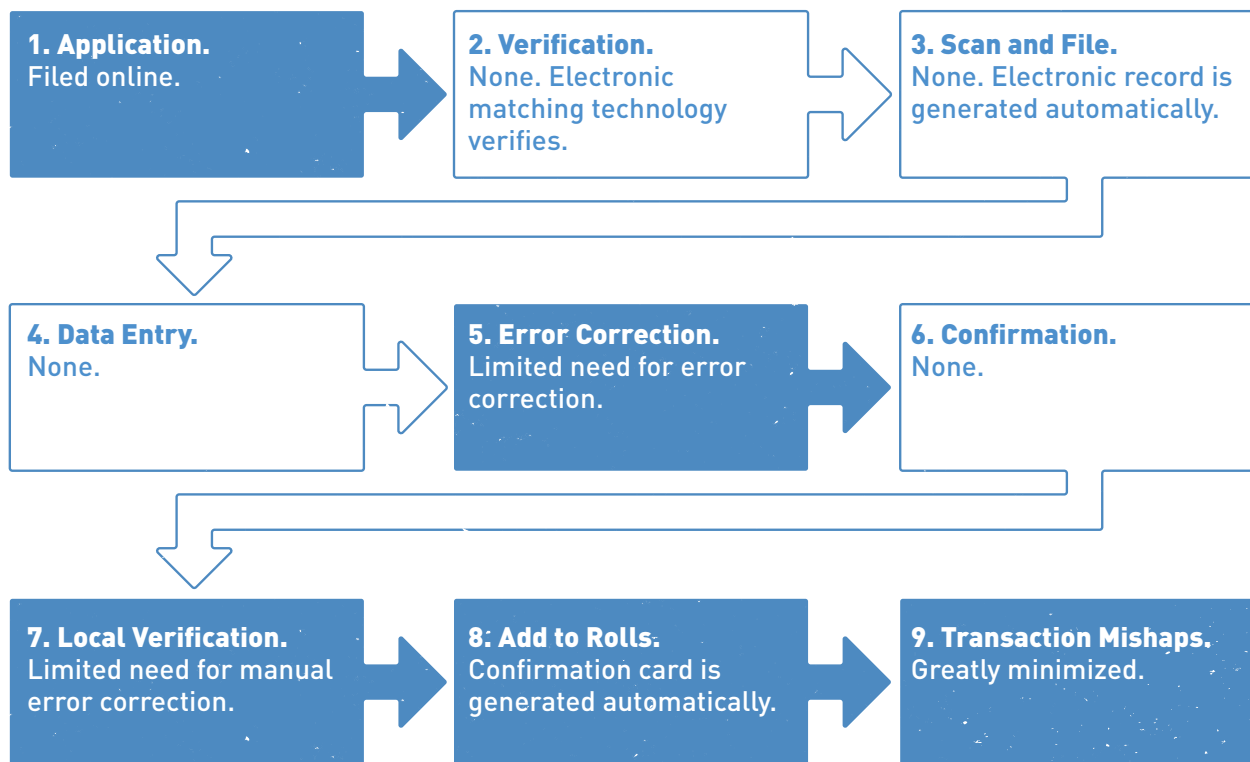


the registration process for a prospective voter, beginning with a paper application and ending with receipt of confirmation that he or she is registered to vote. The second diagram outlines this same process online.

Paper-Based System



Online System



Sources: Pew, 2012; Rosenfeld, 2010; Bowen, 2012; Arizona Secretary of State's Office.

The elements of a paper-based system that are eliminated by switching to a fully modernized system fall into two main categories: staff costs and nonstaff expenses. Staff costs, as apparent above, involve data entry and application processing, verifying eligibility, checking discrepancies, creating and mailing forms, and processing provisional ballots after elections; nonstaff expenses are comprised mostly of printing and scanning costs and postage stamps required for cards or forms sent between elections officials and registrants. Another expenditure that is greatly reduced is legal fees that result when information is erroneously removed by voter roll purges or through other errors that lead to litigation. In the 2008 election, it is estimated that 1.5 to 3 million people experienced a problem on Election Day due to voter registration problems.²

A statewide database whereby elections officials can exchange information securely in real time with other state agencies and local elections officials is the critical first step toward an online voter registration system. Building a statewide database constitutes the bulk of the cost involved and enables many subsequent modernization features.

The following is a summary of the types of costs involved for each feature discussed above and the types of savings that can be realized when these features are implemented:

Feature	Cost of Implementation	Types of Savings
Secure Website	Requires establishing a secure, computerized, statewide voter registration database, designing a voter registration website/portal, and enabling the electronic transfer of voter registration information from the DMV to elections authorities. Direct costs include setup of secure server, design of interface between state and county systems, and staff to program and manage new database.	Considerable reduction in staffing costs, especially temporary workers and overtime pay around elections, due to reduced need for data entry, quality control, and error correction. One of the biggest areas of labor savings is the reduced need for elections officials to decipher handwriting or correspond with prospective registrants to complete forms. Additional savings yielded from the elimination of printing, scanning, and postage costs of applications and cards at various stages.
Automated/ Paperless Registration at Government Agencies	Once electronic transfer and database are established (described above), the DMV can electronically transfer voter registration information from prospective voters to elections authorities at no extra cost. The only aspect of a fully automated/paperless system with cost implications is the electronic signature. In Delaware, the cost to develop an e-signature program that draws a digital signature from the DMV was \$600,000. ³	With an online DMV system, DMV transaction time necessary to register individuals is greatly reduced, DMV postage to send applications to elections officials is eliminated, and errors due to illegible handwriting or incomplete applications are drastically reduced. Further, access to digital DMV signatures eliminates the need to scan paper signatures and print, stamp, and send a signature confirmation to prospective voters. In Delaware, because of E-Signature, each DMV registration transaction now takes one-third of the time to complete, which translated into \$200,000 in savings in the first year. ⁴

Feature	Cost of Implementation	Types of Savings
Access for Those Without State-Issued Identification	When registering by paper, voters may choose from among a wide range of photo and nonphoto IDs. In contrast, all states with online registration programs (except California) require either a driver's license or state-issued photo ID. If designed like California's system, which does not allow alternative forms of ID for online registration but rather requires applicants to submit their signature, the system automatically generates a card for these online registrants requiring the voter's signature. It is estimated that the cost to add this feature is negligible. In the few cases where the registrant does not send back the signed card, elections officials must follow up. In California, this costs about \$1.10 per registrant. In 2012, this cost the state under \$10,000.⁵	Ten percent of the 880,000 Californians who registered online in 2012 lacked a state-issued ID and used this feature. If the savings per voter is \$2.85 (see costing discussion on page 9), this feature saved over \$240,000, even accounting for the costs to track down those who did not mail back their signed card.⁶

Feature	Cost of Implementation	Types of Savings
Online Availability at All Government Service Agencies	Delaware is one of the only states to have expanded online registration to another government agency beyond the DMV. Voters may now register during visits to the Department of Health and Social Services. Costs included initial outlay for keypad devices and programming. Annual upkeep will be rolled into everyday maintenance. ⁷	Savings cannot yet be calculated; the feature has just been implemented.
Accessibility for People with Disabilities	Incorporating accessibility features during the design phase increases the initial cost of building the site by about two percent. ⁸	Increased access for people with disabilities increases use of online registration by this population, thereby decreasing costs associated with paper registration.



2. ARIZONA AND CALIFORNIA COSTING CASE STUDIES

Note: In 2014, the State of California updated its voter registration system to enhance accessibility for voters with disabilities, and also translated its website into 12 different languages, as required by the Voting Rights Act. This report was first published before such changes.

Arizona's EZ Voter system evolved out of the Motor Vehicles Department's (MVD) online licensing process, which was made available beginning in 1997. Therefore, the steps needed to expand this system to include voter registration did not involve a lot of additional cost. As summarized in the table on page 11, Arizona now has a paperless online portal in both English and Spanish that is mirrored on the MVD's site. The system is built on MVD records, drawing voter signatures from existing MVD digitized signatures and transferring the full application to the state voter rolls electronically. If accepted, registrants subsequently receive a confirmation card. Arizona's system has been a model for other states, and its experience with online voter registration has been extremely positive, as reflected in cost savings, greater efficiency for elections officials, significantly more accurate voter rolls, and a tremendous surge in voter registration. In Maricopa County alone, the 460,000 online voter registrations received through the EZ Voter online portal in 2008 were an astonishing 28 times the number of paper forms received in 2001, the year before EZ Voter launched.⁹

**California facilitates
online voter registration
for those who do not
have a driver's license
or state-issued ID.**

The California Online Voter Registration (COVR) system was established comparatively recently. A fully automated system was not established until 2012, but parts of the voter registration process were automated prior to this date (some electronic transactions were already occurring between the Office of the Secretary of State and county elections officials in 1998).¹⁰ The website is available in both English and Spanish. Like Arizona's online portal, it also draws a registrant's digitized signature from the DMV. While California state legislation in 2011 (Senate Bill 397) required the Secretary of State to fast-track online voter registration, the state's financial situation at the time was dire, and funds to begin implementing online voter registration did not become available

until late summer of 2011. The system was in place one month before the deadline to register to vote in the November 2012 election. While the Secretary of State originally intended to develop a statewide voter registration database as part of this process, lack of time and finances made that impossible. Work on California's statewide database and other efforts to bring California into full compliance with HAVA began in early 2013 and are due for completion in 2016.¹¹

One particularly interesting feature of California's online system that is not available in Arizona is that California is one of a few states that facilitates online voter registration for those who do not have a driver's license or state-issued identification card. Nonetheless, the system is not entirely paperless; if a voter wants to register without a state-issued ID, some counties mail the registrant a postage-prepaid postcard that the voter must sign and return. Other counties require registrants to go online and print, sign, and mail a signature form to the Secretary of State. The latter option is less desirable due to the need for a printer and postage. Moreover, the online form is not county-specific and can be mailed only to the Secretary of State, which must then send it on to the county. In addition to the added costs to the state, these two separate mailings may contribute to delays in processing. About 10 percent of the total number of applicants in the 2012 election year applied to register without a DMV signature. Of those 10 percent, more than 75 percent eventually made it onto the voter rolls, whether through mailing or hand-delivering a form or through correcting other previous errors to their application.¹²

Finally, one important feature of both sites is a parallel Spanish-language version. Given the size of the Latino population in both states, this feature has important benefits for maximizing access to voting. Further, this expanded access can come at very little additional cost. Correspondence with the Arizona Secretary of State's Office confirmed that the translation of the text was done in-house and the technical expense was minimal.¹³ Many content management systems have built-in localization capabilities that allow the creation of multiple versions of the same page in different languages, thus eliminating the need for extra programming. One recommendation for agencies embarking on this process is to choose a software platform with this type of localization capability. The following is a summary of availability of these five basic features in Arizona and California:

Feature	Present in Arizona's "EZ Voter" system?	Present in California's "COVR" system?
Year started	2002	2012
Secure online website	Yes	Yes
Automated/paperless registration	Yes	Yes
Alternative ID options online	No	Yes
Online availability at all government service agencies	No	No
Accessibility for people with disabilities	Partial accessibility	No

a. Startup and Annual Maintenance Costs in Arizona and California

The evolution of voter registration arrangements in these two states, as previously described, involved very different cost requirements. According to Arizona's Secretary of State, the full startup costs for the state and counties, including labor, software, and hardware costs, were less than \$100,000. However, several counties did engage outside labor to modify their systems for compatibility with the new statewide voter registration system. Startup labor requirements included a business analyst, a project manager, and developers. Arizona's annual operating costs are about \$125,000 at both the state and county levels for system maintenance and enhancement as well as software and servers to run the system.¹⁴

According to the California Secretary of State office, the startup cost was about \$1.8 million and the maintenance cost is about \$5,000 per year.¹⁵ The main costs were related to the development of an elections management system created by the Secretary of State, a data interface with the DMV for obtaining registrants' signatures, and installation of the system in every county elections office. California's system cost significantly more than Arizona's, due in part to California's lack of a preexisting statewide voter registration database. California's modernization was achieved using a combination of state funding and federal funds from HAVA and the Federal Voting Assistance Program. There was no cost to county elections offices for the design and implementation of the new system.¹⁶

b. Cost Savings in Arizona

Before the online system was created, local elections officials in Arizona faced three surge periods each election year: just prior to elections, when processing registration applications and resolving problems with applications; on Election Day, when dealing with voters who were not on the rolls due to incomplete applications; and after elections, when speedily processing provisional ballots that resulted from clerical errors or incomplete applications.

After the online registration program launched and usage increased, savings fell into two main categories: reductions in staffing and nonstaffing expenses such as printing, scanning, and postage. Those interviewed in Arizona emphasized that savings on staffing were very important because in addition to state- and county-level budgetary reductions, the transition to a paperless system greatly improved worker productivity and the accuracy of voter rolls. These improvements were due to the reduction in workload surges at the three time periods outlined above, surges that often necessitated extensive overtime (and resulted in fatigue) and/or the use of relatively inexperienced temporary workers. The transition to a paperless system means that most data entry from a paper application is eliminated, incomplete applications are minimized



because the process is complete only if the registrant fills in all required fields, and the number of provisional ballots is greatly reduced. This is in marked contrast to the cost of processing provisional ballots, which is triggered each time there is a dispute. Such ballots cost about \$3.90 each for the form, envelope, and staff verification and processing.¹⁷

Maricopa County, the state's largest county, saved \$1.4 million on voter registration alone between 2008 and 2012.¹⁸ Maricopa County elections officials estimate that a standard voter registration application costs \$0.83 in staff time to enter data from a paper form, a cost that is slashed to \$0.03—or less than 4 percent of the paper-based system cost—with Arizona's EZ Voter online system.¹⁹ Under most circumstances, the online system would not involve any data entry, and thus costs would be reduced to zero because the registration or update is automatic. However, Maricopa County officials included a nominal cost of 3 cents to allow for the unusual case of a registration that needs extra attention. This is a conservative estimate that does not include savings due to reduced use of paper or postage. Uptake of the online option in Maricopa County has been huge—60 to 70 percent of new voters in even years and 90 percent or more in odd years are registering online.²⁰

[I]n Maricopa County...60 to 70 percent of new voters in even years and 90 percent or more in odd years are registering online.

Based on correspondence with officials, it appears that savings from reduced staff time are generally greater for more populous counties. Maricopa County saved about \$4,000 each election by eliminating 10 temporary staff positions that, prior to the implementation of its modernized system, were filled for the week leading up to Election Day.²¹

c. Cost Savings in California

California officials estimate the cost of processing a paper-based voter registration application at \$2.95 per application, with \$2.44 of that coming from counties and the remaining \$0.51 coming from the state for postage (first-class stamp) and printing. In contrast, the total cost for a registration application submitted online is only 10 cents—nearly one-thirtieth of the cost of a paper application.²² Based on the 878,994 new registrations²³ received online during the five-week period the system was open in California in the fall of 2012, the net savings to counties in the 2012 elections were \$2,056,846 and the net savings to the state were \$448,287, for a total savings of over \$2.5 million. Given the startup costs, California’s online voter registration system paid for itself in its first year of operation and even generated a net savings of some \$700,000.

Savings to counties and the state from California’s system will likely be greater in the coming years as use increases. Looking ahead to 2020, the system will have been used in three general elections—2012, 2016, and 2020. If current use remains the same for the next two general elections, the state and county governments would save a combined total of about \$5.7 million, even taking into consideration initial startup costs and annual maintenance (see table below). If use increases by 25 percent in each of the next two general elections, then the net savings for the state could be as high as \$7.7 million.

The following are the projected savings at the county and state levels in California from online voter registration from 2012 to 2020:

Change in usage of online system, 2012–2020	Projected savings to all counties	Projected savings at state level	Total projected savings*
No change	\$6,170,538	\$1,344,861	\$5,670,399
10% increase each general election	\$6,808,160	\$1,483,830	\$6,446,990
25% increase each general election	\$7,841,725	\$1,709,094	\$7,705,819

*Minus startup costs and annual maintenance.

Source: Measure of America analysis of registration data from the California Secretary of State (2013) and projections of number of registered voters in 2020 from the California Department of Finance (2013).

In order to have a point of comparison for savings in smaller counties, Marin County's Registrar of Voters provided some estimates based on the 2012 elections. Marin County has only about 7 percent of the population of Maricopa County in Arizona, and in the past generally needed to hire only one temporary worker to process voter registrations.

In Marin County's case, California's new system made a tremendous difference in terms of reducing time spent on handling paper registration forms and streamlining processes: registrations submitted online took about one minute for elections staff to process compared with the five minutes needed to process paper registrations.²⁴ During an interview with this report's authors, the assistant registrar of voters in Marin County said they did not reduce their staff but instead reallocated one full-time temporary hire (an elections clerk earning about 20 dollars per hour) for one month to do other elections-related work. So while the Marin County Registrar of Voters did not recoup savings because it redeployed a clerk to other tasks, it did in fact spend approximately \$3,360 less on staffing for voter registration than it had in the past.

d. California's Costs for Improving Accessibility

While California has made great strides in modernizing its voter registration system in recent years, one outstanding criticism is that the state's voter registration website is difficult to use for individuals with disabilities, including the blind or those with limited vision and people with cognitive disabilities; those with other disabilities that can make interacting with websites a challenge; and those with limited literacy or English proficiency. Among the major accessibility issues identified by advocates for people with disabilities are the inability of the website to work well with screen readers and other assistive technologies and the limiting of language options to English and Spanish.²⁵

Specialists in website accessibility estimate that incorporating accessibility features during the design phase, which improves the performance of the website for all visitors, adds only about two percent to the initial cost of building the site. Improved performance for all comes from the fact that sites that are sensitive to cognitive disabilities are also sites that avoid overly complex navigation, inconsistent design, an excessive number of clicks to get where a user needs to go, and pages that time out quickly, among other things. On the other hand, the costs of retrofitting an existing website to address accessibility concerns can run two to three times the initial costs of building the site with these features in the first place.²⁶

The table on page 16 posits three scenarios related to accessibility and projected savings from 2012 to 2020 in California based on use of the state's online voter registration system by all registrants. The scenarios compare savings on voter registration when everyone switches from a paper-based to an online registration system assuming (1) no change to the website for enhanced accessibility, (2) voter registration using a retrofitted website, or (3) that all necessary accessibility features were built into the initial design. These scenarios assume a 25 percent

increase in online registration over the 2012 level in each general election to 2020. It concludes that savings as a result of voters switching from a paper-based system to online registration are far greater in Scenario 3, when the site is designed for accessibility at the outset, but that even in Scenario 2, with the cost of retrofitting the site for accessibility plus general startup and maintenance costs, there are still cost savings. Making online voter registration systems more accessible

does have budgetary implications, but this analysis demonstrates that it does not take away from the cost savings of the overall modernization process, whether done at the outset or in a later phase. As an added bonus, an online voter registration website that adheres to the best practices of accessibility is better for all users; it is easier to understand and navigate, times out less, and results in more successful outcomes. This, in turn, tends to increase use by everyone, resulting in even greater savings.

Incorporating accessibility features during the design phase...adds only about two percent to the initial cost.

Website accessibility for people with disabilities	Projected savings from 2012 to 2020*
No change to existing website	\$7,705,819
Retrofitting website	\$5,005,819
Accessibility included in initial design of website	\$7,669,819

**Minus initial costs and maintenance.*

Source: Measure of America analysis of registration data from the California Secretary of State (2013) and population projections from the California Department of Finance (2013).

The above is a conservative estimate of savings. If every one of the 3.5 million voting-age Californians with a disability²⁷ registered to vote through the online system before 2020, the savings through the decade would be considerably higher: almost \$15 million for the counties and state combined, or 72 cents per registered voter.

e. Protecting Privacy in Voter Registration

By its nature, paperless voter registration offers greater privacy for voters, due to the elimination of third-party elections personnel inputting voter registration data into state rolls by hand. However, online transactions also have security risks. The following are best practices for online voter registration websites to ensure voter privacy and protect registration data from unauthorized use:

- 1. Inform voters of public accessibility of their data.** Some personal information about registered voters must legally be made accessible to political parties, election campaigns, and advocacy groups. Voter registration websites should indicate those items that will become publicly available and should distinguish clearly between required and optional information during the registration process.²⁸
- 2. Encrypt personal registration data.** Translating personal information into encrypted code decipherable only by the system itself helps safeguard data against misuse by hackers and identity thieves in the event that voter registration data are lost or stolen. All personal data about registered voters entered into state voter rolls should be encrypted.
- 3. Build secure lookup tools.** The ability to check and update registration information online is a major benefit of a modern registration system. However, these lookup tools must be made secure by ensuring they return only as much personal information as the user of the site enters. For example, some state voter registration sites provide access to home addresses when only the name and date of birth of voters are known, potentially allowing third parties to gain access to voters' personal data. Further, these lookup tools must be on secure servers. As recently as 2011, a quarter of state registration websites with a registration lookup tool were not hosted on secure servers.²⁹
- 4. Restrict access and maintain a comprehensive audit log.** Voter registration data and the systems that compile and maintain the voter rolls should be accessible only to authorized state and county elections officials. All changes to individual voter registration records and to the electronic voter rolls overall should be recorded in a secure audit log accessible only to authorized personnel. Regular audits of the log should be performed to review all activity within the system and detect irregular activity that might indicate a security breach.³⁰
- 5. Establish a voter privacy advisory board.** New tools are constantly being developed and new ways to breach security are also regularly emerging. In order to keep abreast of these developments, an expert group in data management and online security should be convened to establish and review the implementation of privacy policies and to update these policies as necessary.³¹



3. ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF A MODERN VOTER REGISTRATION SYSTEM

This case study concentrates on cost savings, but the benefits to Arizona and California from modernization can be expressed in other measures as well. For elections officials, the benefits include a greatly decreased administrative burden, less time pressure on their work around election deadlines, the near total elimination of paper filing, and newly available office space. For citizens, registering to vote online is more convenient, quick, and accurate. An added benefit is that some states have observed shorter DMV lines due to the reduced transaction time of those who choose to register to vote there. And American society is perhaps reaping the greatest benefits. Each paperless voter registration contributes to environmental sustainability. But perhaps most importantly, while about 51 million eligible adults, or about one in four U.S. citizens, are not registered to vote,³² the evidence is clear that online voter registration is helping to increase voter franchise and build a more robust and vibrant democracy.

In Arizona, as in every state that has introduced an online voter registration option, registration is on the rise. And this is particularly the case with young voters and minorities. Voter registration among those aged 18 to 24 increased from the low rate of 28 percent before Arizona's EZ Voter was implemented to 53 percent after.³³ Coupled with this change in registration, greatly increased accuracy is likely to instill greater trust in voting. In Arizona, online applications are one-fifth as prone to errors as paper-based applications are.³⁴

In California, overall voting rates are relatively low compared to those of other states. However, since September 19, 2012, the date the online system began, nearly 50 percent of those who registered have done so online. The hypothesis of advocates of online registration that it

Voter registration among those aged 18 to 24 increased from the low rate of 28 percent before Arizona's EZ Voter...to 53 percent after.

allows for a broader range of voters was borne out in the state. Youth voter registration increased nearly 14 percent in 2012 over the November 2008 election, a growth rate that far outpaces growth in the state's youth population. In 2012, youth comprised 30 percent of online registrants.³⁵ Interestingly, those who registered online in 2012 were more likely to vote. This was especially true of young people: 70 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds who registered online voted, as compared with 45 percent of those who used other means to register.³⁶ Exploring registration rates by race and ethnicity, a study at the University of California, Berkeley, found that more Latino men and women under 35 registered to vote online in the 2012 election than whites or Asian-Americans of any gender did, and further, that the majority of both Latino and white online registrants were low or middle income.³⁷





4. CONCLUSION

The experiences of Arizona and California described in this report shed light on some best practices for maximizing access to voting while also saving money:

1. Design a system based on collaboration between those government agencies with the information and tools needed for voter registration (i.e., Department of Motor Vehicles and Secretary of State). This yields a more efficient system that can be built faster and at a lower cost.
2. Build a secure, computerized, statewide voter registration database first. This makes subsequent steps easier and less costly.
3. Offer online registration for those without a driver's license or state-issued ID. This maximizes use of the system by all.
4. Incorporate accessibility features for the disabled, such as screen readers, at the design phase. This costs considerably less than retrofitting these features after the site is built and yields a better site both for people with disabilities and for all users; these sites are easier to understand and navigate, time out less, and allow voters to register successfully.
5. Ensure the technology platform chosen for an online registration site has localization capabilities built in that allow the creation of multiple versions of the same page in different languages. This facilitates parallel language sites at little additional cost beyond that of translation.

As is clear from the above discussion, by using existing technology to improve voter registration systems, elections divisions will reap many of the rewards of automation that the private sector is already experiencing. Online registration has reduced the workload and administrative burden of elections workers and smoothed out workflow considerably, and, very importantly in a time of fiscal pressure, these positive benefits can be achieved with considerable public savings.

This research shows that the five important features of a modern voter registration system can result in important savings for local and state elections offices, primarily in the areas of reduced staffing needs and the near elimination of printing, scanning, and postage outlays. In the cases of both Arizona and California, those savings were immense. Further, several of the features not currently in place in Arizona or California would, if implemented, likely attract the interest of many more potential registrants in using the online system, thereby further increasing savings. We project that if current use of the online voter registration system remains the same for the

next two general elections—a conservative estimate, since interest in online registration is increasing—California would save a total of \$5.7 million by 2020.

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Jennie Bretschneider, Assistant Deputy Secretary of State, California

Melvin Briones, Assistant Registrar of Voters, Marin County, California

Mary Fontes, Election Office Manager, Arizona Secretary of State

Jason Heyes, Secretary of State, Office of Voting Systems Technology Assessment, California

Joseph Lorenzo Hall, Senior Staff Technologist, Center for Democracy and Technology

Elaine Manlove, Commissioner, Department of Elections, Delaware

Susan Mizner, Disability Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union

Tammy Patrick, Federal Compliance Officer, Maricopa County Elections, Arizona

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