

2011



# Rhode Island Agency-Based Voter Registration

*National Voter Registration Act of 1993*

&

*Help America Vote Act of 2002*



RI Board of Elections  
50 Branch Avenue  
Providence, RI 02904  
<http://www.elections.ri.gov/agencies>

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## BACKGROUND

### ABOUT THE ACTS

In 1993, the United States Congress passed, and President Bill Clinton signed into law, the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA). In passing this legislation, the Congress affirmed that not only do the citizens of the United States possess the right to vote, but that federal, state and local governments have a duty to promote the exercise of that fundamental right. In addition, the Congress expressed its concern relative to the possible disenfranchisement of various groups due to discriminatory and unfair registration laws and procedures and the resulting detrimental effect on voter participation which may occur in elections for federal office.

The legislative intent of the NVRA is to increase the opportunities afforded to eligible citizens to register to vote thereby increasing the number of citizens who register to vote and enhancing the level of voter participation in elections. In conjunction with the passage of the Act, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed and the Governor signed, legislation reflecting the intent and requirements of the NVRA.

The availability of voter registration services at selected agencies has been identified by the Act as a vehicle to increase the registration opportunities for citizens throughout the United States. Consequently, among the means of registering to vote required by Congress is that known as **Agency Registration**. It is designed to increase the number of Americans registered to vote.

As a result of the passage of **The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)**, the State of Rhode Island received \$11 million dollars to improve voter registration systems and elections.

The voter registration form has been modified to allow for registrants to answer two HAVA required questions\* (see below) and to provide for the inclusion of a Rhode Island driver's license number or the last four digits of their social security number in order to verify identity for voter registration purposes.

#### **The required questions are:**

1. \*Are you a citizen of the United States?
2. \*Are you at least 16 years of age?

Registrants who answer no to either question should be instructed not to complete the voter registration form, as they are considered ineligible.

## **AGENCY PARTICIPATION**

The following agencies are required by the NVRA and State Laws to offer voter registration services:

- all offices in the state which provide public assistance;
- at, or through, any offices in the state that provide state-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities;
- at armed forces recruitment offices
- the Department of Corrections; and
- at other such agencies as shall be determined by the Board of Elections.

In addition, the NVRA requires that every applicant for a motor vehicle driver's license or a renewal, or a personal identification card issued by the Division of Motor Vehicles and who is eligible to register to vote shall be afforded the opportunity to register to vote. Voter registration services are, therefore, provided at offices of the Division of Motor Vehicles throughout Rhode Island.

## **WHEN AGENCIES MUST OFFER VOTER REGISTRATION SERVICES**

The NVRA and RI Law require that the opportunity to register to vote be offered to a participating agency's applicants/clients each time an applicant/client:

- applies for, recertifies or renews for services or assistance; or
- submits a change of address with the agency; or
- upon discharge from the Department of Corrections

The appropriate form to be used to execute voter registrations for the above activities is the Agency Voter Registration Form. (See Appendix)

### **ASSISTING THE APPLICANT/CLIENT WITH VOTER REGISTRATION**

Participating agencies are required to provide the applicant/client with the same amount of assistance in completing the voter registration form as they would provide the applicant/client in completing the agency's own forms, unless the applicant/client refuses such assistance.

Agency representatives are prohibited from seeking to influence an applicant's/client's decision regarding voter registration or party preference. Similarly, agency representatives cannot make any statement or take any action whose purpose or effect is:

- to discourage the applicant/client from registering to vote; or
- to lead the applicant/client to believe that a decision whether or not to register to vote has any bearing on the availability of services or benefits.

### **INTERFERENCE WITH THE VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS**

The NVRA prohibits interference in the voter registration process. The Act prohibits anyone from knowingly and willfully intimidating, threatening or coercing any person to vote or attempting to register to vote. Further, knowing and willful procurement or submission of fraudulent voter registration applications is prohibited.

Under the provisions of the Act, persons interfering with the voter registration process may be fined in accordance with Title 18 of the United States Code or imprisoned not more than five (5) years, or both.

## VOTER REGISTRATION MATERIALS

The following materials are required for conducting agency-based voter registration: Voter Registration Forms and packing slips. In addition, the agency will need the form entitled "State of Rhode Island Agency-Based Voter Registration Monthly Activity Report." See Appendix for sample forms.

### REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The NVRA requires each participating agency to file periodic reports on various voter registration activities. These reports shall be made on the form entitled "State of Rhode Island Agency-Based Voter Registration Monthly Activity Report" and shall be filed on a monthly basis and must be received at the Board of Elections within ten (10) days after the close of each month.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions, comments and inquiries regarding the implementation or execution of agency-based registration may be directed to:

Voter Registration Coordinator  
Rhode Island Board of Elections  
50 Branch Avenue  
Providence, Rhode Island 02904  
Phone: 401-222-2345  
squirk@elections.ri.gov

The Board of Elections strongly urges each agency to designate a coordinator to oversee the voter registration program and a contact person for coordinating communications between the agency and Board of Elections.

## THE AGENCY-BASED VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS

### THE VOTER REGISTRATION FORM

The Voter Registration Form **MUST BE COMPLETED IN INK**. The **certification form**, is a separate document, and is used to document the applicant's/client's decision to register to vote or to decline to register to vote, and contains important information about an applicant's right to register to vote. The completed voter **registration form** is transmitted, filed and recorded as the registrant's voter registration record.

## STEPS IN THE AGENCY VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS

- 1) **Read the instructions** on the certification form (the agency representative may help an applicant/client who requests assistance);
- 2) **Complete the certification form;**
- 3) **Complete the voter registration form** if the applicant/client has indicated that he/she wishes to register to vote from or would like to change his/her registration address and/or name.

## HOW TO COMPLETE THE CERTIFICATION FORM

Each applicant/client should be offered the opportunity to register to vote. Upon being offered the opportunity to vote, each applicant/client should indicate on the certification form whether he/she would like to register to vote at the agency or submit an address change for voter registration purposes. In response to the question, "If you are **not** registered to vote where you live now, would you like to register here today?" the applicant/client should check either "yes" or "no." The applicant/client should then sign and date the form in the space below the aforementioned question.

- ***If the client decides to register to vote***, he or she should fill out the voter registration form and check "Yes" on the certification form and sign it.
- ***If the client desires to change their address for voter registration purposes***, he or she should complete the entire voter registration form. They must also check "Yes" on the certification form and sign it.
- ***The client can indicate that he/she is declining to register by marking the appropriate box on the certification form.*** If a client fails to complete the certification the agency representative shall note the refusal on the certification form.

***The applicant/client must have the same opportunity to complete the certification form and the voter registration form as he/she is given to complete the agency's own forms.***

## HOW TO COMPLETE THE VOTER REGISTRATION FORM

A person who chooses to fill out the voter registration form may do so in private or may request help from an agency representative.

### ***If an applicant/client requires assistance filling out the form***

The agency representative must provide the person the same degree of assistance for voter registration as is provided for completing agency forms.

### ***If an applicant/client would prefer to take the Agency Voter Registration Form home***

The agency representative should keep the completed certification form marked "No." and write the client's name on the certification form.

**It is essential that registration forms be FILLED OUT IN INK AND BE SIGNED, DATED AND COMPLETED IN FULL. The agency representative should review the form for completeness.**

## CONFIDENTIALITY OF VOTER REGISTRATION RECORDS

Information relating to a declination or acceptance of voter registration services at a participating agency is confidential. Use of this information is limited to voter registration purposes. Other uses are prohibited.

## WHAT TO DO WITH COMPLETED CERTIFICATION FORMS

Completed certification forms must be filed and retained by the participating agency for a period of twenty-four (24) months.

## WHAT TO DO WITH COMPLETED VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS

Completed voter registration forms are required to be transmitted by agencies to the Board of Elections. The completed forms must be received at the Board of Elections within ten (10) days after acceptance, or if accepted within five days before the last day to register to vote for an election, within five (5) days of such acceptance. (To be eligible to vote in an election a person must be registered at least 30 days prior to the election.)

- ***Packing slips.*** Agency representatives shall complete packing slips for each transmitted package including completed voter registration forms.



- **Transmittal package.** A 9 1/2 x 12 1/2 envelope should be used as the transmittal package.  
Each agency must use its mailing address as the return address on each transmittal package.  
Included in the transmittal package shall be the following:

- 1) completed voter registration forms;
- 2) packing slip

The transmittal package should be sent to:

Voter Registration Coordinator  
c/o Rhode Island Board of Elections  
50 Branch Avenue  
Providence, Rhode Island 02904

### **HOW WILL A PERSON KNOW IF THEIR REGISTRATION WAS ACCEPTED?**

The Board of Canvassers in the community in which the person has registered to vote will mail to each registrant an Acknowledgment Notice to let the voter know that his/her registration was accepted. The notice will tell the voter which voting district he/she lives in so that he/she will know where to vote.

If the person does not receive an Acknowledgment Notice within 3 weeks, he/she should contact the Board of Canvassers in his/her community.

## **ADMINISTERING AN AGENCY VOTER REGISTRATION PROGRAM**

Each agency shall designate a site coordinator whose duties shall include:

- Collecting, tracking and maintaining a record of the number of voter registration forms processed and forwarded to the Board of Elections;
- Collecting, tracking and maintaining a record of certification forms;
- Employee training;
- Ordering and distribution of registration and certification forms.

## **APPENDIX**

***CLIENT CERTIFICATION FORM (p. 14)***

***VOTER REGISTRATION FORM (p. 15)***

***AGENCY-BASED VOTER REGISTRATION MONTHLY ACTIVITY REPORT (p. 16-15)***

***PACKING SLIP (p. 18)***

## Certification Form



### State of Rhode Island Agency Voter Registration Certification

The State of Rhode Island urges all of its citizens to register to vote. Your vote will benefit you and your family. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this important form.

#### Register To Vote

If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to apply to register to vote here? Where you submit your registration form is confidential.

- Yes, I would like to register to vote. (Please fill out the voter registration form)
- No, I do not want to register to vote, or I am already registered to vote at my current address, or I am not eligible to register to vote and do not need an application to register to vote, or I am taking the voter registration form with me and may complete the voter registration form and send it in at a later time.

**IF YOU DO NOT CHECK EITHER BOX YOU WILL BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE DECIDED NOT TO REGISTER TO VOTE AT THIS TIME.**

- If you would like help in filling out the voter registration form, we will help you. The decision whether to seek or accept help is yours. You may fill out the application form in private.
- Applying to register or declining to register to vote will not affect the amount of assistance that you will be provided by this agency.
- You may leave the voter registration form at the office where you received it, or you may mail or deliver it to the Board of Canvassers in your city/town hall.
- If you believe that someone has interfered with your right to register or to decline to register to vote, your right to privacy in deciding whether to register or in applying to register to vote, or your right to choose your own political party or other political preference, you may file a complaint with the Voter Registration Coordinator, Rhode Island Board of Elections, 50 Branch Avenue, Providence, R.I. 02904 or (401) 222-2345.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant's Signature                      Applicant's Name                      Date

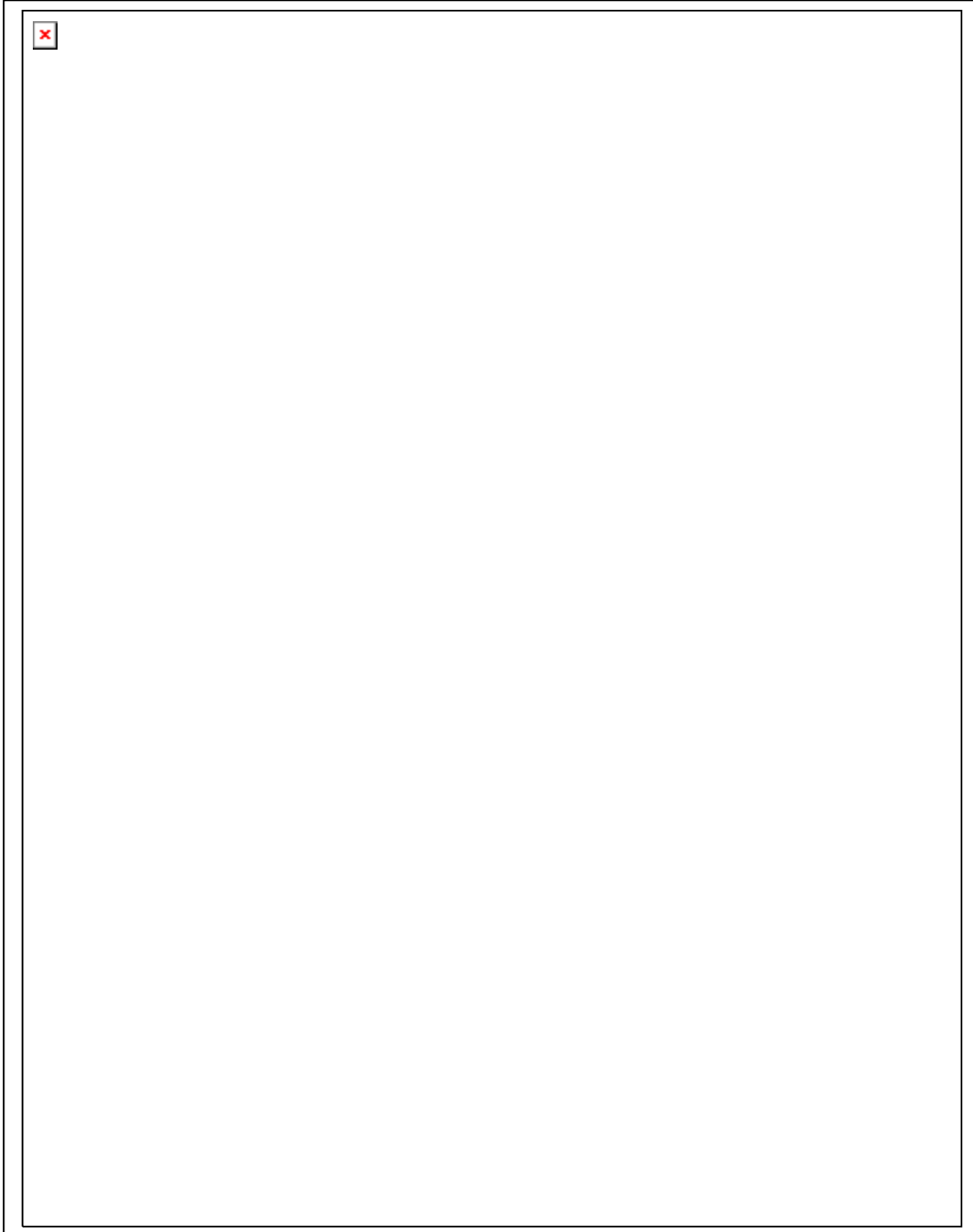
#### For Agency Use Only

\_\_\_\_\_  
Registration Agent's Initials                      Date

**This form must be retained by the agency for 24 months.**

VR Agency Cert (3/2011)

## Voter Registration Form



A large empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a voter registration form. A small red 'x' icon is located in the top-left corner of the box.

## Monthly Activity Report

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
AGENCY-BASED VOTER REGISTRATION**

**MONTHLY ACTIVITY REPORT**

Agency: _____		Date: _____ <small>MMYY</small>	
Number of Persons Applying/Reapplying for Services/Assistance, Change of Address	Number of Persons Registering to Vote	Number of Persons Who Declined To Register to Vote On-Site.	
		FORM REFUSED	FORM MAILED TO CLIENT
<u>AGENT CERTIFICATION</u>			
I hereby certify that I am this agency's authorized voter registration coordinator, and I have truthfully and accurately completed this form* in conformance with the provisions of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA), based on information I have received from our listed registration agents.			
Agency/Site Coordinator: _____		Date: _____	
Address: _____		Phone: _____	
SIGNATURE: _____			
Signed and sworn before me this _____ day of _____ 20____			
NOTARY PUBLIC: _____			

\* Agency/Site Coordinator must complete the back of this form\*

**Voter Registration Coordinator  
Rhode Island Board of Elections  
50 Branch Avenue  
Providence, R.I. 02904**

**This form must be transmitted to the Board of Elections within 10 days from the last day of the preceding month**



**Packing Slip**

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
AGENCY-BASED VOTER REGISTRATION**

**PACKING SLIP**

**Agency:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Field Office:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Mailed or Delivered:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Of Completed Voter Registration Forms *

**Agency Representative:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Agency Rep. Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

*\* Agencies are responsible for sorting completed voter registrations by community prior to transmitting them to the Board of Elections.*

**Forward to**

**Voter Registration Coordinator  
Rhode Island Board of Elections  
50 Branch Avenue  
Providence, R.I. 02904**

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## **ABOUT THIS GUIDE**

This document has been prepared by the Rhode Island Board of Elections to assist in the implementation of voter registration in state agencies. It is advisory in nature and is intended to serve as a guide to explain the responsibilities of participating agencies offering voter registration services to applicants for services or their clients.

To obtain copies of this guide or other information related to the implementation of the agency-based registration program, or to offer suggested modifications to this publication, please contact the Voter Registration Coordinator at the Board of Elections.