

**STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS**

Voter registration over the past 21+ years

Delaware has registered 675,645 new voters over the more than 21 years since the inception of the State's Agency Based Registration Act (ABRA) and the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) as shown on the attached table. During the same time, Delaware cancelled the registrations of approximately 351,000 persons who had died, moved out of state, or requested that the State cancel their registrations. Delaware had 649,024 registered voters on July 9, 2015.

Background

The voter registration process changed dramatically in Delaware starting in January, 1994 when the State's ABRA was implemented. This act, based on the NVRA, mandated that the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV), the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the Department of Labor (DOL) begin to register voters when providing services to their clients. With respect to the DMV, the mandate only applied to persons being issued or updating their driver's licenses.

Delaware's ABRA officially went into effect on January 30, 1994. DMV, however, began generating transactions during the latter part of the previous week in order to make sure that the system put in place worked.

DMV printed a voter registration application that the applicant would sign. DMV then sent the forms to the Elections office in the county in which the DMV office was located. Note: in some instances Elections office staff picked up applications at DMV offices. The Elections office would process the applications or send them to the appropriate Elections office if applications were for people living in another county. Election offices would not process a transaction until they received the paper application for that transaction.

There were minor issues that plagued the DMV system. Printers did not always work properly, some applicants did not sign the applications, and the Election offices did not always receive the applications. Changes to the process have mitigated most of these issues.

People receiving services at the DHSS and the DOL completed applications by hand. The offices of those agencies then sent the applications to the Elections office in the county where the agency office was located. Elections offices would send applications received for people living in another county to the appropriate Elections office. The number of applications created at DHSS and DOL sites has dramatically decreased over the past several years. The State Election Commissioner is working with both agencies to modernize the voter registration process so that they comply with ABRA and NVRA.

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The National Voter Registration Act, referred to as “Motor Voter” went into effect on January 1, 1995. Delaware had already implemented a large part of the Act, and implemented the remaining mandates on or before the effective date. These included:

- Accepting the national voter registration form promulgated by the Federal Election Commission
- Acceptance of voter registration forms collected by volunteer persons and groups
- Prohibiting the cancellation of a person’s registration because he/she did not vote
- Establishing rules on maintaining the list of registered voters

These two acts dramatically increased the number of people registering to vote, but increased the number of bad addresses.

Delaware has modernized its voter registration system over the past several years by adding an on-line service that required the applicant to print, sign and mail the voter registration application. More recently, the on-line system has been re-engineered to let most people use one of several digital options and complete the registration process on-line.

Additionally, Delaware pioneered a digital signature process at DMV that eliminated paper applications. In most instances, Election offices process applications the same day DMV creates the transaction and the State mails the applicant a Polling Place Card the same day.

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7/13/15

**New Registrations since the Agency Based Registration and National Voter Registration Acts
(Jan 1, 1994 through July 9, 2015¹)**

Registration Source	Kent	New Castle	Sussex	Total	%
Department of Elections	17,617	53,846	29,066	100,529	14.88%
Div of Motor Vehicles	86,032	307,603	113,772	507,407	75.10%
Dept of Health & Social Services	2,135	5,938	3,918	11,991	1.77%
Department of Labor	2,585	3,475	1,130	7,190	1.06%
Other Government	120	176	181	477	0.07%
Federal forms ²	4,346	24,886	5,263	34,495	5.11%
Volunteer groups	1,309	10,938	1,309	13,556	2.01%
	114,144	406,862	154,639	675,645	100.00%

¹ Non-agency base registrations between Jan 1, 1994, and Jan 29, 1994, have been removed from this analysis. These were Office and Mail registrations. There were 37 for Kent County, 163 for New Castle County and 48 for Sussex County.

² Includes Federal NVRA forms that are not attributed to a specific volunteer group and Federal Post Card Applications (used by military and overseas citizen voters)