



# Implementing the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA): State Agencies



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# National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA)



## NVRA History

- Also known as the “Motor Voter Law”
- **Federal** statute passed by Congress in 1993
- 44 states, **including Texas**, were required to implement the NVRA by January 1, 1995
- Designated government entities as Voter Registration Agencies (VRAs)
- State agencies that provide public assistance and certain other public entities **are required** to offer the opportunity to register to vote to their clients.
  - Individuals can register while getting their driver's license
  - Individuals can register through the mail
  - Individuals can register at Voter Registration Agencies

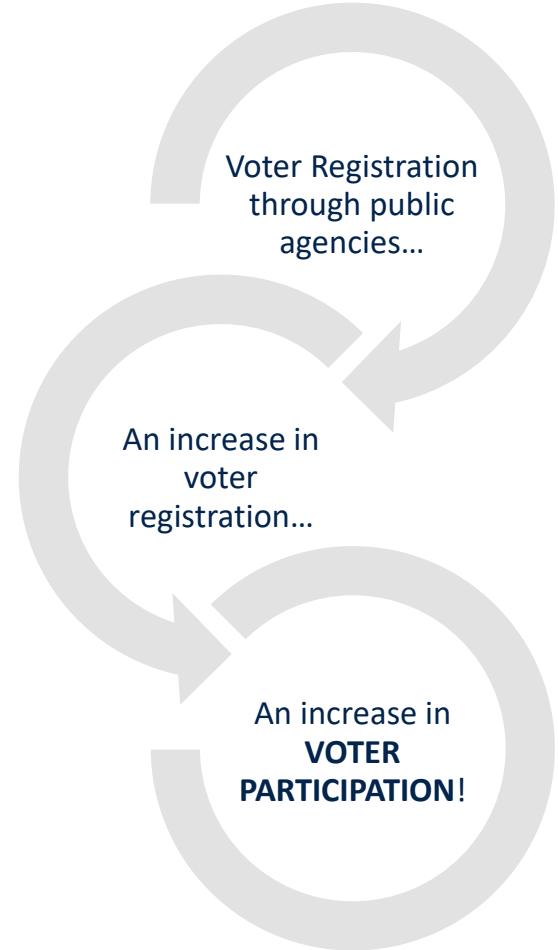


## Goals of the NVRA

**Increasing Voter Registration** by making the process more accessible and convenient, especially through high-demand government agencies like the DPS and social services offices.

**Enhancing Voter Participation** in the electoral process by encouraging more eligible citizens to register and vote.

**Protecting the Integrity of the Electoral Process** by establishing fair standards for maintaining accurate and up to date voter registration rolls.





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# Voter Registration Agencies



## What is a Voter Registration Agency (VRA)?

- A Voter Registration Agency is a government office designated under the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) or state law to offer voter registration services. Their role is to provide citizens with the opportunity to register to vote or update their registration information when they apply for or receive the services that the agency provides. VRAs are located where people commonly interact with government services which makes voter registration more accessible and convenient for those who might not otherwise seek voter registration.



## Texas Voter Registration Agencies

Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)

Department of Public Safety (DPS)

Any other agency or program as determined by the Secretary of State that primarily provides public assistance or services to persons with disabilities.



## Other Designated Agencies

Texas  
Rehabilitation  
Commission

Texas School for  
the Blind and  
Visually Impaired

Texas School for  
the Deaf

Texas  
Commission for  
the Blind

Public Libraries

High Schools

Federal online  
application

Military / U.S.  
Department of  
Defense

County Marriage  
License Bureaus

Cities

Voter Registrars



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# Why Are State Agencies Used?

**State agency voter registration most effectively reaches populations that are among the least registered.**

Low Income individuals are often among the least registered due to barriers such as:

- Lack of access
- Frequent moves
- Time constraints
- Lack of information

People with disabilities are often among the least registered due to challenges such as:

- Physical accessibility barriers
- Lack of accessible information
- Transportation issues
- Low outreach

Youth are often the least registered due to a combination of structural and social factors such as:

- Lack of awareness
- First-time process
- Mobility and life transitions
- Low outreach

Populations with high residential mobility are often the least registered because frequent moves create challenges such as:

- Registration updates
- Lack of stability
- Missing deadlines
- Mail issues



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# Voter Registration Agency Responsibilities

## Offering Voter Registration



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### Responsibilities

Each voter registration agency **must**:

- offer voter registration applications to every individual applying for the agency's services (TEC §20.032(a));
- if an agency provides services at a person's residence, the agency must also provide the opportunity to complete a voter registration application (TEC §20.032(b)); **and**
- provide the same degree of assistance that you provide to a patron completing agency forms, including bilingual assistance. (TEC §20.005)

### Methods of Distribution

Distribution of voter registration applications and informational notices may be included as part of the routine distribution of agency related forms and services in the following ways:

- On-site or off site direct interactions;
- By mail; or
- By electronic transmission such as email.



## Services Rendered by Mail or Phone

TEC § 20.037

An agency **must provide** a voter registration application to applicants by mail *if*:

- the agency automatically notifies an applicant to renew or recertify a service by mailing a form to the applicant; **or**
- the applicant requests agency services by telephone and the agency provides services in that manner.

Mailed voter registration applications **must include a notice** informing the applicant that the application may be submitted:

- in person or by mail to the **voter registrar** of the county in which the applicant resides; **or**
- in person to a **volunteer deputy registrar** for delivery to the voter registrar of the county in which the applicant resides.



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# Voter Registration

## Applications and Declinations



## Voter Registration Applications

Agencies may use the Secretary of State's (SOS) prescribed voter registration application form or one that the public agency has created and approved by the SOS. (TEC § 20.002).



Printing formats and specifications will be provided by the SOS. Agencies are responsible for the printing of applications based on agency need and distribution demand.



## Declaration of Registration

TEC § 20.036

If an applicant declines the voter registration application, a declination of registration form should be **completed and signed** by the applicant.



If the applicant refuses to sign the declination form, the agency employee must include a notation of that fact on the form.



Declination forms must be preserved for at least 22 months after the date of signing either in the applicant's file at the agency or in a separate declination file.



Declinations **are confidential** and may be used only for voter registration purposes.



The Secretary of State will prescribe procedures necessary to eliminate the filing of multiple declinations by an applicant.



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The Official Declination of Registration Form **must include** the following:

- Sufficient spaces for the person's signature, printed name and the date of signing;
- A statement that if the applicant declines to register to vote, that fact will remain confidential and will be used only for voter registration purposes;
- A statement that if the applicant does register to vote, information regarding the agency or office to which the application is submitted will remain confidential and will be used only for voter registration purposes; **and**
- A space for indicating that the applicant refused to sign the declination or kept the application to personally submit it to the voter registrar.



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The officially prescribed form for a declination of a voter registration application must include the following questions/statements:

"If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to apply to register to vote here today?" followed by appropriate "Yes" and "No" boxes.

"Applying to register or declining to register to vote will not affect the amount of assistance that you will be provided by this agency."

**"IF YOU HAVE NOT CHECKED EITHER BOX,  
YOU WILL BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE  
DECIDED NOT TO REGISTER TO VOTE AT  
THIS TIME."**

"If you would like help filling out the voter registration application form, we will help you. The decision whether to seek or accept help is yours. You may fill out the application form in private."

"If you believe that someone has interfered with your right to register or to decline to register to vote or with your right to privacy in deciding whether to register or in applying to register to vote, you may file a complaint with the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of State, P.O. Box 12060, Austin, Texas 78711."



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# Application Submission Collecting and Delivering Applications



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Once collected  
by agency  
personnel, the  
agency **must**:

- deliver in person all completed registration applications submitted to agency employees to the **voter registrar of the county** in which the agency office is located; and
- deliver to the appropriate state election official **no later than the 5th day** after the application is submitted to an agency employee.



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# Agency Implementation Offering Voter Registration



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## Each voter registration agency must:

Prepare and submit a plan to implement voter registration procedures to the SOS office;

Designate a point of contact and provide all necessary contact information to the SOS;  
*and*

Conduct training for agency employees in voter registration procedures.

Either email the plan to [elections@sos.texas.gov](mailto:elections@sos.texas.gov), fax the plan to 512-463-7552, or mail to P.O. Box 12060, Austin, TX 78711.

*Note: Public agencies designated under Chapter 20 of the Texas Election Code as voter registration agencies are not required to obtain certification as voter registrars.*



## Best Practices to Ensure Compliance

Employee training on voter registration responsibilities under the NVRA/Texas Election Code should occur **frequently**.

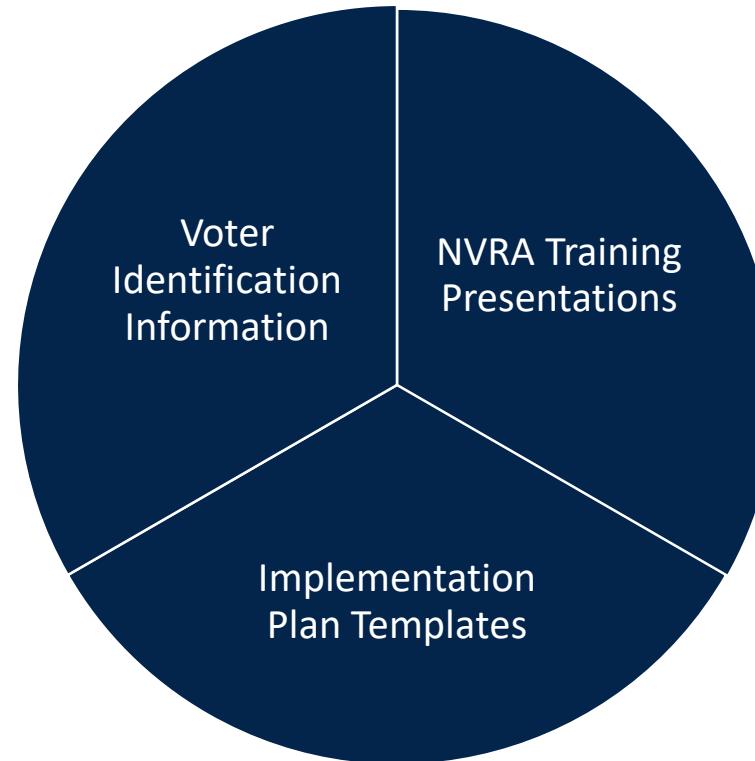
Employee training should occur **before** contact with clients.

Each local agency office must be stocked with an adequate supply of voter registration application forms. An adequate supply is the number of forms needed to distribute with each covered transaction for a period of not less than two months.



## Voter Registration Resources

- Please visit our website for additional training material and voter education resources at [www.sos.texas.gov](http://www.sos.texas.gov).





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## Available Support



**WEBINARS**



**TRAINING**



**RESOURCES**

[elections@sos.texas.gov](mailto:elections@sos.texas.gov)

800-252-VOTE • 512-463-5650

[sos.texas.gov](http://sos.texas.gov)