

# NVRA Voter Registration in Colorado

## *2019-20 ANNUAL REPORT*

VOTER REGISTRATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIZENS IN COLORADO UNDER THE  
NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT



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## INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Secretary of State's office is responsible for implementing the requirements of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). This report describes the Secretary of State's ongoing implementation and outlines how Colorado will continue to offer voter registration opportunities to all eligible citizens. The report consists of the following sections:

- NVRA Compliance
- Reporting Methods
- Process Improvements
- Outreach Opportunities

## COMPLIANCE

### *NVRA VOTER REGISTRATION*

The NVRA requires each state to establish procedures to ensure that a voter registration application is available:

- simultaneously with an application for a driver's license;
- at all offices in the state that provide public assistance; and
- at all offices in the state that administer state-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities.

The Secretary of State's office commits to ensuring that every citizen who applies for a driver's license, or requests an eligibility determination for a public benefit, is offered the opportunity to register to vote. This report refers to applications made at a driver's license office as "Motor Voter" transactions, and applications made at a public assistance office, or an office that provides services to persons with disabilities, as "Section 7" transactions.

In 2019 and 2020, Colorado underwent significant changes and challenges related to Motor Voter and Section 7 voter registration transactions. In the summer of 2019, the Department, working with the Colorado Department of Revenue, began implementing SB18-233. That legislation required the Department of State to communicate in real-time with DMV offices around the state. This allowed DMV offices to automatically update voter registration records of current Colorado voters.

In 2020 the Department worked to implement SB 19-235. This bill required DMV offices around Colorado to automatically register Coloradans who appeared at a DMV with paperwork that proved their US citizenship. Due to the diligent efforts of Department of State and Department of Revenue staff, this transition went seamlessly and Coloradans who show US citizenship documentation began to be automatically registered in April of 2020.

At the same time, DMV offices and other Section 7 agencies had their operations significantly affected by the global pandemic. From late March through the summer of 2020, in office agency appointments were significantly reduced or discontinued altogether. Despite these challenges, agencies continued to process voter registrations remotely via mail, and online.

## ***MOTOR VOTER***

As has been consistent with previous years, the 2019 data shows that the majority of Colorado’s NVRA voter registration applications—721,369—occurred at driver’s license offices. In 2020, 850,926 voter registrations occurred at driver’s license offices.

In recent years, the Secretary of State’s office has worked closely with the Colorado Department of Revenue to enhance the voter registration experience at driver’s license offices across the state. Now, all motor voter transactions are transmitted electronically to county clerks, increasing the timeliness and efficiency of the registration process. This electronic transmission combined with automatic updates and registrations has strengthened Colorado’s voter registration and list maintenance processes.

We continue to work on modernizing the process and creating efficiencies, and expect to see increased registration and updates in the coming years.

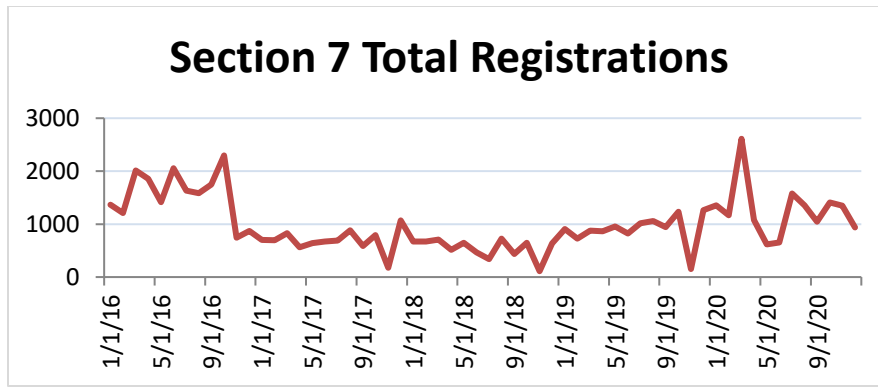
## ***SECTION 7 VOTER REGISTRATION AGENCIES***

Section 7 of the NVRA uses the term “Voter Registration Agency” to describe state offices that provide public assistance and services to people with disabilities. Voter Registration Agencies serve a vital role because they provide voter registration opportunities for this segment of the population.

The following are services provided by Voter Registration Agencies—categorized by the state agencies responsible for regulating the services.

- Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF)
  - Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+)
  - Medicaid
- Department of Human Services (DHS)
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
- Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE)
  - Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Colleges and Universities
  - Programs for people with disabilities

The Secretary of State’s office provides training to Voter Registration Agencies and surveys the agencies monthly to track their activity. Colorado has over 300 Voter Registration Agencies, which were responsible for 10,816 voter registration applications in the 2019 period, and 15,150 voter registration applications in 2020. The monthly Section 7 totals from 2016 through 2020 are displayed below.



This data reflects NVRA voter registration transactions initiated via Section 7 agencies.

## REPORTING METHODS

### MOTOR VOTER REPORTING

The Secretary of State’s office tracks motor voter registration activity through the statewide voter registration system (SCORE). When an individual registers to vote or updates their information at a driver’s license office or on the driver’s license online portal, the application is forwarded to the county clerk and recorder. The county clerk and recorder is responsible for registering or updating the individual in SCORE and the registration is tagged with a transaction source indicating that the registration occurred at a driver’s license office. The Secretary of State’s office runs reports that show the number of registrations by transaction source. The motor voter numbers used in this report were collected from that data. Voter registration data from these locations has increased in volume over the past two years as the Secretary of State’s office and the Department of Revenue have worked to implement automatic updates and voter registration at driver’s license offices around the state.

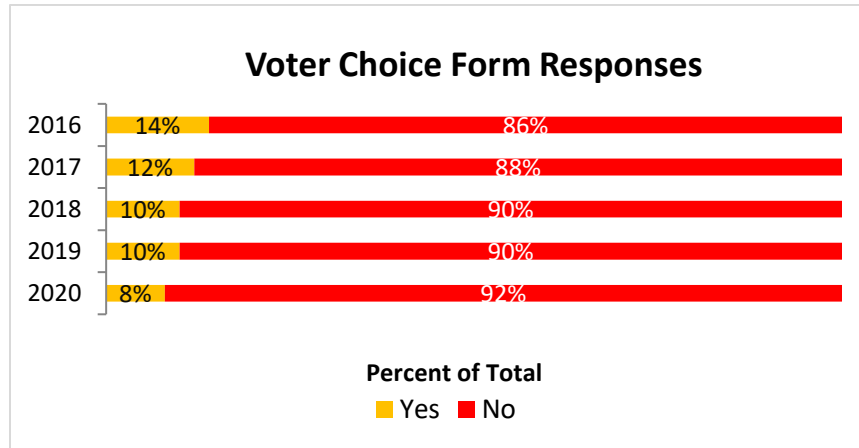
Beginning in the summer of 2019, current voters who visited a motor vehicle office had their voter record information automatically updated. These updates are transmitted from the driver’s license office to SCORE where they are then processed by county clerks. Updates may include changes to name or addressing information.

Then, in the summer of 2020, individuals who were not registered to vote who visited a motor vehicle office and presented documentation proving US citizenship began to be automatically registered to vote. These automatic registrations are transmitted from the driver’s license office to SCORE where they are then processed by county clerks. Individuals who are automatically registered to vote in this way are then sent a letter which confirms their registration status and allows them to opt-out of registration, or pick a party to affiliate with. Voters who do nothing are registered to vote as unaffiliated.

### Section 7 Reporting

Before an applicant receives a voter registration application at a Voter Registration Agency, he or she either accepts or declines the opportunity to register to vote by filling out the *Voter Registration Choice Form*. Voter Registration Agencies collect the voter-response data from the *Voter Registration Choice*

Form and report it through a monthly survey tool, and the Section 7 agencies track the response. The following chart displays the cumulative percentage for each answer category from 2016 to 2020.



### ***BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING RESPONSE RATE***

Reporting compliance continues to hold steady at 96 percent or more monthly. The following graph shows the Voter Registration Agency reporting rate as a percentage for each month from 2016 to 2020.

### **OUTREACH STRATEGIES**

The Secretary of State’s office commits to making voter registration opportunities available to all eligible citizens. Leveraging the partnership between Voter Registration Agencies and the Secretary of State is crucial to compliance. The Secretary of State’s office voter registration outreach focuses on building these partnerships with Voter Registration Agencies by identifying covered agencies, training them and communicating with covered agencies to collect data.

### ***IDENTIFICATION***

To comply with the NVRA, a state must identify Voter Registration Agencies. The Secretary of State’s office recognizes that building relationships with Voter Registration Agencies and state agency personnel overseeing those Voter Registration Agencies is vital to compliance. Each Voter Registration Agency appoints a coordinator responsible for NVRA activities at that office. Although each office has a coordinator, employee turnover is a barrier to maintaining the relationship between the Voter Registration Agency and the Secretary of State’s office.

State agencies are very helpful with mitigating the effects of coordinator turnover. The state agencies are now able to quickly identify a replacement coordinator because NVRA coordinator duties are part of the job function for the vacant position. Additionally, state agency personnel that oversee Voter Registration Agencies serve as liaisons that provide new coordinator contact information and encourage compliance through accountability.

## **TRAINING**

The Secretary of State's office provides an online training course that covers required NVRA activities for Section 7 agencies. Agencies prefer the convenience of the online training. The training resource was enhanced to allow for verification that an individual completed the training. State agency liaisons requested this enhancement so they can hold Voter Registration Agency coordinators accountable for completing NVRA training. The table below shows the number of individuals that completed the training each year.

<b>SOS</b>	
2016	183
2017	80
2018	150
2019	82
2020	10

The Department of Health Care Policy & Financing's Staff Development Center, the primary source of statewide training for HCPF and CDHS public assistance eligibility workers, reached out to our office to collaborate on an NVRA training for the workers that determine public assistance eligibility for CHP+, Medicaid, SNAP and TANF programs. This training is available on the HCPF website and provides greater exposure to the NVRA requirements at these offices statewide.

<b>HCPF</b>	
2018	1503
2019	1598
2020	1515

In addition to the online training, the Secretary of State's office sends a newsletter called *Registration Connections* to all NVRA coordinators. Registration Connections provides updates and information about NVRA activities and compliance.

## **SECTION 7 DATA COLLECTION**

The Secretary of State's office tracks Section 7 NVRA data through surveys and SCORE.

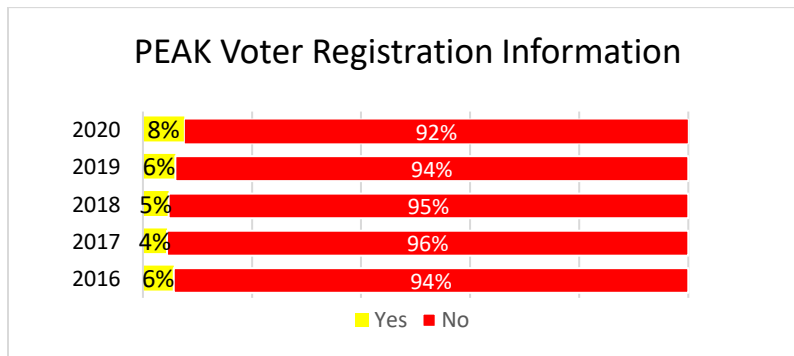
- The surveys are used to collect the information from the voter choice forms. Each month Voter Registration Agencies receive and return a survey. They are asked to respond by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month with data from the month before .
- The actual number of voter registration applications from Section 7 activity is tracked in SCORE.

The online voter registration address for NVRA Section 7 registrations ([www.govotecolorado.gov/NVRA](http://www.govotecolorado.gov/NVRA)) continues to be a source for offering voter registration. NVRA Section 7 agencies advertise the site to citizens accessing services. The web address is also provided to those using a computer station at a Voter

Registration Agency. The Secretary of State's office and the Department of Human Services worked together to include this web address in the Human Services web-based benefit application service called PEAK, but not without challenges. Specifically at the early stages of implementation the PEAK site underwent significant redevelopment, which resulted in a period of time that hits to the voter registration site went unreported. In 2015, 1,598 applicants visited the online voter registration site by clicking the link on the PEAK site.

The redevelopment of the PEAK site and the development of the PEAK Health mobile app. prompted a review of each for NVRA compliance. The Secretary of State's office, the Department of Human Services, and the Office of Information Technology reviewed the sites, identified compliance issues, and began a business requirements planning for development to the sites.

As a part of the redevelopment to PEAK and the development of the PEAK Health mobile app., and in compliance with the NVRA, before an applicant submits his or her benefits application the respective site, he or she either accepts or declines the opportunity to register to vote. Beginning in April 2016 PEAK began tracking and reporting responses. The following chart displays the cumulative percentage for each answer category for 2016-2020.



This data was retrieved from: <https://coloradopeak.secure.force.com/RPTSS>

## CONCLUSION

The Secretary of State's office continues to work closely with Voter Registration Agencies and driver's license offices to ensure that Colorado complies with the NVRA. In 2021, the Secretary of State's office will continue efforts to identify all offices in the state that need to comply with the NVRA. The office strives to offer training that is comprehensive and easy to access. And the office will maintain the agency relationships that are responsible for the high reporting and compliance rate from Voter Registration Agencies.