

STATE OF NEW YORK

3288--A

2019-2020 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

January 29, 2019

Introduced by M. of A. CARROLL, GALEF, COLTON, BENEDETTO, MOSLEY, D'URSO, BLAKE, NIOU, BICHOTTE, RICHARDSON, PHEFFER AMATO, JONES -- Multi-Sponsored by -- M. of A. ENGLEBRIGHT, HYNDMAN -- read once and referred to the Committee on Election Law -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the election law, in relation to providing for automatic voter registration at the department of motor vehicles and certain other state agencies, and allowing for the later implementation of automatic voter registration at other state agencies in the future

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Section 5-212 of the election law, as added by chapter 659 of the laws of 1994 and subdivisions 6 and 9 as amended by chapter 200 of the laws of 1996, is amended to read as follows:

§ 5-212. Motor vehicle registration. 1. In addition to any other method of voter registration provided for in this article, any qualified person ~~[may apply for registration and enrollment by application made simultaneously and integrated with]~~ who completes an application for a motor vehicle driver's license, a driver's license renewal or an identification card if such a card is issued by the department of motor vehicles in its normal course of business, shall automatically be registered to vote unless the person declines. Every qualified person who completes such an application shall be provided the opportunity to decline registration during the application process.

2. The department of motor vehicles, with the approval of the state board of elections, shall design ~~[a]~~ an electronic form or forms which shall, in addition to eliciting such information as may be required by the department of motor vehicles for a driver's license, a driver's license renewal, a change of address notification or an identification card, serve as an application for registration and enrollment, or a

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets ~~[-]~~ is old law to be omitted.

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1 registration necessitated by a change of residence. The cost of such
2 forms shall be borne by the department of motor vehicles.

3 3. The voter registration portion of such forms:

4 (a) shall not require any information that duplicates the information
5 required on the application for the driver license portion and shall
6 require only such additional information, including the applicant's
7 signature, as will enable election officials to assess the applicant's
8 eligibility to register to vote, prevent duplicate registration and to
9 administer voter registration and other parts of the election process.

10 (b) shall include a statement of the eligibility requirements for
11 voter registration and shall require the applicant to attest by his
12 signature that he meets those requirements under penalty of perjury.

13 (c) shall inform the applicant, in print identical to that used in the
14 attestation section of the following:

15 (i) voter eligibility requirements;

16 (ii) penalties for submission of false registration application;

17 (iii) that the office where applicant registers shall remain confiden-
18 tial and the information be used only for voter registration purposes;

19 (iv) if the applicant declines to register, his declination shall
20 remain confidential and be used only for voter registration purposes;

21 4. Included on the form [~~or on a separate form~~] shall be:

22 (a) [~~the question, "If you are not registered to vote where you live~~
23 ~~now, would you like to apply to register here today?"~~] a notice that if
24 the applicant is eligible to register to vote, the information provided
25 on the application will be used to register the applicant to vote, or to
26 update the applicant's registration, unless the applicant declines.

27 (b) [~~boxes~~] a box for the applicant to check to indicate [~~whether~~] if
28 the applicant would like to [~~register or~~] decline to register to vote.

29 (c) [~~the statement in prominent type, "IF YOU DO NOT CHECK EITHER BOX,~~
30 ~~YOU WILL BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE DECIDED NOT TO REGISTER TO VOTE AT THIS~~
31 ~~TIME."~~

32 (d) the statement, "If you would like help in filling out the [~~voter~~
33 ~~registration~~] application form, we will help you. The decision whether
34 to seek or accept help is yours. You may fill out the application form
35 in private."

36 [~~(e)~~] (d) the statement, "If you believe that someone has interfered
37 with your right to register or decline to register to vote, your right
38 to privacy in deciding whether to register or in applying to register to
39 vote, or your right to choose your own political party or other politi-
40 cal preference, you may file a complaint with the state board of
41 elections (address and toll free telephone number)."

42 [~~(f)~~] (e) a toll free number at the state board of elections that can
43 be called for answers to registration questions.

44 (f) a notice that an applicant who is a victim of domestic violence or
45 stalking may decline the automatic voter registration and contact the
46 state board of elections for assistance in voting without disclosing
47 their address.

48 5. The form containing the declination to register to vote shall be
49 retained by the department of motor vehicles for the same period of time
50 as such department retains the accompanying application for services or
51 for such shorter period of time as may be approved by the state board of
52 elections.

53 6. The department of motor vehicles shall promptly transmit electron-
54 ically that portion of the form which constitutes the completed applica-
55 tion for registration or change of address form to the [~~appropriate~~]
56 state board of elections [~~not later than ten days after receipt except~~

~~that all such completed applications and forms received by the department between the thirtieth and twenty fifth day before an election shall be transmitted in such manner and at such time as to assure their receipt by such board of elections not later than the twentieth day before such election].~~ All transmittals shall include ~~[original signatures]~~ an image of the applicant's signature.

7. Completed application forms received by the department of motor vehicles not later than the twenty-fifth day before the next ensuing primary, general or special election ~~[and transmitted by such department to the appropriate board of elections so that they are received not later than the twentieth day before such election]~~ shall entitle the applicant to vote in such election provided the board determines that the applicant is otherwise qualified.

8. Disclosure of voter registration information, including a declination to register, by the department of motor vehicles, its agents or employees, for other than voter registration purposes, shall be deemed an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy pursuant to the provisions of subdivision two of section eighty-nine of the public officers law and shall constitute a violation of this chapter.

9. Application forms shall be processed by the board of elections in the manner prescribed by section 5-210 of this title or, if the applicant is already registered to vote from another address in such county or city, in the manner prescribed by section 5-208 of this title. The board shall send the appropriate notice of approval or rejection as required by either subdivision nine of such section 5-210 or subdivision five of such section 5-208.

10. Strict neutrality with respect to a person's party enrollment shall be maintained and all persons seeking voter registration forms and information shall be advised that government services are not conditioned on being registered to vote.

11. No statement shall be made nor any action taken to discourage the applicant from registering to vote.

12. The department of motor vehicles shall provide to each person who chooses to register to vote the same level of assistance provided to persons in connection with the completion of the agency's own forms, unless such person refuses such assistance.

13. The state board shall adopt such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the requirements of this section. The board shall also adopt such rules and regulations as may be necessary to require county boards and the department of motor vehicles to provide the state board with such information and data as the board deems necessary to assess compliance with this section and to compile such statistics as may be required by the federal elections commission.

14. The state board shall develop and distribute public information and promotional materials relating to the purposes and implementation of this program.

15. The state board shall prepare and distribute to the department of motor vehicles written instructions as to the implementation of the program and shall be responsible for establishing training programs for employees of the department of motor vehicles involved in such program.

16. The commissioner of motor vehicles shall take all actions which are necessary and proper for the implementation of this section. The commissioner of motor vehicles shall designate one person within the agency as the agency voter registration coordinator who will, under the direction of the state board of elections, be responsible for the voter registration program in such agency.

1 17. If a person who is not entitled to vote becomes registered to vote
2 pursuant to this section, that person shall be presumed to have regis-
3 tered with official authorization, the registration shall not be consid-
4 ered as evidence of a claim to citizenship, and the person shall not be
5 deemed to have committed a crime under section 5-210 of this title. This
6 subdivision shall not apply to a person who knowingly and willfully
7 makes a false statement to effectuate voter registration.

8 § 2. The election law is amended by adding a new section 5-209 to read
9 as follows:

10 § 5-209. Automatic voter registration. 1. In addition to any other
11 method of voter registration provided for in this article, any qualified
12 person who completes an application for services or assistance at an
13 automatic voter registration agency shall automatically be registered to
14 vote unless the person declines. Every qualified person who completes
15 such an application shall be provided the opportunity to decline regis-
16 tration during the application process.

17 2. For purposes of this section, an automatic voter registration agen-
18 cy shall mean:

19 (a) the department of health; and

20 (b) any other state agency that the governor designates, provided that
21 the governor may only designate an agency as an automatic voter regis-
22 tration agency after verifying that the agency collects information or
23 documents that would provide proof of eligibility to vote.

24 3. For any automatic voter registration agency that is a participating
25 agency under section 5-211 of this title, the procedures set forth in
26 this section shall replace the procedures for registration at that agen-
27 cy set forth in such section. The voter registration coordinator desig-
28 nated by each agency shall remain responsible for voter registration in
29 such agency.

30 4. Each year, the governor shall conduct a review of each participat-
31 ing agency under section 5-211 of this title not already designated as
32 an automatic voter registration agency in order to determine whether
33 such designation is appropriate. The governor shall designate each
34 participating agency that collects information or documents that would
35 provide proof of eligibility to vote unless the board determines that
36 there are compelling reasons why automatic voter registration is not
37 feasible at the agency. If the governor should determine that there are
38 compelling reasons why automatic voter registration is not feasible at
39 an agency, the governor shall prepare a report explaining those reasons
40 to the legislature by the end of the calendar year in which that deter-
41 mination is made.

42 5. Automatic voter registration agencies, with the approval of the
43 state board of elections, shall each design an electronic form or forms
44 which shall, in addition to eliciting such information as may be
45 required by each department for an application for services or assist-
46 ance, serve as an application for registration and enrollment, or a
47 registration necessitated by a change of residence. Each agency shall
48 bear the cost of its own forms.

49 6. The voter registration portion of such forms:

50 (a) shall not require any information that duplicates the information
51 required on the application for services or assistance from the agency
52 and shall require only such additional information as will enable
53 election officials to assess the applicant's eligibility to register to
54 vote, prevent duplicate registration and to administer voter registra-
55 tion and other parts of the election process;

1 (b) shall include a statement of the eligibility requirements for
2 voter registration and shall require the applicant to attest by his
3 signature that he meets those requirements under penalty of perjury; and

4 (c) shall inform the applicant, in print identical to that used in the
5 attestation section of the following:

6 (i) voter eligibility requirements;

7 (ii) penalties for submission of false registration application;

8 (iii) that the office where applicant registers shall remain confiden-
9 tial and the information be used only for voter registration purposes;
10 and

11 (iv) if the applicant declines to register, the declination shall
12 remain confidential and be used only for voter registration purposes.

13 7. Included on the form shall be:

14 (a) a notice that if the applicant is eligible to register to vote,
15 the information provided on the application will be used to register the
16 applicant to vote, or to update the applicant's registration, unless the
17 applicant declines;

18 (b) a box for the applicant to check to indicate that the applicant
19 would like to decline to register to vote;

20 (c) the statement, "If you would like help in filling out the applica-
21 tion form, we will help you. The decision whether to seek or accept
22 help is yours. You may fill out the application form in private.";

23 (d) the statement, "applying to register or declining to register to
24 vote will not affect the amount of assistance that you will be provided
25 by this agency.";

26 (e) the statement, "If you believe that someone has interfered with
27 your right to register or decline to register to vote, your right to
28 privacy in deciding whether to register or in applying to register to
29 vote, or your right to choose your own political party or other poli-
30 tical preference, you may file a complaint with the state board of
31 elections (address and toll free telephone number).";

32 (f) a toll free number at the state board of elections that can be
33 called for answers to registration questions; and

34 (g) a notice that an applicant who is a victim of domestic violence or
35 stalking may decline the automatic voter registration and contact the
36 state board of elections for assistance in voting without disclosing
37 their address.

38 8. The form containing the declination to register to vote shall be
39 retained by the agency for the same period of time as such department
40 retains the accompanying application for services or assistance or for
41 such shorter period of time as may be approved by the state board of
42 elections.

43 9. Automatic voter registration agencies shall each promptly transmit
44 electronically that portion of the form which constitutes the completed
45 application for registration or change of address form to the state
46 board of elections. All transmittals shall include an image of the
47 applicant's signature.

48 10. Completed application forms received by an automatic voter regis-
49 tration agency not later than the twenty-fifth day before the next ensu-
50 ing primary, general or special election shall entitle the applicant to
51 vote in such election provided the board determines that the applicant
52 is otherwise qualified.

53 11. Disclosure of voter registration information, including a declina-
54 tion to register, by an automatic voter registration agency, its agents
55 or employees, for other than voter registration purposes, shall be
56 deemed an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy pursuant to the

1 provisions of subdivision two of section eighty-nine of the public offi-
2 cers law and shall constitute a violation of this chapter.

3 12. Application forms shall be processed by the board of elections in
4 the manner prescribed by section 5-210 of this title or, if the appli-
5 cant is already registered to vote from another address in such county
6 or city, in the manner prescribed by section 5-208 of this title. The
7 board shall send the appropriate notice of approval or rejection as
8 required by either subdivision nine of such section 5-210 or subdivision
9 five of such section 5-208.

10 13. Strict neutrality with respect to a person's party enrollment
11 shall be maintained and all applicants for services or assistance shall
12 be advised that government services are not conditioned on being regis-
13 tered to vote.

14 14. No statement shall be made nor any action taken to discourage the
15 applicant from registering to vote.

16 15. Automatic voter registration agencies shall provide to each person
17 who chooses to register to vote the same level of assistance provided to
18 persons in connection with the completion of the agency's own forms,
19 unless such person refuses such assistance.

20 16. The state board shall adopt such rules and regulations as may be
21 necessary to carry out the requirements of this section. The board shall
22 also adopt such rules and regulations as may be necessary to require
23 county boards and automatic voter registration agencies to provide the
24 state board with such information and data as the board deems necessary
25 to assess compliance with this section and to compile such statistics as
26 may be required by the federal elections commission.

27 17. The state board shall develop and distribute public information
28 and promotional materials relating to the purposes and implementation of
29 this program.

30 18. The state board shall prepare and distribute to the automatic
31 voter registration agencies written instructions as to the implementa-
32 tion of the program and shall be responsible for establishing training
33 programs for employees of the automatic voter registration agencies
34 involved in such program.

35 19. If a person who is not entitled to vote becomes registered to vote
36 pursuant to this section, that person shall be presumed to have regis-
37 tered with official authorization, the registration shall not be consid-
38 ered as evidence of a claim to citizenship, and the person shall not be
39 deemed to have committed a crime under section 5-210 of this title. This
40 subdivision shall not apply to a person who knowingly and willfully
41 makes a false statement to effectuate voter registration.

42 § 3. This act shall take effect one year after it shall have become a
43 law.