

# NVRA AGENCY-BASED VOTER REGISTRATION IN COLORADO

*2011 ANNUAL REPORT*

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Voter registration opportunities for citizens receiving public assistance in Colorado in accordance with the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA)

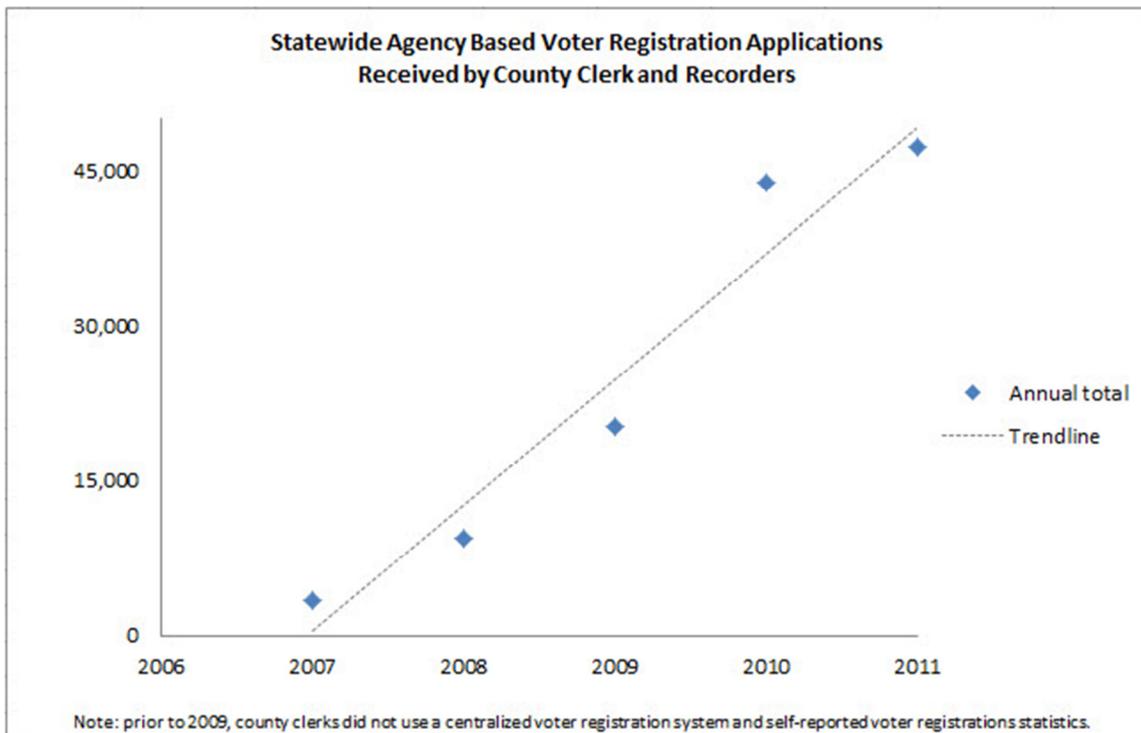


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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines procedures implemented in compliance with Section 7 of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). These procedures require each State to offer voter registration services at agencies providing public assistance.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the NVRA requires agencies to provide and accept voter registration applications from anyone who recertifies or renews benefits or services, changes their address related to their benefits or services, or applies for public assistance benefits or accommodation services.<sup>2</sup>

Colorado’s partnership between the Secretary of State’s office and covered agencies results in improved registration opportunities for voters. Because of Colorado’s focus on compliance and commitment to voter registration, applications generated through public assistance agencies in 2011 increased by 7.74% from 2010 and have increased more than 1,300% since 2007. In 2007, county clerks reportedly received 3,340 voter registration applications from covered agencies. In 2011, the number of applications reported was 47,199. Appendix A illustrates the number of voter registrations submitted by public assistance agencies between 2007 and 2011.



### Milestones

Fall 2007: Received notice of intent to sue

Winter 2007: Secretary of State conducted independent review

Spring 2008: New procedures and reporting implemented

Fall 2008: Statewide voter registration system (SCORE) implemented

Summer 2009: Received re-notice of intent to sue

Fall 2009: Began sending registration forms in renewal packets

Summer 2011: Integrated voter registration into Human Services web-based benefit application system (PEAK)

<sup>1</sup> 42 U.S.C. 1973gg-5(a)(1) and (3)

<sup>2</sup> See 42 U.S.C. 1973gg-5(a)(4)(A) and (a)(6)(A)

## COLORADO'S SECTION 7 COMPLIANCE

In the first quarter of 2008, the Secretary of State's office conducted an independent review of available voter registration data. The findings suggested the need for education. The Secretary of State's office identified key stakeholders and specific areas of non-compliance to develop a comprehensive mitigation plan. The plan addressed the need for improved communication and coordination with local agencies regarding their specific NVRA duties. The plan also called for the development of training materials and creation of a web-based tracking system to record voter registration statistics.

In fall of 2009, the Secretary of State's office—in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Human Services (DHS)—began mailing voter registration applications in monthly renewal packets to individuals who receive public assistance from DHS agencies. Every applicant now receives an opportunity to register to vote—or update his/her voter registration information—even if he or she does not appear in person at a local office. Additionally, this centralized mailing removes the burden from local DHS offices who were previously required to mail voter applications separately to each potential elector not applying in person for renewal. Approximately 50,000 voter registration applications are mailed each month. This mailing supplements, but does not supplant, the opportunity to register to vote when potential applicants apply for, or renew, services in person.

### COLORADO'S NVRA SECTION 7 SUCCESS

Colorado's improved Section 7 compliance is enhanced by the partnership between the Secretary of State's office, the Department of Human Services, the Women Infant and Children (WIC) program, and Colorado's publicly-funded colleges and universities. Stakeholders work together to increase awareness and improve compliance with Section 7.

The Secretary of State uses source codes to identify and track agency-based voter registration forms. Covered agencies also complete a monthly survey to report voter registration statistics... Appendix A shows how many agency-based voter registration forms were processed in each county during 2007-2011.

The Secretary of State implemented online voter registration in April 2010. The Secretary's office partnered with the DHS and the Office of Information Technology to integrate online voter registration with the DHS's web-based benefit application system, PEAK. The new online system directs applicants wishing to register to vote to [www.GoVoteColorado.com](http://www.GoVoteColorado.com), allowing applicants to register or update their voter information while applying for benefits. This streamlines agency-based voter registration procedures, promotes voter convenience, creates more accurate data, and reduces the amount of time needed for case managers to assist potential electors with completing voter registration applications. In addition, online voter registration allows applicants to complete the application in Spanish. The Secretary's office tracks statistical information in order to monitor the effectiveness of online voter registration at covered agencies.

To maintain the Colorado's Section 7 compliance, the Secretary of State contacted publicly-funded colleges and universities with offices that primarily serve students with disabilities. Following litigation in the State of New York<sup>3</sup>, the Secretary of State's office contacted these offices to provide training and information regarding Section 7 compliance. In 2010, the Secretary of State sent forms, posters, and other information to 23 colleges and universities not previously offering voter registration in offices serving students with disabilities.

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<sup>3</sup> *U.S. v. State of New York*, No. 5:04-CV-00428 (NAM/DEP) (N.D. N.Y. March 3, 2010).

In 2009, the Secretary of State transitioned agency staff training to a web-based environment. With this new system, training is consistent and easily accessible 24 hours a day, ensuring agency staffers are aware of their responsibilities regarding Section 7 compliance. Online training ensures that each agency in the state has convenient access to training materials... The Secretary of State's office continues to provide in-person training to agencies and colleges when requested.

The Secretary of State's office distributes a quarterly newsletter, *Registration Connections*, to provide additional communication to agencies and colleges. This newsletter includes information on NVRA requirements, election dates, instructions for online form ordering, and other topics relating to NVRA compliance.

## FUTURE CHALLENGES

Colorado's Section 7 compliance continues to improve, but the Secretary of State's office, the Department of Human Services, WIC, colleges and universities, and other public assistance agencies will continue to face challenges when offering voter registration. With increased employee turnover and limited staff and departmental resources, many agencies struggle not only to provide basic client services, but also to meet Section 7 compliance.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the challenges, voter registration opportunities have improved substantially. The statewide voter registration system, known as SCORE, provides a well-developed system of evaluation and tracking of voter registration applications transmitted from agencies to Colorado's county clerk and recorders. SCORE allows the state to compare the number of completed agency applications against the number of applications received by county clerk and recorders to identify and mitigate inconsistencies on an ongoing basis.

Despite the current and future challenges, the Secretary of State's office is committed to enhancement of voter registration opportunities for citizens applying for public assistance or disability services.

## CONCLUSION

The Secretary of State's office is committed to continuing its positive partnership with the Department of Human Services, WIC, local public assistance agencies, colleges, and other stakeholders to improve and maintain compliance with the NVRA.

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<sup>4</sup> In early 2012, the Secretary of State was notified that a vendor serving a covered-agency submitted approximately 88 voter applications to a county well after the established timeframes. The Secretary of State's Office investigated the matter, and spoke with the Governor's office to mitigate identified problems. Since then, the Secretary of State's office has noted a marked increase in calls and emails from agencies requesting voter applications and assistance with NVRA compliance.

**SECRETARY SCOTT GESSLER'S NVRA TEAM:**

**Christi Heppard-** Special Projects Coordinator

Christi joined the Office of the Secretary of State in 2005 and serves as the Training and Compliance Coordinator for the Elections Division, a task that includes oversight of NVRA administration and compliance. Prior to joining the Department of State, Christi was the Chief Deputy and Elections Administrator for Teller County, Colorado, where she served for 10 years. Christi may be contacted via email to [christi.heppard@sos.state.co.us](mailto:christi.heppard@sos.state.co.us).

**Lisa Doran-** NVRA Coordinator

Lisa serves as the NVRA Coordinator for the Office of the Secretary of State and is responsible for communication with covered agencies, collecting statistical data, and ensuring appropriate materials are prepared and distributed. Lisa joined the Department of State in 1999, after serving 13 years with the Arapahoe County Clerk's Office. Lisa may be contacted via email to [lisa.doran@sos.state.co.us](mailto:lisa.doran@sos.state.co.us).

**APPENDIX A**  
**VOTER REGISTRATION TABLES**  
*2007-2011*

Data presented in the following table depict information reported by County Clerks and Recorders, as reflected in the statewide voter registration database. While every effort has been made to ensure that accurate data is presented, in some cases data may contain anomalies. Contact the Secretary of State's office for more information about voter registration data.

# PUBLIC ASSISTANCE VOTER REGISTRATION DATA

Adams – Jefferson Counties

<b>Voter Registration Received From NVRA-Designated Agencies</b>					
<b>County</b>	<b>2007*</b>	<b>2008*</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Adams	729	283	1,368	2,858	3,026
Alamosa	66	139	82	140	98
Arapahoe	270	1,797	2,303	6,183	8,613
Archuleta	0	2	1	34	35
Baca	2	85	36	35	14
Bent	1	4	47	74	89
Boulder	6	3,575	422	1,401	1,237
Broomfield	385	82	152	181	172
Chaffee	6	11	21	80	71
Cheyenne	4	2	8	14	12
Clear Creek	4	4	35	45	49
Conejos	14	32	17	41	106
Costilla	16	5	86	70	947
Crowley	7	81	37	47	99
Custer	0	2	7	15	30
Delta	12	74	154	287	455
Denver	280	21	7,601	12,785	9,844
Dolores	0	5	17	47	48
Douglas	38	28	268	395	723
Eagle	2	65	199	493	97
El Paso	14	792	1,844	5,008	6,250
Elbert	327	15	73	140	48
Fremont	51	21	155	539	476
Garfield	45	18	65	152	283
Gilpin	0	2	19	38	20
Grand	0	42	102	43	46
Gunnison	0	112	41	61	95
Hinsdale	0	0	8	22	28
Huerfano	36	92	42	88	104
Jackson	0	3	7	0	137
Jefferson	19	87	1,553	5,345	4,428

\*Prior to 2009, county clerks did not use a centralized voter registration system and self-reported voter registrations statistics.

<b>Voter Registration Received From NVRA-Designated Agencies</b>					
<b>County</b>	<b>2007*</b>	<b>2008*</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Kiowa	0	1	0	19	14
Kit Carson	0	19	4	22	42
La Plata	4	43	285	474	683
Lake	3	2	25	63	39
Larimer	527	462	570	860	758
Las Animas	0	20	50	114	111
Lincoln	98	13	50	55	42
Logan	22	27	139	155	324
Mesa	0	118	282	749	1,243
Mineral	0	0	0	4	2
Moffat	0	64	55	119	130
Montezuma	0	44	215	262	173
Montrose	3	18	144	315	302
Morgan	5	68	111	134	137
Otero	20	58	33	93	278
Ouray	0	31	29	24	10
Park	15	6	47	104	116
Phillips	85	37	17	42	14
Pitkin	0	7	17	12	33
Prowers	29	36	47	49	100
Pueblo	101	100	210	1,374	1,352
Rio Blanco	0	17	13	22	7
Rio Grande	0	111	97	200	183
Routt	0	3	39	59	76
Saguache	3	98	28	105	96
San Juan	0	0	10	10	2
San Miguel	76	8	44	26	67
Sedgwick	9	14	8	9	3
Summit	0	39	246	182	210
Teller	0	102	76	108	351
Washington	5	8	18	16	62
Weld	0	35	405	1,290	2,477
Yuma	1	390	101	77	82
<b>Statewide Totals By Year</b>	<b>3,340</b>	<b>9,480</b>	<b>20,185</b>	<b>43,808</b>	<b>47,199</b>

\*Prior to 2009, county clerks did not use a centralized voter registration system and self-reported voter registrations statistics.