

Deploying Online Voter Registration at Community Events

With an increasing number of states adopting online voter registration portals in recent years, community organizations like the League of Women Voters are taking advantage of widely available technology in order to help voters complete the registration process on the spot at community events, in schools, and on their way to work. Online voter registration reduces costs and streamlines the administrative burden on voters, those of us who serve them and local elections officials. It can also dramatically increase the number of voter registration applications that are successfully processed by local elections officials. At the same time, it raises new questions about how best to deploy technology for maximum effect.

Consider these questions if your group is planning to use online registration voter registration at a community event:



- **Does the venue and expected volume of people make sense for online technology?**
 - **Is your location Wi-Fi enabled?** Can it reliably handle multiple devices at once?
 - **Do you have enough tablets/computers/smartphones** to handle the potential demand for voter registration? *For example: a crowded high school classroom with only one available computer is probably NOT a great fit for an online voter registration experiment. But how about partnering with a local community health center whose employees have ready internet access AND an influx of clients? Or heading to a farmers' market with five volunteer, each equipped with a compatible device?*
 - **Will the screen of your devices be visible in bright sunlight (if outside)?** If not, does your League have a tent or a more shady option?

- **How mobile-friendly is the online tool?**

Does your state's tool work completely and efficiently on various devices, or only on a desktop computer? Test it out ahead of time!



- **How inclusive is the online tool?**

In some states, online voter registration tools currently only accept applicants who possess a current state driver's license and/or a learner's permit; thus, many potential voters may not be able to use the online tool and will instead need a traditional paper form or a tool like the one available at www.vote411.org/register (see below).

- **How comfortable are your volunteers with the online tool?**

As you would before any voter registration drive, make sure your team takes some time to practice using the online registration system in order to ensure your volunteers are comfortable answering questions and navigating the technology.

- **How will you follow-up with voters?** Can you ask registrants to "Like" your Facebook page (or ask them to "Like" the League's VOTE411 Facebook page) on the spot? Fill out a [sign-up sheet](#) to receive emails from you? Hand out educational materials including your contact information? All of these go a long way toward ensuring voters have the information they need to participate. Please note: new voters should only be contacted about election information unless they have specifically signed up to receive other kinds of information from you (such as fundraising emails or action alerts).

Key Reminders:

- [Review the rules governing voter registration drives in your state](#). Contact LWVUS if you need help. If you are using paper forms in addition to online technology to help voter register, be mindful of any requirements to turn in forms in a certain timeframe.
- Remember: a voter may need to use a paper form if he/she does not have the identification required by your state's online tool, or if they do not have an active email address. **ASK if they have the required identification and an email address before they start the process.**
- As an alternative to your state's online portal, consider promoting the **League's national online voter registration tool** at www.VOTE411.org/register, which provides a mobile-friendly platform for voters from any state to fill out a voter registration form online. In most states, the system will generate a printable PDF of a voter's completed voter registration application as well as send the applicant an email copy of the PDF, which

they must print, sign and mail in to the elections official. This option could work well if your state does not have an online voter registration system that is available to all voters (including those without a driver's license) as well as at events where a printer will be available.

- Always ensure you have an adequate supply of **back-up paper registration forms** (or comfort using the www.VOTE411.org/register tool) should any logistical or technological challenge arise.
- **Remain flexible.** You'll no doubt think of newer, better ways to deploy online technology as you go. Stay flexible and open to suggestions from your "front line" of volunteers.
- **Be mindful of any restrictions** on providing assistance to registrants. In some states, there may be restrictions on voter registration volunteers directly assisting voters in filling out an online form (for example, typing in the information for someone who is unfamiliar using mobile technology). In that case, it may be more appropriate to provide a paper form to the voter and provide instructions on filling it out.
- **Stand by to help.** Volunteers should stay close by in order to help voters navigate the system and complete the process.



LWVEF gratefully acknowledges Rock the Vote and New Organizing Institute for their 2012 work to explore the use of online voter registration in traditional in-person voter registration drives.