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DIRECTIVE 2016-52

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To: All County Boards of Elections
Directors, Deputy Directors, and Board Members

Re: Implementation of Online Voter Registration

BACKGROUND

As authorized by Substitute Senate Bill 63, the Ohio Secretary of State's Office will begin offering Ohioans the ability to register to vote online on January 1, 2017.¹ The Secretary of State's Online Voter Registration (OLVR) system allows an applicant to securely and efficiently submit a voter registration application online to the Secretary of State's Office.

In order to use OLVR, an applicant must have a valid Ohio driver's license or state identification card. Each applicant is required to provide the following information: his or her name; address; date of birth; and the last four digits of his or her Social Security number and Ohio driver's license or state identification number.² The information entered by the applicant must be consistent with the applicant's BMV information.³ With the applicant's consent, the Ohio Secretary of State's Office obtains the applicant's signature from the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV).⁴ Any applicant who does not have an Ohio driver's license or state identification card or who enters information that is inconsistent with what is on file with the BMV is prompted to complete, print, and sign a voter registration form.

INSTRUCTIONS

I. PROCESSING

The OLVR system will function in conjunction with the current Online Change of Address system. Like the current online change of address system, an XML packet containing all of the required information entered by the applicant and the applicant's signature will be sent from the OLVR system to the county's voter registration system (VRS) for each new registration.

As with changes of address passed down through the current Online Change of Address system, each county's VRS allows the board of elections to review the information contained in each XML packet and to accept it into its VRS.

¹ Sub. S.B. 63 (131st General Assembly); <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA131-SB-63>.

² R.C. 3503.20(A)(2)(a).

³ R.C. 3503.20(A)(2)(b).

⁴ R.C. 3503.20(B) & (D)(6).

II. TIMELINE

Each board of elections must access the system and process (i.e., accept or reject) all records into its VRS at least once each workday. Beginning the 60th day before any election and through the close of registration for that election, each board of elections must access the system and process all records at least twice every workday.⁵

III. PROBLEMATIC RECORDS: REJECTION, WRONG COUNTY, OR NON-CONFORMING STREET NAMES

As explained in [Chapter 3, Section 1.08, of the Election Official Manual](#) for the Online Change of Address System, in the unusual circumstance that the processing of online records results in a rejection of the record from a board's VRS, you must:

- Document the reason for the rejection in the VRS, carefully following the instructions provided by your vendor for documenting a rejection;
- Contact the voter by first-class U.S. mail, phone, or e-mail if that information was provided and contained in the XML packet, and inform him or her of the need to provide complete information; and
- Contact the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office via e-mail at (SWVRD@OhioSecretaryofState.gov).

Similar to a paper registration form, if an otherwise complete OLVR or change of address is timely submitted to the wrong county (as a result of the voter entering the incorrect county), it is still a valid registration or change of address and must be treated as such. A board of elections that rejects a record because the voter's address is not in the county must contact the Secretary of State's Office via e-mail at (SWVRD@OhioSecretaryofState.gov) within 24 hours of the rejection, so the Secretary of State's Office can redirect the record to the correct county.

Additionally, submission by a voter of a valid, in-county street address that contains a street name not found in the board's street/road table must not be rejected. Instead, it must be amended by the board of elections to conform to the county's street/road table.

Example: Submission of "1234 State Route 161" when the board's street table names that road "East Dublin-Granville Road" must not be rejected as invalid.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGMENT CARDS

Boards of elections must issue acknowledgment cards at least once per week. This weekly batch of acknowledgment cards must include all online voter registrations and changes of address, as well as traditional paper voter registration forms (for new registrations, changes of address, and changes of name) received during the week before the batch run and/or mail date.⁶

⁵ [Chapter 3, Section 1.08, of the Election Official Manual](#).

⁶ [Chapter 3, Section 1.08, of the Election Official Manual](#).

V. WIDGET PLACEMENT

During the first week of January, each board of elections must place on its website an updated widget developed by the Secretary of State's Office, so any voter accessing the county board of elections' website seeking to register to vote or change his or her address may be easily redirected to the online change of address portal. Secretary of State Widgets are online at <http://www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/publications/Widgets.aspx>.

VI. REPORTING

A new registration submitted through the Secretary of State's OLVR system is considered a registration submitted via the internet and must be tracked as such for purposes of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Survey. Boards of elections must track new online registrations in a unique category. Boards should also continue to track duplicate registration transactions to comply with EAC reporting requirements.

If you have questions regarding this Directive, please contact the Secretary of State's elections counsel assigned to your county.

Sincerely,



Jon Husted