

National Voter Registration Act Manual for Covered Agencies

Published by

Elections Division
255 Capitol St NE Suite 501
Salem OR 97310-0722

 503 986 1518
fax 503 373 7414
Voice Relay:
1 800 735 2900
www.OregonVotes.gov



2015

Secretary of State
Jeanne P. Atkins

Contents

Getting Started	3
Covered Agencies	4
Roles and Responsibilities	4
NVRA Requirements	5
Other Important Information	6
Tips for Completing	
Registration Forms	6
FAQ: Voting in Oregon	8

Getting Started

This manual instructs covered sites in how to comply with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA).

NVRA affects the Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division of the Oregon Department of Transportation (DMV) and health and human service agencies like the Oregon Health Authority and the Department of Human Services. It requires these agencies to incorporate voter registration into their core services.

While some clients may be registered, it is important to continue to provide voter registration in compliance with NVRA. Under Oregon's vote-by-mail system, elections officials require up-to-date address information, to ensure that ballots are mailed to the correct addresses.

For assistance, contact:

Elections Division
255 Capitol St NE Suite 501
Salem OR 97310

 **503 986 1518**

 **1 866 673 VOTE/673 8683**
se habla español

fax 503 373 7414

 **elec-reports.sos@state.or.us**
www.OregonVotes.gov

1 800 735 2900
Relay service for the hearing impaired

County Elections Offices
sos.oregon.gov/county

Icons Used in this Manual



alert icon

indicates alert; warning; attention needed



deadline icon

indicates a deadline



form icon

indicates a reference to a form



info icon

indicates additional information



search icon

indicates information located elsewhere

Recent Policy Guidelines

The U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) provides guidance on how states must implement NVRA. Recent litigation clarified a number of NVRA's provisions. Changes to the NVRA manual reflect the most current understanding of the law.



Failure to comply may result in USDOJ audits or litigation.



NVRA has provisions giving any citizen the right to sue an agency for not offering him or her the chance to register to vote.

Covered Agencies

NVRA uses two criteria to designate voter registration agencies. First, any agency that licenses drivers must comply. Second, any agency that provides public assistance or administers state-funded services for people with disabilities must comply. The Secretary of State retains the authority to designate any state agency as a voter registration agency. Covered agencies include:

- Division of Motor Vehicles
- Department of Human Services
- Oregon Health Authority
- Commission for the Blind
- Oregon University System
- Armed Forces recruitment offices operated by the U.S. Department of Defense

Local and federal governmental entities may opt in to NVRA. Additionally, contractors that enroll Oregonians for public assistance may need to follow NVRA.

Roles and Responsibilities

Designated voter registration agencies are responsible for implementing NVRA.

In addition, your agency must choose a NVRA Coordinator and Site Coordinators for each field office to communicate reminders, deadlines and changes in policy and procedure. Having an up-to-date NVRA Site Coordinator list is vital.

Agency and division NVRA Coordinators are responsible for:

- Maintaining extensive knowledge of NVRA and relevant procedures
- Participating in quarterly check-in meetings with colleagues and the Secretary of State
- Resolving questions about NVRA compliance with division leadership and the Secretary of State
- Maintaining an accurate and up-to-date list of NVRA Site Coordinators
- Monitoring and communicating any changes in statute, rule or policy to NVRA Site Coordinators

NVRA Site Coordinators are responsible for:

- Maintaining knowledge of relevant procedures
- Clarifying NVRA provisions for colleagues at your field office
- Monitoring NVRA activity
- Communicating any changes in statute, rule or policy to colleagues
- Ordering voter registration forms and other printed material from Publications and Design
- Forwarding completed voter registration forms to county elections offices within 5 calendar days
- Using the online SEL 504 to report the number of completed voter registration forms to the Secretary of State monthly.
- Reporting issues to agency-wide NVRA Coordinators
- Updating NVRA Coordinator of any changes to NVRA Site Coordinators



If there is a new NVRA Site Coordinator, fill out an [SEL 504c](#) and send it to the Secretary of State and your NVRA Coordinator.

If you are uncertain of who your NVRA Coordinator is, please contact the Secretary of State at: elec-reports.sos@state.or.us or (503) 986-1518.

NVRA Requirements

1 Register clients to vote

State agencies must provide clients the opportunity to register to vote when they:

- apply for benefits
- renew or recertify their benefits
- submit change of address information
- submit change of name information



According to NVRA, you must ask the same question of every person when providing voter registration. You must ask:

“If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to apply to register to vote here today?”

These requirements are **not** limited to situations where a client physically appears in your office. When clients transact business online, through the mail or over the phone, you must provide your client the opportunity to register or update voter information.



DHS and OHA must order forms through the Field Branch Ordering System (FBOS). If you do not have access to FBOS please order using the Supplemental - Forms Order Sheet DHS|OHA 8100 [here](#).

NVRA Site Coordinators can order [SEL 503s](#) -- voter registration forms with a tear-away declination -- from the Publications and Design Section of DHS and OHA Shared Services in either English or Spanish. If you need any assistance with an order, you can contact the Distribution and Storage Section at (503) 373-1342 for assistance.

2 Declinations

Declination forms serve as a receipt of transaction. Every time you provide someone the opportunity to register to vote, you must provide him or her with a declination form. The people should answer the question, “If you are not register to vote where you live now, would you like to register here today?” by checking yes or no.

Checking “yes” means the person wants to register.

Checking “no” means the person does not want to register.

If a person does not check a box, a voter registration form must still be offered.



Every declination must also be signed and dated.

Declination forms must be retained for 24 months.

They are public records and may be audited by the USDOJ to determine a state’s NVRA compliance.

3 Review

You must provide the same amount of assistance completing voter registration applications as you would any of your own forms.

Review them for legibility, accuracy and completeness before forwarding them to your Site Coordinator.

A Completed Voter Registration Must Include:

Qualifications	Be a US citizen Be at least 17 years-old
Personal Information	Name Residence address Date of Birth Mailing address (if different from residence address)
Driver License	Oregon Driver’s License, permit or ID number If a client doesn’t have a valid Oregon ID from the DMV, provide the last four digits of SSN
Political Party	May choose one
Signature	Applications without signatures will be rejected.

Questions about completing voter registration forms should be directed to your NVRA Site Coordinator or your local elections office. Answers to frequently asked questions are included in the back of this manual.

4 Date Stamp

You must date stamp each voter registration form.

5 Forward Forms

Return voter registration forms to your NVRA Site Coordinator.

The NVRA Site Coordinator will forward applications to your local elections office within five calendar days of receiving the voter registration application.

Return forms in the special marked envelopes. This indicates that any enclosed voter registration forms originated from a covered agency.



Holding onto voter registration forms beyond five calendar days will result in fines. Return completed forms to an elections official as soon as possible or at the end of every business week.

6 Monthly Reports

NVRA Site Coordinators must report the number of forms forwarded to county elections offices. These reports must be made at least monthly to the Secretary of State.

Report using the online form [SEL 504](https://apps.state.or.us/Forms/Served/se1504.pdf), available at: <https://apps.state.or.us/Forms/Served/se1504.pdf>

Please include your Agency ID number. Your agency or division-wide NVRA Coordinator can provide you with that number.

Other Important Information

Enforcement

While the USDOJ Civil Rights Division has jurisdiction to enforce NVRA, Oregonians also have a private right of action and may request public records or declination forms in order to pursue litigation. Third-party advocacy groups have litigated NVRA compliance in other states.

Assistance

You must treat voter registration like any other process or benefit application. You are required by federal law to provide the same amount of assistance registering clients to vote as you provide to fill out other forms.

Confidentiality

NVRA and administrative rules requires covered agencies to protect the confidentiality of a client’s decision to register.

Political Influence

Pursuant to ORS 247.208(3), public officials shall not influence or attempt to influence clients’ political party preference or vote in any particular manner. You should not display or wear anything that supports or opposes political parties, candidates and ballot measures. Do not allow a client’s decision about registration or party affiliation to change the amount of assistance you offer that client.

Incomplete Forms

Although public officials are responsible for ensuring voter registration forms are complete, accidents happen. If any of the required information is left blank, the application must still be turned in within five calendar days. County elections officials will contact the voter and collect any missing information.

Tips for Completing Registration Forms

Below are answers to common questions about registering to vote in Oregon.

Eligibility

Do not try to determine a client’s eligibility. That is elections officials’ responsibility; however, do not provide voter registration opportunities to people who have indicated that they are not citizens.

Voter Registration Deadlines

Oregon’s Constitution requires voters to be registered no later than “the 21st day immediately preceding the election” in order to vote in that election. Please keep these deadlines in mind as you process forms and forward applications to county elections officials. Remember, always date stamp the voter registration card.



Election	Registration Deadline
Special Election	February 17, 2015
May Election	April 28, 2015
Special Election	August 25, 2015
November Election	October 13, 2015

Also note that voters may continuously update their addresses until 8PM on Election Day; however, Oregonians who register to vote for the first time after 21 days before an election will be unable to vote in that election.

Political Party Choice

In order to vote for candidates for partisan offices at primary elections, a voter must be affiliated with that political party. Political parties may also opt to allow unaffiliated voters to join in their primary.

If clients ask for more information on political parties, it is best to refer them to the political parties directly and allow the parties to speak for themselves. Let clients know that they have the option to register as an unaffiliated voter and update their information later at oregonvotes.gov.

Felony Convictions

Oregonians with felony convictions have their voting rights automatically restored upon release from custody.

Homeless Voters

A homeless client may register to vote. On the voter registration form he or she must give an identifiable description of his or her physical location. A homeless client may also list his or her county elections office as their mailing address and pick up their ballots there.

Safety Concerns

If a person has safety concerns, he or she can still register and prevent registration information from becoming public by filling out an [exemption form](#), SEL 550. All decisions about making voter information private take place at the county level.

Signature Stamp

A person with a disability who is unable to sign the voter registration form may use a signature stamp or other indicator of the person's signature. When this option is exercised, a person must complete an [SEL 540](#) in order to attest that he or she is unable to sign due to a disability.

Power of attorney cannot be used for voter registration.

Competence

Under Oregon's constitution, mental competency is not a prerequisite to vote. Only a court order can interfere with the right to vote. If you work with people with cognitive or developmental disabilities, assume nothing prevents them from voting. You must provide all clients the opportunity to register

Jury Duty

Registering to vote rarely enters a person into the jury pool. The Judiciary Department uses all driver and state ID information in addition to voter registration to compile the master jury list. If your client already has an Oregon driver's license or state ID, he or she may already be included in the master jury list.

FAQ: Voting in Oregon

How will voters know they're registered?

The county elections office will mail a voter notification card to let your client know the office accepted the registration. If a person does not receive a voter notification card within 30 days after submitting a completed voter registration card, he or she should contact the county elections office. The two easiest ways to check registration status are by contacting the appropriate county elections office, or online at OregonVotes.gov.

When should voters receive their ballots?

Between the 20 and 14 days before the election the county elections office will automatically mail a ballot to each registered voter who is eligible to vote in that election.

Voters can check if their ballots have been mailed at OregonVotes.gov.

Where do voters return their ballots?

After completing the ballot and signing the return identification envelope, a voter may: mail the ballot with the appropriate postage, drop the ballot off at a designated "drop site," or take the ballot to a county elections office. Voters may drop off their ballots at any official location in Oregon, not just in their home counties. Locations of the drop sites are designated by the county elections official. The location of drop sites may be printed in your state or county voters' pamphlet or you may contact your county elections office to find the nearest drop site to you.

Voters can check if their ballots have been received by their county elections offices at OregonVotes.gov.

17 year-olds can register to vote. Will they receive a ballot?

While Oregon state law allows for 17 year-olds to register to vote, they will not receive ballots until they turn 18.



Forms

SEL 503

Voter Registration Card with
Declination

SEL 503d

Voter Registration Declination Only

SEL 504c

NVRA Site Coordinator Change Form

SEL 550

Application to Exempt Residence
Address from Disclosure as a Public
Record

SEL 503a

Spanish Voter Registration Card with
Declination

SEL 540

Signature Stamp Attestation



All required forms are available online at
www.OregonVotes.gov.

DHA and OHA should use the FBOS system
(see p. 5 of this manual).