
Automatic Voter Registration

Program Evaluation Description

December 2025

BACKGROUND

In 2023, the Minnesota Legislature passed a law to automatically register eligible individuals to vote when they apply for a driver's license or ID card.¹ Previously, individuals could choose whether to register to vote when applying for a driver's license or ID card.

Under the automatic voter registration (AVR) program, only individuals who provide proof of U.S. citizenship during a transaction with a state driver's license office may be automatically registered to vote.

The Department of Public Safety (DPS), which oversees the state's driver's license offices, is responsible for transmitting the records of AVR-eligible individuals to the Office of the Secretary of State (OSS). OSS is responsible for maintaining the state's centralized voter registration database. Via that database, OSS transmits the records of AVR-eligible drivers to individual counties, which are responsible for ultimately registering individuals to vote.

In mid-2024, a few months after DPS rolled out the AVR program, concerns began to emerge about its implementation. Notably, questions were raised about whether driver's license office staff were correctly categorizing documents that did or did not prove U.S. citizenship. In response to these concerns, DPS implemented process changes and audited a sample of the AVR records that it had already sent to OSS.

EVALUATION ISSUES

1. To what extent has DPS effectively implemented AVR?
2. What impact has AVR had on Minnesota's voter registration system?

DISCUSSION

We plan to use a variety of research methods to conduct this evaluation. We will review state laws as well as DPS and OSS policies and procedures for AVR. We will also interview agency staff and survey representatives from all Minnesota counties.

Additionally, through an analysis of state driver and voter registration records, we will determine how many individuals have been newly registered via AVR. We will not, however, be able to isolate the impact of AVR on Minnesota's overall voter registration rate.

Finally, we will review a sample of driver records to determine whether DPS complied with state law when determining whether to forward those records to OSS.

OLA is currently working on a separate, broader evaluation of Minnesota's voter registration system. That evaluation, which is expected to be completed in spring 2026, focuses on the work of OSS and counties. This evaluation will focus on the work of DPS as it relates to AVR specifically.

This evaluation is scheduled to be completed in summer 2026. For additional information, contact Laura Schwartz at Laura.Schwartz@state.mn.us or 651-296-1232.

¹ *Laws of Minnesota* 2023, chapter 34, art. 1, sec. 9, codified as *Minnesota Statutes* 2025, 201.161.