



Voter Registration

The Office of the Secretary of State has largely established adequate procedures for processing and maintaining voter registration records; however, we found some instances in which counties did not update records accurately.

Report Summary

New Applications and Voter Verification

To process a voter registration application, counties must enter application information into the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) that the Office of the Secretary of State (OSS) maintains. OSS and counties use the information to verify applicants' identities and residencies. We analyzed SVRS data on new voter registration applications submitted in Summer/Fall 2024.

- OSS has generally established appropriate procedures that counties are expected to follow when processing voter registration applications. (p. 15)
- While counties processed 96 percent of new voter registration applications we reviewed within the time frames established in law, they were often late to process applications received within 20 days of an election. (p. 19)

Recommendation ► Counties should process all voter registration applications within the time frames established by law. (p. 19)

- Counties followed the *identity* verification process correctly for 99.9 percent of applicants, most of whom were verified without county involvement; among the remaining applicants, counties accurately assigned voter statuses in 98 percent of cases we reviewed. (p. 23)
- Counties followed the *residency* verification process correctly for 99 percent of applicants, most of whom were verified entirely automatically. Among the applicants counties manually reviewed, counties either inaccurately assigned voter statuses or failed to document their rationale in more than one-third of the cases we reviewed. (p. 30)

Recommendation ► Counties should (1) follow state law and OSS guidance when processing returned residency verification notices (known as postal verification cards or PVCs) and, (2) accurately document all returned PVCs in SVRS. (p. 31)

- While OSS's report on PVCs returned after an election may meet statutory requirements, the report offers limited value. (p. 35)

Background

As of January 2026, nearly 3.8 million individuals were registered to vote in Minnesota. Voter eligibility and registration requirements are determined by federal and state laws.

In Minnesota, the Office of the Secretary of State (OSS) and individual counties share voter registration responsibilities. OSS maintains the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) and supports counties; counties, for the most part, create and maintain voter registration records.

Processing voter registration applications involves confirming an applicant's identity, residency, and conformance with certain eligibility requirements. The order of the steps and the documents required to register vary by registration method.

When county election staff learn that a registered voter's life circumstances have changed, they must update SVRS as appropriate. This could mean changing the voter status of a voter registration record from Active to Challenged. An individual with a Challenged status must provide certain information before voting.

Recommendation ► The Legislature should clarify the purpose and requirements of post-election reporting on returned PVCs. (p. 36)

Maintaining Accurate Lists of Registered Voters

Counties must keep voter registration records up-to-date using information provided by OSS. OSS uses SVRS to convey information to counties, including information about disqualifying conditions (such as incarceration) that OSS receives from other state agencies. We reviewed data other state agencies provided to OSS in Fall 2024.

- While OSS satisfied its requirements to provide counties with data from other state agencies, counties did not always update voter registration records as required by law. (p. 39)

Recommendation ► Counties should either update—or document their rationale for not updating—all voter registration records flagged by OSS for a disqualifying condition. (p. 43)

- Counties sent required notices within 10 days to 84 percent of registered voters whose incarceration or guardianship challenges they removed. (p. 44)

Recommendation ► Counties should send a notice to all individuals whose rights to vote have been restored, as required by Minnesota rules. (p. 45)

- County survey respondents generally agreed that OSS provides useful written guidance for county election staff. (p. 53)
- Federal law, Minnesota law, and OSS practice establish different criteria for inactivating voter registration records. (p. 55)

Recommendation ► The Legislature should consider revising the criteria for inactivating voter registration records. (p. 57)

Impact of Recent Legislation

In 2023 and 2024, the Legislature enacted several changes, each of which made voter eligibility or voter registration easier for particular groups of Minnesotans. We cannot determine the extent to which the changes contributed to an increase in the number of registered voters.

Summary of Responses

In letters dated July 6, 2026, Steve Simon, Secretary of State, and Cory Kampf, President of the Minnesota Association of County Officers, each indicated that they largely agreed with OLA recommendations. Secretary Simon said OSS “appreciates the significant work that went into preparing this report,” and that “Minnesota is proud of its accurate, fair, secure, accessible, and trusted elections system.” He went on, “As the report reflects, the state law does not provide the OSS the authority to enforce county implementation of voter registration laws” but he is “pleased that this report shows that our county elections partners...report that they are getting adequate guidance from OSS.”

President Kampf noted that “Where the OLA has found that improvements can and should be made, we generally agree;” but noted that MACO wished to offer context. For example, he emphasized that residency was verified in 99 percent of applications following correct processes and noted that available data did not allow OLA to determine whether the remaining cases “represent inaccurate determinations...or if the determination was completed outside of SVRS.” He also noted that “additional avenues to register, along with other new election laws, have placed new workload demands on county election offices,” and requested that “the Legislature further investigate if statutory changes may help with efficient administration of these laws.”