

Automatic Voter Registration
Work Group Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 26, 2026
12:00 PM to 2:00 PM
Patrick Henry Building
1111 E. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219

Attendance

Members attended both in person and virtually, including representatives from the Virginia Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, general registrars and other local election officials, advocacy organizations, and state agency staff. Staff from the Office of the Secretary of Administration and the Office of the Attorney General were also present.

In-Person

- Victor Angry, President, Virginia Association of Counties
- Josette Bulova, Policy Communications Coordinator, Virginia Municipal League
- Ashley Coles, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Elections
- Traci J. Deshazor, Secretary of Administration
- Alison Fox, President, Voter Registrars Association of Virginia
- Lisa Gerchick, Chair, Fauquier County Electoral Board
- Grindly Johnson, Principal Consultant, Perception LLC
- Jane Newell, Strategic Transformation Director, League of Women Voters
- Steven Koski, Commissioner, Department of Elections
- Tram Nguyen, Co-Executive Director, Virginia New Majority
- Allison Robbins, General Registrar, King William County
- Wanda Taylor, President, Virginia Electoral Board Association
- Mike Watson, Chief Information Officer, Virginia Information Technology Agency
- Matthew Weinstein, Deputy Secretary of Administration

Virtual

- Judy Brown, General Registrar, Loudoun County
- Scott Konopasek, Electoral Board Vice Chair, Hanover County
- Matthew Martin, Director, Department of Motor Vehicles
- The Honorable Senator Tammy Mulchi, Virginia State Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections
- Ajay Saini, Special Counsel, Office of the Attorney General
- Mary Strenko, Chair, Frederick County Electoral Board

In-Person Staff

- Alexander Cintron, Policy Advisor, Office of the Secretary of Administration

Absent

- Chris Bailey, David Bailey and Associates

- The Honorable Delegate Marcia Price, Chair, Virginia House Committee on Privileges and Elections
 - The Honorable Senator Aaron Rouse, Chair, Virginia State Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections
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The meeting was called to order at 12:00 PM by Secretary Traci J. Deshazor.

Welcome

Secretary Deshazor opened with a welcome to all participants attending both in person and virtually. An overview of the agenda was provided, and facilitation was transitioned to Deputy Secretary Weinstein.

Meeting #1 and #2 Recap

A recap was provided of prior discussions, including:

- The definition and mechanics of Automatic Voter Registration (AVR).
- Differences between front-end opt-out and back-end opt-out models.
- The structure and history of the Electronic Motor Voter (EMV) system.
- Key takeaways regarding the current workflow.
- An overview of national AVR trends, noting that differences in voter registration rates between AVR and non-AVR states are not particularly large.
- Experiences from other states that have transitioned from front-end to back-end AVR.
- Feedback from states emphasizing the importance of testing and detailed implementation planning.

Potential Recommendations

Potential recommendations and considerations were shared for group discussion.

Summary of Policy Options

1. Maintain front-end, opt-out AVR without changes.
2. Maintain front-end AVR but improve existing processes.
3. Maintain front-end AVR and expand registration outreach.
4. Transition to a back-end, opt-out AVR model.

Potential Policy Proposal #1

Retain front-end, opt-out AVR in its current form. Implementation complexity and cost remain low.

- Several members emphasized that maintaining the current system would still require targeted improvements.
- Observations were made regarding the need for agencies involved in the process to strengthen internal procedures.
- Opportunities were noted to improve the clarity and administration of citizenship-related questions.
- Members reaffirmed that the General Assembly's charge is to identify and evaluate opportunities for process improvement.

Potential Policy Proposal #2

Improve existing front-end AVR processes by amending data flows or updating procedures to reduce erroneous cancellations and ensure more reliable updates.

- There is a need for structured collaboration between agencies responsible for AVR operations.
- Clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between partner agencies is critical.
- Some jurisdictions reported inconsistencies in guidance provided to residents during registration-related transactions, suggesting opportunities for strengthened training.
- Agency representatives noted that training alone cannot eliminate all potential errors, but identified opportunities for refining forms, questions, and customer guidance.

Potential Policy Proposal #3

Expand registration outreach under the existing front-end model by:

- Increasing electronic registration opportunities at additional designated state agencies (DSAs).
- Exploring mailings to eligible but unregistered individuals.

Additional Considerations:

- DSAs vary in their capacity to conduct data exchanges effectively.
- Historical background regarding prior interstate systems was provided.
- Expanding the number of DSAs could involve significant cost and operational changes.
- Concerns were raised regarding increased data volume and the need for enhanced data cleansing to maintain accuracy.
- Effective implementation would require sufficient time and support structures for participating agencies.

Potential Policy Proposal #4

Move to a back-end, opt-out AVR system.

- Questions were raised about the number of individuals who opt out and their reasons for doing so.
- Concerns were expressed regarding unintended consequences of increasing the volume of registration-related mailings to residents, including potential delays in receipt and response due to postal issues.
- The back-end model may shift more responsibility for data accuracy from residents to the government, prompting the need for stronger data validation processes.
- Members noted that states operating back-end, opt-out systems do so with workflows very different from Virginia's current approach.
- Questions were raised about how residents might respond to receiving a mailer after every interaction with a state agency.
- Concerns were raised about residents with temporary or non-residential mailing addresses, including those whose transactions occur in localities where they do not reside.
- It was suggested that the group may benefit from focusing first on current inefficiencies within the existing system.

Working Group Discussion – Additional Considerations – Secretary Deshazor

Regarding the back-end model:

- Other states emphasized the importance of establishing implementation timelines that allow for adequate preparation.
- Close collaboration with agencies conducting registration-related transactions is essential.
- Mailing logistics and associated costs need to be thoroughly anticipated.
- Statutory clarity should be ensured when defining back-end processes.
- Considerations remain regarding citizenship verification and documentation.
- Federal requirements for state-provided data must be kept in mind.

Next Steps

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, September 23, focusing on the draft report.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:44 PM on August 26, 2026, by Secretary Deshazor.