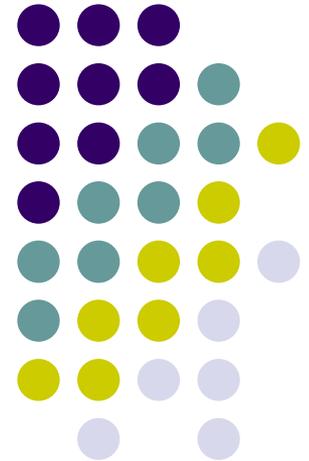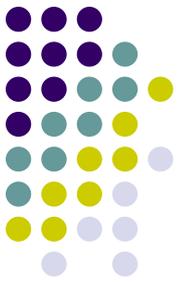# Overview of Online Voter Registration
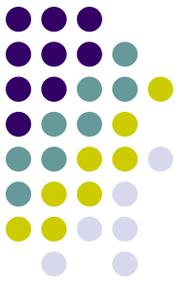
Current System in Connecticut

- Currently voters can register to vote in person with a local election official or by submitting a voter registration card by mail.

- Both State and Federal law require the Department of Motor Vehicles and public assistance offices to offer voter registration as well.

- Online voter registration is a concept that would allow citizens to complete their voter registrations online, *without* the need to print, sign and mail any paper forms.

Online Voter Registration Status
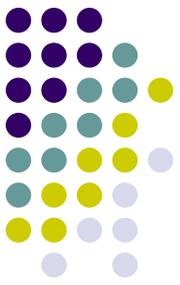
- Nine states currently offer online voter registration:
  - Arizona
  - Colorado
  - Indiana
  - Kansas
  - Louisiana
  - Nevada
  - Oregon
  - Utah; and
  - Washington

Similarities in Approach

- Both Arizona and Washington systems require the citizen to have a previous record with the motor vehicle department. This provides the digitized signature necessary for the online registration process.

Differences in Approach

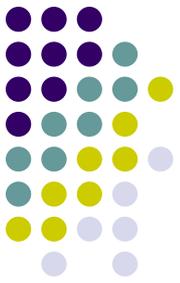- Arizona – Voter registration services offered in addition to online services already available through Motor Vehicle Division. This allows for simultaneous update of information across several systems.

- Washington – Voter registration services offered as a stand alone system operated by the Secretary of the State. Information is updated only with voter permission and only in one direction (DMV -> SOTS).
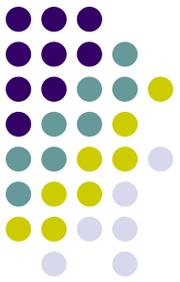
Arizona Online Process

- Verify Voter Registration Eligibility
- Please verify that you are eligible by clicking on all the checkboxes to the left of the statements below and answering yes to the two questions. In order to be eligible for voter registration, you must meet each of the requirements, be a U.S. citizen and be 18 years old by the next general election. Executing a false voter registration is a Class 6 felony.
- I am a RESIDENT of Arizona
- I am not a convicted FELON or my civil rights are restored
- I have not been adjudicated incompetent
- Are you a US citizen?
  - Yes
  - No
- Will you be at least 18 YEARS OF AGE by the next general election, November 8, 2011?
  - Yes
  - No
- The information you provide must match the information that is currently on your Arizona Driver License or Identification Card. In order to complete an EZ Voter registration, you must have a valid Arizona driver license or nonoperating identification license. By using EZ Voter registration, your driver license or nonoperating identification license will be used for completion of your voter registration form.
  - Name
  - Date of Birth
  - Arizona Driver License number
- If you do not have an Arizona driver license number or nonoperating identification license, you must fill out a paper voter registration form.
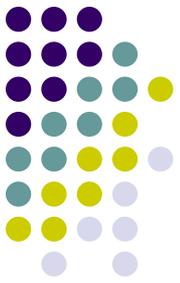
Security Issues

- Some have stated that online registration is not secure and not recommended, primarily because of the inability to authenticate the individual, to assess eligibility for voting, and to avoid fraudulent registrations.
- Current systems have been designed to address many of these concerns. In Arizona and Washington the registration is not accepted by the online system if it does not match a real person with a driver license or state identification card.
- Registering online does not have to be automatic in terms of establishing a registration record. It can be set up so that local officials must actually accept into their database the registration that was made online.
- Finally, there is one method to stop or at least slow down registrations being conducted by an automated process. Washington requires the user to type in a number that appears on the screen.
- In addition to these measures, both states employ standard Web security measures, such as SSL-encryption and dedicated lines between agencies. In both cases, the databases accessed during online registration are part of the existing state network which already has a firewall protecting it from all kinds of public access.
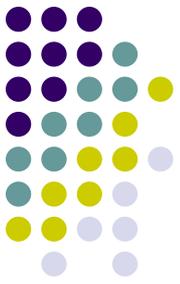
Cost Factors

- Initially, there would be some start-up costs associated with reconfiguring computer systems within the Secretary of the State and Department of Motor Vehicles.

- However, the experience in other states have indicated a cost savings in future years to local election officials by a reduction in data entry time.
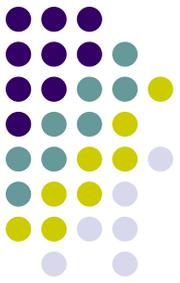
Other Benefits

- Ease of Use; Convenience
- Improved accuracy of voter registration lists.
- Improved efficiency in voter registration.
- Despite being much younger, people who registered to vote online turned out to vote at higher rates in 2008 than those who registered in traditional methods. In Washington 85.3 percent of online registrants voted, compared to 82.4 percent turnout statewide. In Arizona, the gap is more noticeable with 94 percent of online registrants voting compared to 85 percent of traditional registrants in 2008.
- This turnout differential is greatest among young voters. In Arizona, voters under 34 years old who registered via the Internet turned out at 93 percent in 2008 compared to a turnout rate of 73 percent for younger voters that registered "offline." In Washington, the same trend holds whereby young voters who registered online turned out at much higher rates than young voters who did not register online.
- In Arizona and Washington, online voter registration is very popular. This is especially the case among those residents who have used the Internet registration systems. Over 90 percent report that online voter registration is easy to use, and 95 percent state they would recommend online registration to others in the state.
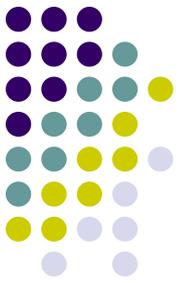
Other Issues for Consideration

- **Storm knocks out online voter registration**
  - Aug. 1, 2011-The Arizona Republic
  - Heavy storms on Sunday night knocked out the mainframe that runs the state's online motor-vehicle and voter-registration system, forcing people who want to register in time for local elections on Aug. 30 to do so in person or by mail.

- Both Arizona and Washington use county based governments with original bottom-up registration systems and developed Centralized Voter Registration Systems before project initiation.
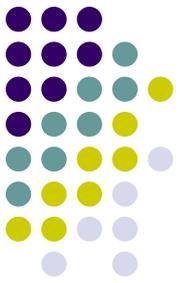
Project Timeline - Arizona

- Arizona's online voter registration program, EZ Voter, was launched in July 2002; however, Arizona's history with coordinating voter registrations and motor vehicle transactions began twenty years earlier. On November 2, 1982, Arizona voters passed the state's own Motor Voter Act, 11 years before a much broader piece of legislation (The National Voter Registration Act of 1993) was enacted by Congress. Arizona's Motor Voter Act recognized the similar data requirements in the driver license application and voter registration processes. The Act called for the state's transportation and voter registration authorities to work together to develop a common exchange of information and integrate the two application processes.

- Arizona driver licenses and identification cards were kept as digital images, and most importantly the signatures were digitized. The signature images were stored on a central image server that was reserved solely for that purpose. Because voter registration requires an original signature, the ability to transmit the image of a signature electronically was the key to online voter registration.

- The SOS CIO was also meeting with the county recorders during this development phase and securing their "buy-in" to online voter registration. County recorders were concerned that the increase in registrations might increase their workload and costs, especially if there were a great number of duplicate registrations to cull through.

- Statutory authority for this program was already in place through the 1982 law and the 1993 federal NVRA; however implementation of EZ Voter did require regulations. The Secretary of State's Office opened a rule-making process in December 2001, and had the rules finalized on March 29, 2002. This new section of regulations entitled "Electronic Voter Registration" laid out the procedures by which ADOT could transmit "electronic voter registration forms." Specifically, a "digitized image of the registrant's wet signature" had to be available to ADOT, and the registrant had to be active and uniquely identifiable in the ADOT database.

- The start-up costs for EZ Voter were just under $100,000, and the continuing costs are about $125,000 per year. The initial costs were low because the infrastructure, most importantly ServiceArizona, was already in place.
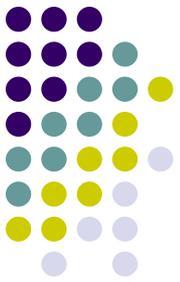
Project Timeline - Washington

- Washington is relatively unique in its registration requirements for two reasons. First of all, voting in Washington in 2008 was almost entirely conducted by mail thereby making electronic signatures even more important. Secondly, Washington does not have registration by party so stating or changing party preference is not a function of the registration process.

- There were two mandates for a statewide registration database in Washington. In 2002, just before the passage of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) by Congress, the Washington Legislature enacted a law requiring a statewide voter registration file. While VRDB is located and was developed in-house, Microsoft was hired as a project contractor to consult and assist in software development. The system was built using the Microsoft Application Platform, including Microsoft SQL Server® 2005 and Microsoft Visual Studio® Team System at a cost of approximately $6 million.

- The collaboration with DOL began in July 2007 and was guided by a Memorandum of Understanding between the two agencies. The DOL labeled implementation of HB 1528 the "Electronic Voter Registration Project' (EVR), assigned ten employees to have a role in the project, and wrote a project management plan that gave a deadline of October 22, 2007 to complete the programming.

- The total cost to develop OLVR was estimated in March 2008 at $278,000

Attributions

- **ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION (OLVR) SYSTEMS IN ARIZONA AND WASHINGTON:**
  - **EVALUATING USAGE, PUBLIC CONFIDENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES**
    - A Joint Research Project of the Washington Institute of the Study of Ethnicity and Race (WISER) University of Washington, Seattle and the Election Administration Research Center (EARC) University of California, Berkeley
    - Funded by: Make Voting Work, a project of the Pew Center on the States funded by the JEHT Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts.
    - *April 1, 2010*

Attributions

- ## **UPGRADING DEMOCRACY:**
  - **Improving America's Elections by Modernizing States' Voter Registration Systems**
    - The PEW Center on the States
    - November 2010