

I. In Focus This Week

Changes aim to make every vote count — and cost less

By [Doug Chapin](#)

States' bottom lines increasingly are a top concern in preparing for Election Day. As the recession squeezes budgets, states are searching for ways to change their election systems—not just to improve voters' experience and accuracy in vote-counting, but also to cut costs in 2010 and beyond.

Voter registration is one major focus. The huge surge in voter interest in 2008 exposed weaknesses in state laws and procedures for building and maintaining voter rolls. As a result, states are rethinking their processes and exploring different approaches to voter registration modernization.

Nine states, led by Arizona and Washington, have moved or are moving registration online, linking voters to motor vehicle records to quickly verify their identity and eligibility. Delaware has eliminated “wet ink” signatures in favor of e-signatures. Utah and Ohio are considering substantial reforms that would use official records—not just voter application forms—to help build and maintain voter lists.

In addition, prompted by the October 2009 passage of the federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE), states are developing the ability to transmit blank ballots and information electronically to voters abroad. These measures seek not only to ensure these voters can cast a valid ballot in time for it to be counted, but also to save states time and money by no longer relying exclusively on postal mail.

Massachusetts enacted legislation to comply with MOVE in November 2009, and others are expected to follow suit in 2010.

States also are making other election information available online. In 2009, Virginia's official Web site added an interactive elections “gadget,” providing useful information such as polling place locations, which users can embed in other online sites. Some estimates suggest states could save up to \$100 for every voter phone call or office visit avoided.

Finally, there is growing interest in early and absentee voting and voting by mail as ways to cut the cost of Election Day, while some states, such as Hawaii, are shrinking the number of polling locations to trim expenses.

Challenges remain, however, in the nation's continued transition to new voting machines as mandated by Congress after problems in the 2000 presidential election. Turnover in the election technology industry—marked most recently by the acquisition of Diebold Inc.'s election business by Election Systems & Software—has led to mounting concern at the state and local level about the cost of purchasing and maintaining voting machines.

(The following is reprinted from the Pew Center on the State's [State of the States 2010 Report](#).)

II. Election Reform News This Week

- Hawaii's system for conducting state elections survived yesterday when legislators killed two bills that would have asked voters to [create a nonpartisan-elections chief](#). The proposals would have placed a constitutional amendment on the November ballot to establish an elected secretary of state to oversee the state Office of Elections. According to the Honolulu Star Bulletin, proponents

said voter should "...have a secretary of state that is accountable and responsive to them." But critics said electing even a nonpartisan secretary of state would lead to perceptions that he or she is obligated to political parties, elections equipment manufacturers or other special interests. Elections planning and management were once under the authority of the lieutenant governor's office. But several years ago, legislators made the Office of Elections independent. It is headed by a chief elections officer and overseen by an appointed commission.

- The Kentucky House approved a constitutional amendment Wednesday that would allow certain [felons to have their voting rights automatically restored](#) after completing their sentences. The amendment would exempt from the automatic restoration of rights felons convicted of intentional murder, rape, sodomy or sexual contact. Under current law, the governor has the authority to restore voting rights for felons who have completed their sentences. Prosecutors are given the opportunity to object. According to the Courier-Journal, Similar measures have passed the House in recent years but died in the Senate. If passed by the Senate, the amendment also would need approval from the voters in this November's general election.
- Dodge County, Neb. is considering [removing elections duties from under the purview of the county clerk](#) — at the county clerk's request. County Clerk Fred Mytty sent the county supervisors a letter Mytty suggesting the county create the position of election commissioner and find a central location to store election equipment. Supervisors pointed out that salaries for the next four years for elected officials were set in January with the assumption that the clerk would continue to serve as election commissioner. "I think this is something we need to research at the committee level so we can open up discussion down the road," board chairman Bob Missel told the local paper.
- Once again this week, polling places were in the news as localities across the country consolidated and rearranged voting precincts and polling places in order to save money. The precinct map in [Plymouth Township, Mich.](#) was redrawn to save money and cut the number of precincts from 17 to 12. Clerk Joe Bridgman, who came up with the plan, said the plan should save money on elections inspectors, but still allow for the efficient processing of voters when they show up at the polls. The [Muscogee County, Ohio](#) board of elections is planning on moving polling places from county schools and consolidating them at the same time. [Gallatin County](#) became the latest county in Montana to consolidate polling places in order to save money. Charlotte Mills, county clerk and recorder and elections administrator for said that combining precincts would free up about 60 judges to help man other polling stations and save at least \$30,000 over the course of the primary and general elections. [Madison County, Ala.](#) plans to split and combine 25 polling places and would move 14 of 16 school-based polling sites. Of course not everyone was eliminating or consolidating polling places. In [Minnehaha County, S.D.](#) the county had to add two polling places to accommodate population growth and the city of [Menasha, Wis.](#) had to add a fifth polling place for their upcoming February 16 election.
- **Personnel News:** [Kansas Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh](#) announced this week that he will leave office one year early in order to accept a position in the private sector. Thornburgh, a Republican, announced Monday that he'll resign next week to become senior vice president for sales and marketing at Olathe-based NIC, a company that provides online services to governments. Gov. Mark Parkinson, a Democrat, will pick Thornburgh's successor. If he picks a Democrat, that will give a member of his party nine months to establish themselves as an incumbent ahead of the 2010 secretary of state election. [Warren Slocum, San Mateo County Calif.'s veteran assessor-clerk-recorder and chief elections officer](#), announced this week that he will not run for re-election in June. Slocum, 62, said he decided he wanted to try something else after 24 years in the elected position and more than three decades in public service. Slocum said he hasn't figured out his next move, but he wants it to be something that combines his interests in technology and democracy. "Somehow it would still all be connected with serving the people," Slocum told the Oakland Tribune. "It wouldn't be selling laptops at Best Buy or something like that." [Bob Ravenscraft, the Marion County, Mo. clerk and election authority](#) since Jan. 1, 1987, has announced he will not seek re-election this year and will step down at the end of December.

Ravenscraft, 66, has had just one opponent since being elected in 1986. The next Marion County clerk will be only the third person in 65 years to have the position. He's overseen 71 local elections and says the job carries a great deal of responsibility. "It's a common-sense kind of job," he told the Quincy Herald Whig. "If you have common sense and know what to do and how to handle them (challenges), then you will be OK.

III. Research and Report Summaries

electionline provides brief summaries of recent research and reports in the field of election administration. Please e-mail links to research to sgreene@pewtrusts.org.

[Making Voter Registration Easier: Evaluation of the "Welcome Kit" Voter Registration Pilot Project](#) - R. Michael Alvarez, Thad E. Hall and Morgan H. Llewellyn, Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Project, January 2010: This pilot project, conducted from February 2008 through May 2009, provided voter registration forms in welcome kit packages that were sent to households that changed their address in three postal markets: Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati. This report provides detailed evaluation and analysis of this project. This work was funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the JEHT Foundation as part of the Make Voting Work Initiative.

IV. Opinion

Alabama: [Voter ID](#)

California: [Election-day registration](#)

Florida: [Election dates](#)

Illinois: [Undervote law](#); [Instant-runoff voting](#)

Massachusetts: [Voter ID](#)

Minnesota: [Earlier primary, II](#)

New Mexico: [Same-day registration](#)

New Jersey: [Voting machines](#)

Vermont: [Instant-runoff voting, II, III](#)

***some sites require registration*

IV. Job Opportunities

All job listings must be received by 12 p.m. Eastern on Wednesday for publication in our Thursday newsletter. Job listings are free but may be edited for length. Whenever possible, include Internet information. Please email job postings to mmoretti@electionline.org

Elections Administrator, Everyone Counts, San Diego—work directly with private and public sector clients to administer high integrity elections for Everyone Counts, the global leader in the delivery of accessible, auditable, verifiable and transparent elections using modern technology. Ideal candidate will possess skills that encompass the following qualities and experiences: delivery of elections or other similar electronic business process, administration, project management, customer service, sales, helpdesk assistance, invoicing and employee supervision. **Duties:** Under the supervision of the Lead Elections Administrator, a successful candidate will work day-to-day with worldwide clients to coordinate elections conducted over the Internet. Duties include: working with client on detailed job specifications, ensuring elections conform to various local and federal laws, set up election using the Everyone Counts voting administration system, testing of the election application, monitoring of election during voting period, responding to voter inquiries, delivering results, and administrative reporting. The Election Administrator will develop contracts with clients, invoice clients for services performed, and work with other employees involved in the administration of elections. Customer service skills and attention to detail are crucial elements of this position. Periodic travel to clients and conferences may also be required. **Qualifications & Skills needed:** minimum of a Bachelor's degree is required; qualifications beyond the degree include professional office and supervisory experience; must demonstrate ability to work independently and provide supervision, where necessary; must demonstrate strong listening skills

and respect for all clients; excellent written, oral and presentation communications are required; attention to detail and accuracy is a must; requires proficiency in general computer software, such as Microsoft Office or Open Office, and a strong comfort level with the use of the Internet and technology; must collaborate with a variety of people, taking the initiative to reach out to others and to accomplish tasks with high quality in a time-efficient manner. Those interested should email a cover letter, one page resume, and salary requirements to careers@everyonecounts.com. Compensation will be based on qualifications and experience. This position reports to the Lead Elections Administrator.

Programmer, Voting Information Project, Washington, DC — The New Organizing Institute (NOI) is seeking a full-time employee to take on responsibilities associated with the Voting Information Project (VIP), a cooperative project with the Pew Charitable Trusts and Google. The Voting Information Project (VIP) is a long-term, non-partisan effort to connect voters, via the web, with the information they need to be more engaged citizens. More specifically, the project works to get all 50 states to publish polling place information and candidate information in a standard format. These “feeds” of voting information will be available to all information providers in a recognized format. Thus, any organization – national or local, large or small – will be able to serve as a distribution channel for voting information-- directly from election officials to voters. The Programmer will be primarily responsible for working directly with tech staff in the states, VIP technical support staff, and Google to implement new feeds and update or maintain existing feeds. NOI itself is a progressive organization that builds capacity and sophistication in the progressive movement in the areas of technology and new media, especially as they relate to organizing. NOI offers numerous trainings for progressive practitioners, engages in data research, and coordinates with a wide range of progressive partners to leverage common interests in the improvement of technology options in the field. The position is hosted out of NOI offices and will include involvement in other NOI projects, but will primarily focus on VIP. **Responsibilities:** Technical Support and Development including: coordinate with technical collaborators to implement feeds; develop controls for monitoring status of VIP data feeds; assist with outreach and development of promotional materials; create materials explaining technical aspects of VIP; answer incoming technical questions from public and other stakeholders. **Qualifications:** Basic knowledge of political data; 1+ yrs database management experience; 3+ yrs programming experience; familiarity with XML, JSON, other data standards, EC2 and other cloud services, REST concepts, and comfortable in a Linux environment. The position goes through Jan, 2011, and may be extended at that time. Salary is commensurate with experience, and includes health care. Candidates should submit a resume and cover letter to data@neworganizing.com. The email must have the subject line “Programmer Application”