

SB 1046 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Rules

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Meeting Dates: 3/31

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure expands automatic voter registration to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. It becomes operative June 1, 2027.

Fiscal impact: The measure may have a fiscal impact, but a statement has not yet been released.

Revenue impact: The measure may have a revenue impact, but a statement has not yet been released.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Automatic voter registration (AVR) is a process in which eligible citizens are automatically registered to vote when they interact with certain government agencies. In 2016, Oregon became the first state to implement AVR through the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division (DMV). The program is known as "Oregon Motor Voter."

As of September 2024, 24 states and the District of Columbia have also adopted AVR provisions.

History of AVR in Oregon

In 1989, the Legislative Assembly enacted an optional voter registration program which allowed for voter registration when applying for, or renewing, a driver's license. It required ODOT to develop a procedure for voter registration, and required the DMV to deliver voter registration applications to the appropriate county clerks. Additionally, the Secretary of State (SoS) was granted rulemaking authority to determine how the DMV would provide completed voter registrations to the county clerks. These revisions become operative with the passage of the 1993 National Voting Rights Act, which requires states to offer voter registration opportunities at DMV locations when obtaining a driver's license.

In 2009, House Bill 2386 was passed, which directed the SoS to adopt an electronic voter registration system, through which Oregonians who are at least 16 years of age and have a valid Oregon driver's license, permit, or identification card can register to vote. This system was originally created to serve military and overseas voters as required by the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act. On March 1, 2010, Oregon became the fourth state to provide online voter registration.

In 2015, AVR was enacted through the passage of House Bill 2177, making Oregon the first state to do so. Under Oregon Motor Voter, if a person is not already registered to vote, they receive a card and a pre-paid postage return envelope from the SoS Elections Division following their qualifying interaction with the DMV. This card provides three options: do nothing and be registered to vote as a nonaffiliated voter; choose a political party by returning the card; or use the card to opt-out of voter registration. Oregon Motor Voter replaced the existing optional voter registration system. Registered voters may update their voter registration at any time.

In 2019, House Bill 2015 repealed requirements that a person provide proof of legal presence before ODOT issues a noncommercial driver license, noncommercial driver permit, or identification card.

In 2023, House Bill 2107 expanded AVR to the Oregon Health Authority, which becomes operative June 1, 2026.