

Delaware E-Signature Project
Testimony to U S Senate Rules Committee
April 9, 2014

- **Elaine Manlove**
State Election Commissioner
Delaware

Good Morning and thank you for inviting me to discuss Delaware's e-signature project. Let me start with a little background. I began working in the Dept. of Elections for New Castle County in 1999, so my first big election was the 2000 General Election. While the country focused on Florida, I was concerned about the 50 court orders that we had requested for voters who came to their polling place assuming they were registered voters but were not on the poll list. Sometimes this was a husband and wife. Only one would be on our rolls while they were both certain they had registered at DMV. Our Elections offices could check DMV records and see that they had been there, but we had no application or declination. Our process was paper and if we didn't get the paper, the voter did not get registered. There were many reasons for this, but, at the end of the day, the voter was the loser.

Some of the problems with the paper process were:

- DMV would be out of applications in the printer
- The printer would jam
- The voter would leave without signing

Every day we picked up the applications from DMV and matched them with the electronic list of who applications we should have received. Then we mailed new applications to those citizens whose application we did not receive. About half came back to Elections.

I knew there had to be a better way to do this. As is always the case, every idea we had cost money and there just was none. Then came HAVA. Since Delaware's voting machines were fairly new and we had already met the statewide database mandate, we decided to focus on the use of technology to improve all of our services. Our Dept. of Technology and Information hired two HAVA-paid programmers to focus on what we called "the Elections wish-list" – all the projects that we knew would improve our services but were too large in scope to be handled by the programmers assigned to Elections by DTI.

I thought the struggle was behind us until we started meeting with DMV! No one said "no, this can't be done", however, our meetings never seemed to move forward. DMV worried that our

solution would slow their lines. Then, on the Elections side, when we were in “election mode”, we would have to move our focus back to that.

In 2007, a new DMV Director was appointed and this project moved forward quickly. Early in 2009, e-Signature went live. It was a success from day 1.

I want to emphasize that this was not rocket science, just a common sense solution to an ongoing problem. The DMV clerks work from a script that is in front of them on their computer screen. They can tell if their customer is a new registrant or is already registered to vote. That fact determines what screen comes up in front of them and the questions they ask. They collect name, address, social security number and date of birth as well as any additional information for DMV use. The customer verifies their voter information on the screen of the credit card device on the counter. If their information is correct, they are asked if they want to register to vote or update their information with the Department of Elections. On the next screen, the voter affirms their citizenship, chooses their political party and signs. All of this is captured and transmitted to Elections in real time.

Customers can go to any DMV in the state. Their voter registration application will be sent to a cue in the Elections office of their home county. The Elections office will determine if this is a duplicate, run a felon check and process their polling place card. All Voter Registration decisions are made in the Elections Office removing that onus from DMV.

My goal when we started this project was just to insure that we received every application. What I didn't anticipate were the unintended consequences. We had no paper - no paper to pick up at DMV, no paper to file, no paper to verify – no paper at all!! This saved us:

- Space in all three county offices – rows of filing cabinets were eventually eliminated
- Time – no paper to file and no files to go through on Election Day when we needed to prove that a voter was registered
- Money – at both DMV and Elections – Elections eliminated 5 vacant positions for a \$200,000 annual savings.

Once Phase 1 was complete, we changed the process for mail applications. We began scanning in any paper applications that came into our offices: Federal Mail Applications, etc. Our clerks still have to do data entry on those applications, but then they electronically link that entry with the paper application containing the signature. The paper application can then be shredded.

Our next phase was to take this technology to Delaware's Health and Social Service agencies as well as our Dept. of Labor. We began first at Health and Social Services and provided computers and credit card signature devices, however, the numbers have not increased as much as we had hoped. In today's economy, both agencies are being encouraged to offer online applications for their customers.

Our solution is in the works. We will very soon link our online voter registration process to the online systems of both of these agencies.

In closing, the initial cost for the DMV project was \$600,000. With newer technology, today it would be less. It has paid for itself by savings to both DMV as well as Elections.

It has also saved time. DMV's original concern was that we would slow their lines because they allocated 90 second for the Elections piece of each customer transaction. It's now 30 seconds!

With advances in technology, this project would cost less today. Delaware has shared our solution with many states. It's an easy solution that works well for both agencies and could work as well for other states.

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Delaware's E-Signature Project is an electronic, real-time connection between DMV and our Election offices for the purpose of voter registration.

It is a common sense approach that saves time money and paper. It has worked well for Delaware and we have shared this technology with other states.

Delaware is currently working with other agencies mandated to conduct voter registration to enable them to use this same technology. It makes it easier for their agencies to do voter registration and keeps them compliant with NVRA.

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Elaine Manlove has been employed by the State of Delaware as Election Commissioner since 2007 following eight years as Director of the Department of Elections for New Castle County. She was formerly employed by New Castle County Government as an Executive Assistant.

In both Elections positions, she has seen many changes from both sides of the election process – local and state perspective. She has overseen Delaware's electronic signature project to allow voters to have their registration information transmitted in real-time from the Division of Motor Vehicles to the Departments of Election in each county. As Commissioner, she is responsible for the Help America Vote Act funds, the statewide voter registration system, campaign finance and the Parent/Student Mock Election.

Under Elaine, Delaware was the second state to join ERIC (Electronic Registration Information Center). This project has allowed Delaware to share information with other member states in an effort to make our voter rolls more accurate as well as give us the ability to reach those eligible to vote, but not registered.

Elaine is a graduate of The Election Center's Certified Election Registration Administrator (CERA) program and is member of NASED (National Association of State Election Directors).

A native Delawarean, born and raised in the City of Wilmington, she graduated from St. Elizabeth's High School and Goldey Beacom College. She lived in Hockessin for many years with her husband and three sons. Now that her sons are grown, Elaine and her husband reside at the Delaware beach.