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Main Street Alliance of Vermont

**MSA-VT Mission & Vision**

Main Street Alliance of Vermont is a statewide network of over 700 small, locally-owned Vermont businesses. Our mission is to elevate the voices of small business owners on important public policy issues in Vermont. We are committed to bringing business owners to the table to engage in and develop policies that reflect the interconnected nature of small businesses and the communities they serve.

**VT AVR Expansion**

MSA-VT was a supporter of Vermont's automatic voter registration legislation, which passed 137-0 in 2016. Our members believe in the goal of universal registration as a step toward ensuring equal access to democracy and increased voter participation. By expanding outside of the DMV for AVR, voter registration will become more accessible to everyone.

This summer, we worked with the SOS' Office on developing the language (below) that permits the SOS to work with designated voter registration agencies, which already receive the necessary information to establish eligibility to vote, to implement automatic voter registration at those agencies. The language does not require the implementation of AVR at any agency, nor does it require those agencies to modify their processes to accommodate AVR. It simply encourages the SOS' Office to explore AVR expansion with designated agencies and to produce a list of those agencies on an annual basis.

Vermont's small businesses are part of the economic and cultural fabric of our state. They thrive when community members are well-informed and connected to the political process. We support AVR expansion as a means to ensure all members of our communities have accessible pathways to register as voters and participate in democracy and hope to see this language included in S.107.

Sec. 6. 17 V.S.A. § 2145b is amended to read:

§ 2145b. VOTER REGISTRATION AGENCIES

(a) Each voter registration agency shall:

(1) distribute voter registration application forms approved under section 2145 of this title;

(2) assist applicants in completing voter registration application forms, unless the applicant refuses such assistance; and

(3) accept completed voter registration applications and transmit completed applications to the Secretary of State not later than 10 days after the date of acceptance, or before the date of any primary or general election, whichever is sooner.

(b) The Secretary shall promptly transmit applications received under this section to the clerks of the appropriate municipalities.

(c)(1) A voter registration agency shall provide each applicant who does not decline to register to vote the same degree of assistance with regard to the completion of the voter registration application that the office provides with regard to the completion of its own forms, unless the applicant refuses such assistance.

(2) If an agency provides services to a person with a disability at the person's home, the agency shall provide the services described in subsection (a) of this section at the person's home.

(d) The Secretary of State shall designate voter registration agencies that shall provide qualified applicants for such agency's services, or qualified inmates within the custody of the Department of Corrections, with automatic voter registration as an integrated option on application forms for services or benefits provided by those agencies. Prior to making any designation under this subsection, the Secretary of State shall consult with the secretary or commissioner of each voter registration agency to determine the feasibility of integrating automatic voter registration into that voter registration agency's normal course of business and to determine a reasonable timetable to complete such integration where the Secretary deems appropriate.

(1) Such designations shall be limited to those voter registration agencies or specific programs administered by such agencies that, in the regular course of such agency's business, already collect and verify documents necessary to provide proof of an individual's eligibility to vote under subchapter 1 of this chapter.

(2) On or before January 1 of each year, the Secretary shall:

(A) publish on his or her official website a list of voter registration agencies designated under this subsection;

(B) specify which programs or services offered by each agency are included within the designation; and

(C) establish for each such newly designated agency the date by which its specified programs or services must comply with requirements of this subsection.

(3) Following the date for compliance established by the Secretary for an agency's specified programs or services established under subdivision (2)(C) of this subsection, an application for services or benefits and any change of address form related to those services or benefits provided by the agency shall provide and request the following information and shall be in the form approved by the Secretary of State:

(A) The applicant's citizenship.

*(B) The applicant's date of birth.*

*(C) The applicant's town of legal residence.*

*(D) The applicant's street address or a description of the physical location of the applicant's residence. The description must contain sufficient information so that the town clerk can determine whether the applicant is a resident of the town.*

*(E) The voter's oath.*

*(F) The applicant's e-mail address, which shall be optional to provide.*

*(4) An application for a designated automatic voter registration agency's services shall provide the following statements:*

*(A) "By signing and submitting this application, you are authorizing the Department of Motor Vehicles to transmit this application to the Secretary of State for voter registration purposes. YOU MAY DECLINE TO REGISTER. Both the office through which you submit this application and your decision of whether or not to register will remain confidential and will be used for voter registration purposes only."*

*(B) "In order to be registered to vote, you must: (1) be a U.S. citizen; (2) be a resident of Vermont; (3) have taken the voter's oath; and (4) be 18 years of age or older. Any person meeting the requirements of (1)-(3) who will be 18 years of age on or before the date of a general election may register and vote in the primary election immediately preceding that general election. Failure to decline to register is an attestation that you meet the requirements to vote."*

*(e) A voter registration agency that provides services or assistance in addition to conducting voter registration that has not been designated by the Secretary of State to provide automatic voter registration under subsection (d) 10 of this section shall distribute a voter registration application with each application for the services or assistance provided by the agency, and with each recertification, renewal, or change of address form relating to those services or assistance. In addition to the voter registration application form, the agency shall distribute a separate form that includes the following:*

*(f) The Secretary of State shall have the authority to audit any voter registration agency to determine compliance with the requirements of this section and to require any voter registration agency to implement any remedial measures necessary to ensure compliance with this section. The Secretary of Administration shall provide the Secretary of State any assistance that is necessary to ensure the cooperation of voter registration agencies in implementing any remedial measures the Secretary of State requires under this subsection.*