ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

SECTION 1. This Act may be cited as the Online Voter Registration Act.

SECTION 2. Requiring Availability of Internet for Voter Registration.

a. [State’s voter registration statute] is amended by inserting after Section ___ [the section in state election law describing methods of registration] the following new section:

Section ___. ONLINE REGISTRATION

I. REQUIRING AVAILABILITY OF INTERNET FOR ONLINE REGISTRATION

a. The Secretary of State [or state’s chief election official] shall ensure that the following services are available to the public at any time on the official public websites of the appropriate state and local election officials:

1. Online application for voter registration, the content of which shall be equivalent to the form provided by designated voter registration agencies;
2. Online assistance to those applying to register to vote;
3. Online completion and submission by applicants of the voter registration application, including the signature of the applicant pursuant to subsection (c) of this section; and
4. Online receipt of completed voter registration applications.

b. The Secretary of State shall direct state government agencies to transmit signatures of their clients, upon authorization, to election officials.

c. An application submitted under this section shall be deemed submitted to the election authority on the date it is sent.

d. An applicant for voter registration under this section provides a signature by:

1. in the case of an applicant who has a signature on file with a state government agency, authorizing the agency to transmit that signature to election officials; or
2. submitting with the application an electronic copy of the applicant’s handwritten signature through electronic means, which the Secretary of State [or state’s chief election official] shall accept beginning [acceptable time period] after the effective date of this Act; or
3. or executing a computerized mark in the signature field as instructed on the online application.

2. DISPOSITION OF ONLINE APPLICATION

a. Upon submission of a completed voter registration application under this section, the official website shall generate an immediate electronic confirmation on the website that the application has been received, with instructions as to how the applicant may check the status of the application thereafter.

b. The appropriate state or local election official shall accept an online voter registration application submit-
ted under this section and ensure that the individual is registered to vote in the state if:

1. the individual meets the same voter registration eligibility requirements applicable to individuals who register to vote by mail; and

2. the individual provides a signature in accordance with Sec. 1(d).

c. The appropriate state or local election official shall inform the applicant for voter registration of the disposition of the application by regular mail and, at the option of the applicant, electronic mail.

d. Upon voting for the first time in the State after registering under this section, any voter who executed a computerized mark under Section 1(d)(3) shall supply a handwritten signature:

1. at the polling place when the individual appears to vote (including during any period of early voting), or

2. with an absentee ballot, on a form provided by the election authority to be returned with the absentee ballot.

e. No legal distinction shall be made between registration under this section and registration by mail, pursuant to [section of the state election code].

3. USE OF INTERNET TO UPDATE REGISTRATION INFORMATION

a. The state’s chief election official shall ensure that any legally registered voter may at any time update the voter’s registration information, including the voter’s address, online through the official public website of the election official responsible for the maintenance of the computerized statewide voter registration list.

b. The election official shall revise any information on the computerized list to reflect the update made by the voter at any time up to and including 7 days before the date of the next election. [Note: in states that permit updating at the polling place on Election Day (e.g., permanent portable registration states), this subsection is unnecessary.]

c. Upon the online submission of updated registration information under this subsection, the appropriate state or local election official shall send a notice confirming receipt of the updated information by regular mail, and, at the option of the voter, by electronic mail.

4. GENERAL PROVISIONS

a. In meeting the requirements of this Act, the state shall establish appropriate technological security measures to protect against unauthorized access to information provided under this Act.

b. The services provided under this Act shall be provided in a manner that is accessible to persons with disabilities so as to provide the same opportunity for access and participation as for other voters.

PROJECT VOTE’S MODEL BILLS ARE DESIGNED TO BE GENERIC EXAMPLES AND MAY BE CUSTOMIZED TO FIT WITH INDIVIDUAL STATE ELECTION CODES. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ESTELLE ROGERS, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, AT ERGROGERS@PROJECTVOTE.ORG, IF YOU’D LIKE ASSISTANCE IN DRAFTING YOUR OWN STATE BILL.

ENDNOTES

1. The waiting period can be eliminated if unnecessary to passage.

2. Such as the marks or initials that are now commonly inserted by clicking on the signature field in online consumer, real estate, and other transactions.