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# The Voter Registration System of the District of Columbia

*A Paper Presented for the Institute for Social Research National Conference:  
"Exploring New Strategies for Increasing Voter Registration in the United States"*

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*by*

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## Introduction

This paper examines the District of Columbia voter registration system, focusing on its origin, development, and productivity during the past eight years. The system in place today has been instituted through a continuing process of experimentation and reform -- strenuously launched in 1983, after the integrity of the voter roll became so questionable that emergency legislation was enacted to re-register the electorate and, literally, start over.

The breakdown of the pre-existing system, made visible by major disruptions in the voting process, was caused by a general lack of adequate resources for election administration and, in particular, by the absence of an effective voter roll maintenance process -- a vital system component. This failure to keep the roll accurate and up-to-date, through systematic removal of invalid records, produced such massive accumulations of "deadwood" that the registry effectively collapsed under its own weight.

The relatively brief period in which the District's entirely "retooled" registration and voting system emerged and developed -- and the fairly consistent data available to track its progress -- may yield some insight, even some lessons, in voter registration reform. The numbers indicate positive and apparently continuing impacts of the new system on both voter registration and turnout, as will be detailed further below. There are also related issues in the areas of legislative reform, program implementation, costs/benefits, and uses of technology that may be illuminated by examining the D.C. system.

## Historical Perspective

The occasion for reform of voter registration in the District -- an election system crisis -- was a critical factor in stimulating the changes that followed. It provided both urgency and some important tools for the Board of Elections and Ethics (BOEE) -- an independent agency charged with exclusive responsibility for administering the District's electoral process -- to use in an effort to build a model voter registration system. As a result of the crisis, the previously underpowered election office obtained a legal mandate and the wherewithal to implement a massive registration outreach program, as well as a strong consensus for reform to support an ongoing program of progressive change.

Under ordinary circumstances, it seems to be axiomatic that voter registration reform efforts will be quashed by the perceived self-interest (however unfounded) of elected officials and administrators who gained power under the existing system -- and are therefore dedicated to preserving its every archaic mode. In the District, an exception that proves the rule, the quite extraordinary circumstances attending the birth of the registration reform program provided for an auspicious

delivery: into receptive hands of new agency leadership, a favorable climate of political open-mindedness, and a spotlight of negative media expectation that tended to magnify every positive change.

The District's short history as an election jurisdiction was also an important factor in the agency's approach to rebuilding the voter registration system -- and in assessing its progress to date. The right to vote for President and Vice President was first exercised by District residents in 1964 -- via the 23rd amendment to the Constitution -- and voting for most local elective offices did not occur until 1974, following Congressional enactment of a Home Rule Charter. As a result, D.C. has had to play "catch up" in building a tradition of registration and voting. A major element in the BOEE program has therefore been a systematic emphasis on voter education, with special focus on indoctrinating the public in the specific requirements of the system. Given the late start and early progress of registration reforms in the District, their impact is primarily reflected by changing patterns of voter activity, rather than overall magnitude, which is still relatively low in comparison to many states.

### **Components of the Voter Registration System:**

#### **1. Registration By Mail**

While District law authorized registration by mail in 1976, no real system was set up to promote the mail-in process, mainly because of problems with the expanding election system -- over 300 local offices plus initiative, referendum, and recall processes were created under Home Rule. Thus, when a revamped BOEE, armed with corrective legislation to rebuild the voter roll, commenced its re-registration program in 1983, this really amounted to the first serious effort to implement mail registration in a manner that could fulfill its potential.

Registration by mail is a significant reform -- beyond its basic convenience to the registrant -- because it frees the process from official intervention, making it directly accessible to all interested parties. The extent to which mail registration will increase registration rates, however, mostly depends on the level of effort the election agency (and private interests) are willing to invest in making use of the freedom it provides. Productive mail registration systems work hard to disseminate the mail-in forms in a wide variety of ways and put significant resources into information programs to promote mail-in services. In D.C., the system's development occurred in three basic phases: foundation (1983-84), expansion (1985-88), and refinement (1989-92). Growth of the registry during the overall process is shown in totals by election year in the chart on page 4.

**In the first phase, during 1983-1984**, a major outreach effort was conducted to rebuild the voter roll. With considerable media attention, three citywide mass mailings were conducted to distribute registration forms and election information to residents and voters. Thousands of the postage-free mail-in forms were made available to candidates, campaigns, nonpartisan groups, and community organizations for registration drives. In the four elections held during the 18-month re-registration period, voters were permitted to re-register on election day and have their sealed ballot subsequently

counted if any record of previous registration could be found. The process began with a base of 147,000 registered voters, only 30.1% of the voting age population (VAP), consisting of those who had voted in the 1982 elections and were considered to have "validated" their registrations by signing the poll book. At the end of this period, 128,000 new registrants had been added to the roll, for total of 274,810 voters or 56.1% of VAP. The foundation of the new voter registry was in place and mail registration was its cornerstone.

In its second phase, during 1985-1988, active registry maintenance programs (discussed as a separate system component further below) were put in place for the updating and removal of voter records on a continuing basis, to assure that the accuracy and currency of the new roll would be preserved. At the same time, a comprehensive system for ongoing dissemination of the mail-in forms was set up. Four basic avenues for distribution were defined:

- (1) a permanent government agency network of 100+ geographically dispersed office sites -- libraries, fire houses, police stations, neighborhood, and high public-traffic offices.
- (2) direct "mail-out" service to anyone making a telephone request, with a 24-hour voice message system installed to handle around the clock processing of registration requests.
- (3) improved assistance to registration drives conducted by volunteer groups, including display kits, posters, pamphlets, and computer tracking to measure effectiveness.
- (4) a systematic information program to increase public awareness of registration services and maximize input to the media to expand pre-election coverage.

During this four-year period, nearly 83,000 registration cancellations were processed by the maintenance program, while some 108,000 new registrants entered the system -- a net increase of 25,000 voters for a total November 1988 registration of 299,757. Despite systematic canvassing and purging of the voter records, **real growth of the registry was 9.1%, an increase to 61.3% of VAP.** Mail registration was working to expand the voter roll.

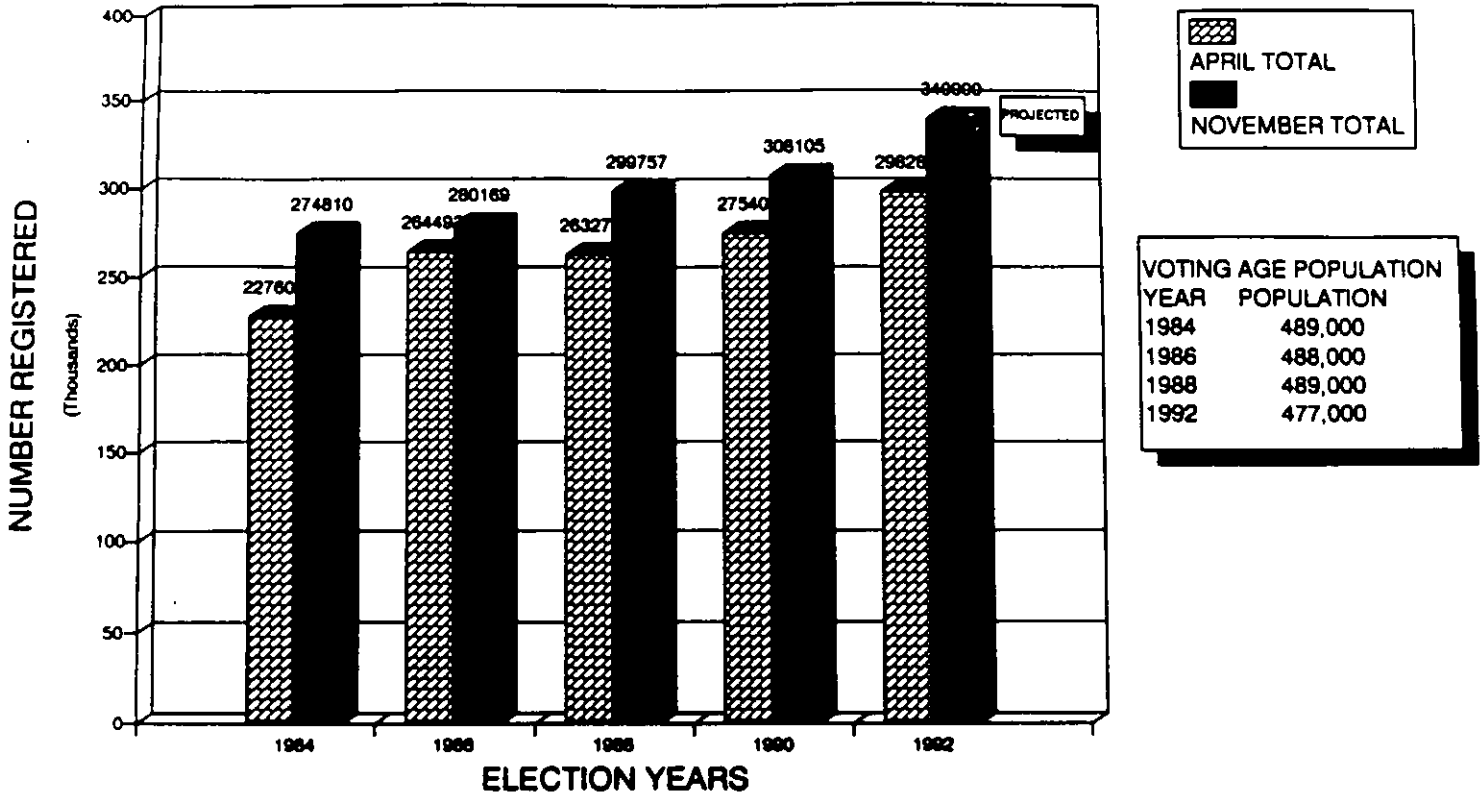
In the third phase, during 1989-1992, a variety of innovations and refinements have been added to increase mail registration productivity. These include:

- (1) reducing literacy barriers: working with Push Literacy Action Now (PLAN), BOEE produced an new "reader-friendly" registration form to lower the literacy hurdle for marginally literate persons. The new form used language and graphic techniques to reduce its reading skill requirement by four grade levels. Key information documents were converted to "readability" criteria, registration "lesson plans" were devised for adult education students, and new materials were tested with PLAN students.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See joint BOEE/PLAN paper entitled, "The Voter Registration Form: Is It a Literacy Test?"

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Registration in Election Years 1984-92



(2) youth voter education: registration form mailings to age-eligible public school students in conjunction with and a hands-on student election program that reached 30,000 students in all grades in 112 public schools in 1990, using official ballots and voting equipment for student council elections, replicating the political process, registration, and voting.<sup>2</sup>

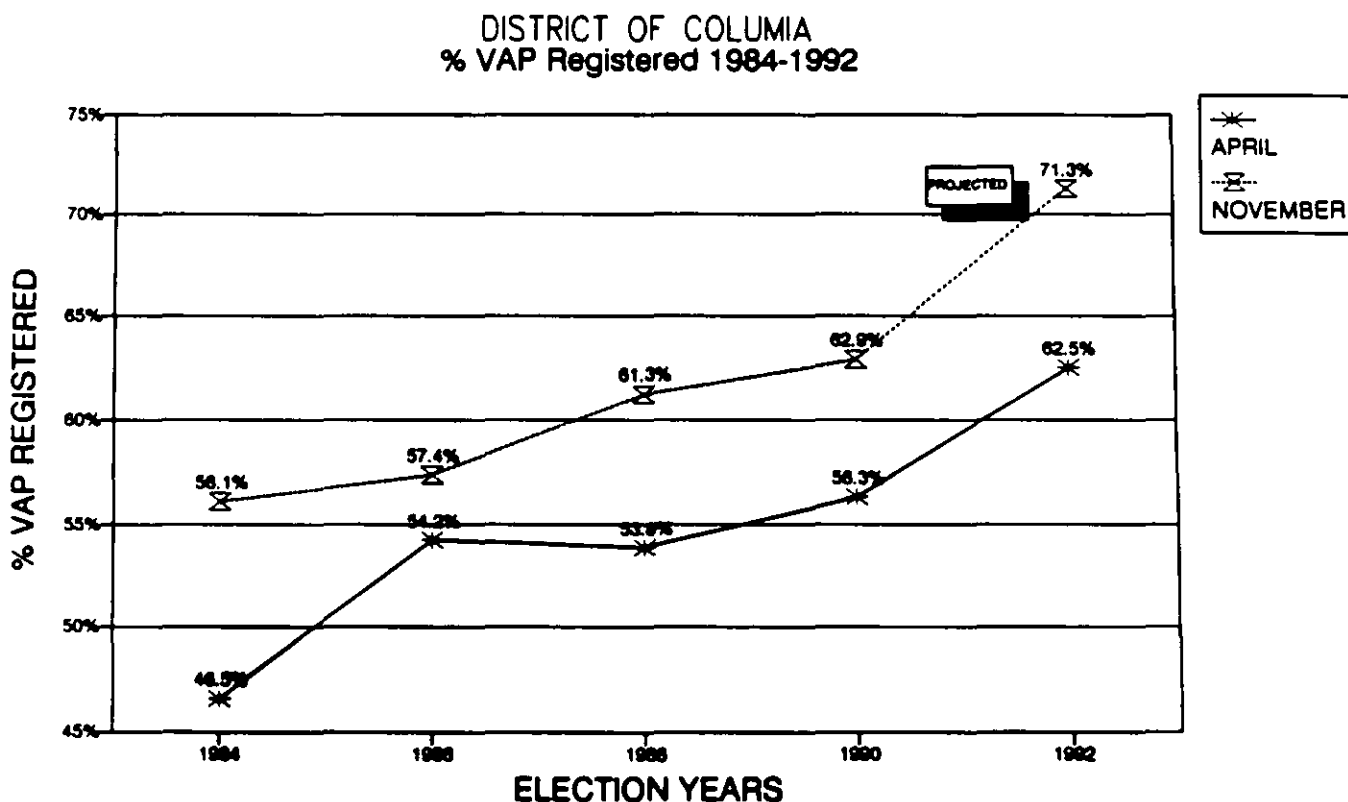
(3) household outreach: in 1990 BOEE utilized the low cost "marriage mail" technique to distribute postage-free registration request cards (in packets of coupons, pizza flyers, etc) to 268,000 D.C. households through a private mail house. This effort yielded about 10,000 new registrations during a normally slow period of the year.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See "Voters of Tomorrow Election Series" (VOTES) Manual and videotape entitled, "The Voice of the Future".

<sup>3</sup> Detailed project data and costs available.

(4) expanded information programming: media programming enhanced by TV PSAs and comprehensive "Election Media Info-Kits", with custom copy and statistics for media needs. Focus on candidate/campaign needs to reach voters, via low-cost agency access to registry database, with selection programs for mailing labels, printouts, and computer tape. Pre-election information mailers to voters enhanced, greater promotion of registration phone lines, added services for new citizens, language minorities, the elderly and handicapped.<sup>4</sup>

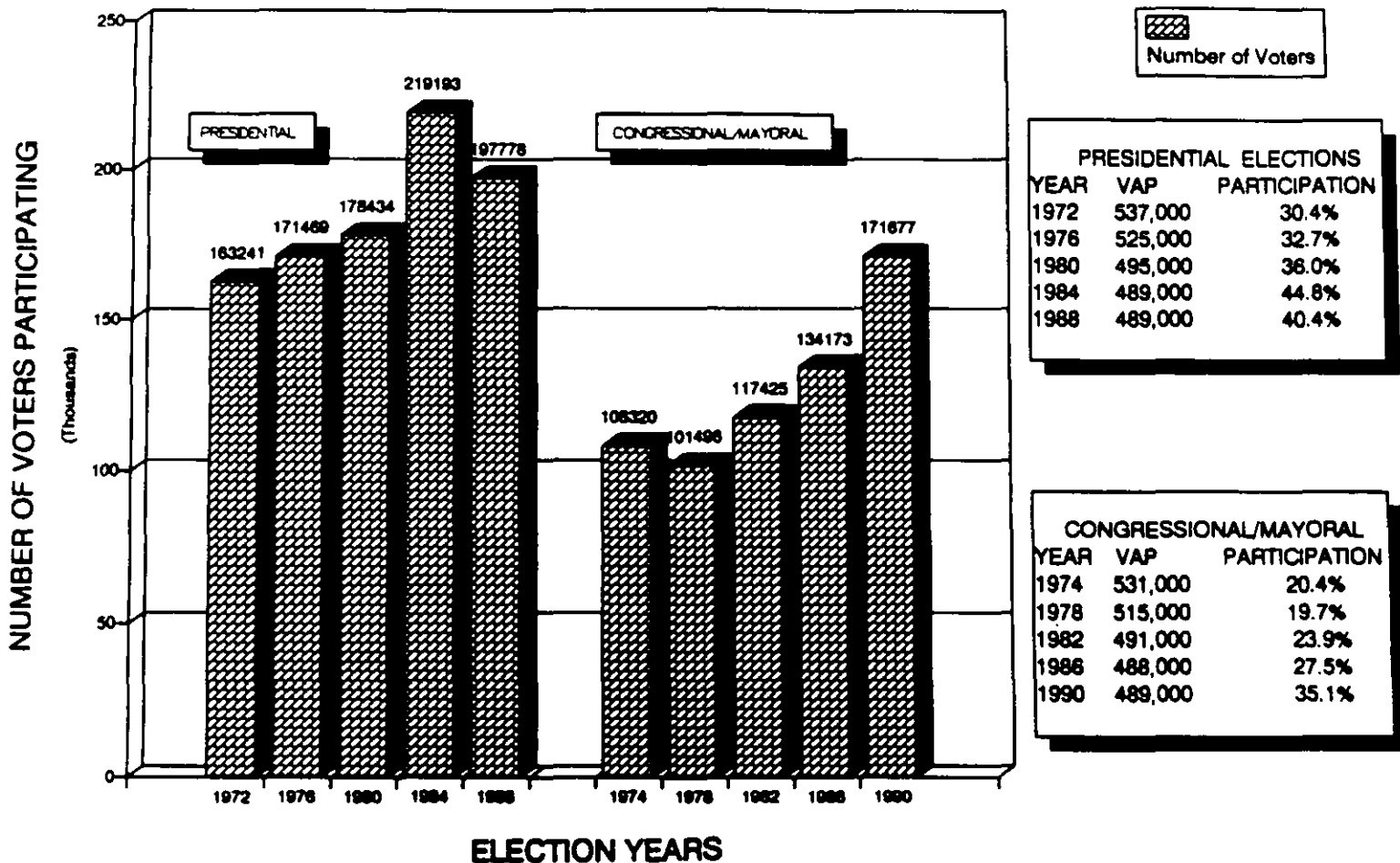
In this last four-year phase, based on activity to date, BOEE conservatively projects that a total of 155,000 new voters will have been added to the roll by the 1992 General Election. Over this same time, registry deletions will total some 115,000, for a projected 13% **net increase** of 40,000 registrants since 1988, to a registration level of 340,000 or 71.3% of VAP. Phase three progress is striking, for it shows an accelerating rate of increase in growth of registration as a percentage of VAP as reflected in the chart below showing changes in % VAP registered over 1984 - 1992. This expanding productivity, as discussed in the next section, is not, however, attributable to mail registration alone. It also reflects the impact of an entirely new factor: "Motor Voter."



<sup>4</sup> Materials and samples available.

As registration levels have risen, voter participation in the District has also shown steady increases, as detailed in the graphic below, which places turnout in General Elections held since 1984 in the context of turnouts in previous election years back to 1972.

### VOTER PARTICIPATION IN DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA GENERAL ELECTIONS



## 2. "Motor Voter" Registration

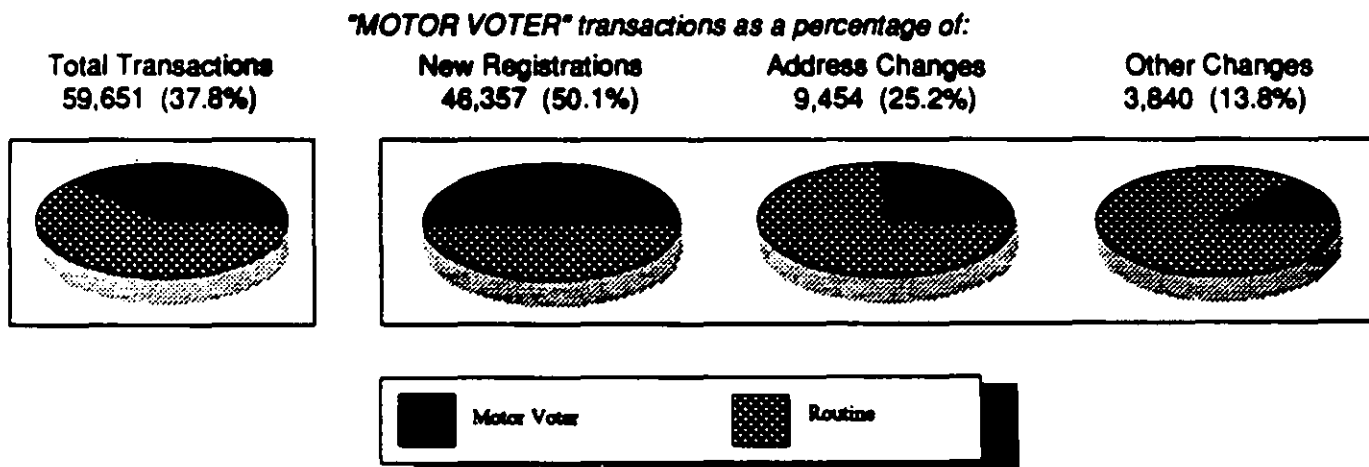
Implemented by statute in May 1989, the D.C. motor voter program allows residents to register to vote or update their existing voter records when they apply for or renew a D.C. driver's permit or non-driver's ID at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV). Motor voter is a revolutionary approach to registration reform which is based on institutionalizing the process in what has become a basic societal mechanism, driver's permit processing, which has nothing to do with elections.

Unlike mail registration, motor voter once established does not depend on the level of effort put forth by public agencies and private interests to realize its potential. Once the program is in place, it requires nothing but the passage of time to produce registered voters -- at a steady and substantial rate. Given studies which indicate that more than 90% of eligible voters nationwide hold drivers licenses or non-driver ID cards, motor voter over time has the clear capability to structurally elevate the registration rate to approach that level.

The D.C. motor voter statute, significantly, requires that a "combined" application form must be used, so that voter registration is accomplished on the same document filled out for driver's permit processing. This combined form features a two-part design in which the personal information required for both voter registration and driver permits is entered only once by the applicant, with only a second signature required for voter registration. This makes the process of registering to vote through the permitting process so convenient for the individual that it is almost automatic. After the form is separated, BMV and BOEE both retain an originally signed application document which is processed by each agency as usual.

In addition to adding registrants to the voter roll, motor voter works to keep existing registrations valid by providing a continuous flow of name and address changes, which help to maintain the currency of the registry. This factor is highly significant because most citizens have come to rely on drivers licenses and non-driver ID cards as their primary and essential identity card for virtually all social and financial transactions. As a result, they have an immediate interest in attending to its renewal when a name or address change occurs -- unlike their voter registration. Motor voter thus offers a potential long term and highly cost effective solution to problems with registry maintenance.

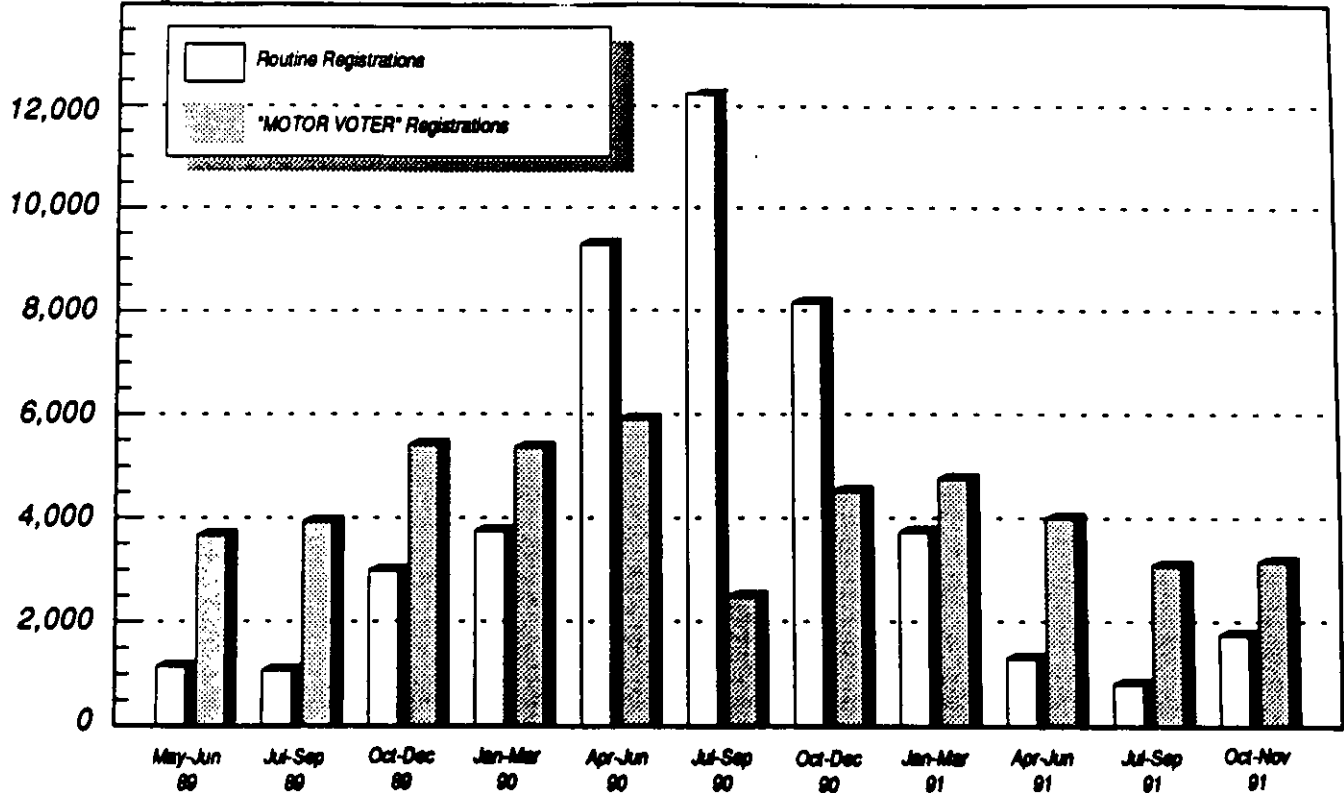
The impact of this innovative program on D.C. voter registration has been striking: after 31 months of operation (May 89 - December 1991), motor voter accounted for more than one-third of the total 155,000 registration transactions during the period and produced more than one-half of the total 92,618 new registrants, as shown below:





At the outset of 1992, motor voter registrants already comprised roughly 14% of the District's voter registration roll, having averaged some 4,500 new registrants in each quarter since implementation. The graphic below compares the intake of motor voter registrants with the intake of mail registrations over the period, revealing the unique capacity of motor voter to generate a relatively constant level of registration activity that is independent of the election cycle. By contrast, the mail-based process produces the typical "peaks-and-valleys" intake pattern driven by election programs, reflected in the chart by the surges in the months preceding the 1990 September Primary and November General Election.

Number of New Registrations



Motor voter works because it takes advantage of what government bureaucracies do naturally and can do well: perform repetitive service functions in a closed system environment. By marrying the registration and drivers permit record systems -- once the "shotgun wedding" has been mandated by law -- innovation sets in and the "impossible task" of "changing the system" becomes a shared administrative problem that gets solved sensibly. In D.C., for example, re-designing the BMV application form (a four-month process) led to consolidating the existing nine (9) BMV applications - new, duplicate, and renewal for drivers, non-drivers, and learners permits -- into a single form which now handles all nine functions, along with voter registration and organ donation! At BOEE, the 50% increase in registration activity and paperwork meant re-designing the work process, changing the computer screens, and altering some job functions -- but no additional staff or funding has been required. Similarly, BMV staff and funding has been unaffected after the initial conversion effort was complete.

When voter registration costs are examined, motor voter is by far the most cost effective method available. In D.C. the only expense of motor voter is the cost of forms, which works out to \$.13 per transaction, including the cost of the combined form for all BMV transactions which do not produce registrations. Figures below compare motor voter costs prior to the 1990 General Election with four other forms of mail registration used in the same period. These costs reflect direct expense to get the voter's registration to the central intake point and do not include the ancillary information programming costs which promote mail registration.

Motor Voter:	31,000 registrations at \$.18 @	(cost of forms)
Direct Mail-In:	12,000 registrations at \$.42 @	(form plus postage)
Phone Request:	7,000 registrations at \$.79 @	(adds two-way postage)
Registration Drives:	12,000 registrations at \$1.10 @	(materials and forms waste)
Household Mailer:	10,000 registrations at \$2.31 @	(268,000 pcs. "marriage mail")

The bottom line on motor voter is that the only true added costs the program will create, after short term startup and conversion expense, are the costs associated with operating a voter registration system at close to "full capacity", instead of close to "half-speed".

Not only are motor voter's costs strikingly low, its benefits are especially high in terms of outreach effectiveness. Motor voter succeeds where other methods fail in registering the hardest to reach citizens -- minorities, young people, and poor people. Because the process provides an institutionalized means for direct contact with 90% of the eligible voter population, its impact --while broadly directed -- is most greatly felt in registering persons in those societal groups and geographical areas who are least registered to begin with.

More than one-fourth of motor voter registrants in D.C. are under 25 and more than two-thirds are 34 or younger (data shown on next page). Analysis of motor voter impact by wards and precincts in D.C. indicates that wards with the lowest registration rates and highest concentration of minority, youth, and poverty population averaged 12% motor voter registrants, in mid-1991, while wards at the other end of the age and socioeconomic spectrum averaged only an 8.7% motor voter registration rate. A George Washington University political scientist used census demographics in an analysis which showed a positive correlation of .60 at the ward level between motor voter registration and percent minority population.<sup>5</sup> Motor voter thus works not only to structurally elevate the level of registration across the board, but also to reverse traditional inequalities in registration rates due to racial and economic factors.

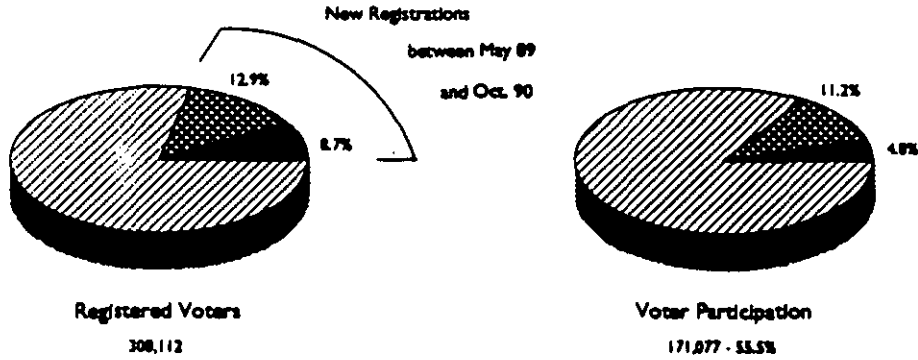
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<sup>5</sup> Wiley, Susan L. (1991) "The Impact of "Motor Voter" Registration on Voter Turnout and Electorate Composition in the District of Columbia: The 1990 Election." Paper presented at the Southern Political Science Association Annual Meeting. Tampa, Fla., November 7-9, 1991. The George Washington University Department of Political Science (202-994-8244).

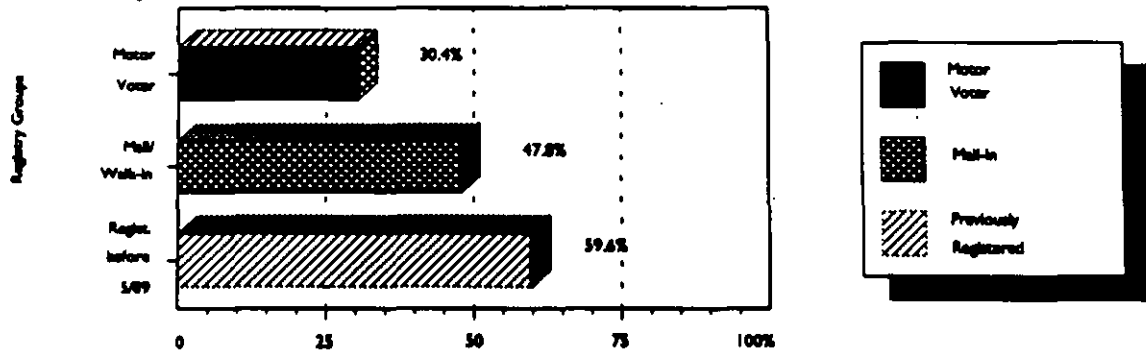
The graphics below depict registration and turnout profiles of motor voter and mail registration groups in the District's only General Election held since motor voter began in mid-1989 -- the November 1990 Congressional/Mayoral Election. A total of 26,756 motor voter registrants were on the roll, of which 8,132 or 30.4% voted, increasing overall turnout by 4.8%

DC Board of Elections & Ethics

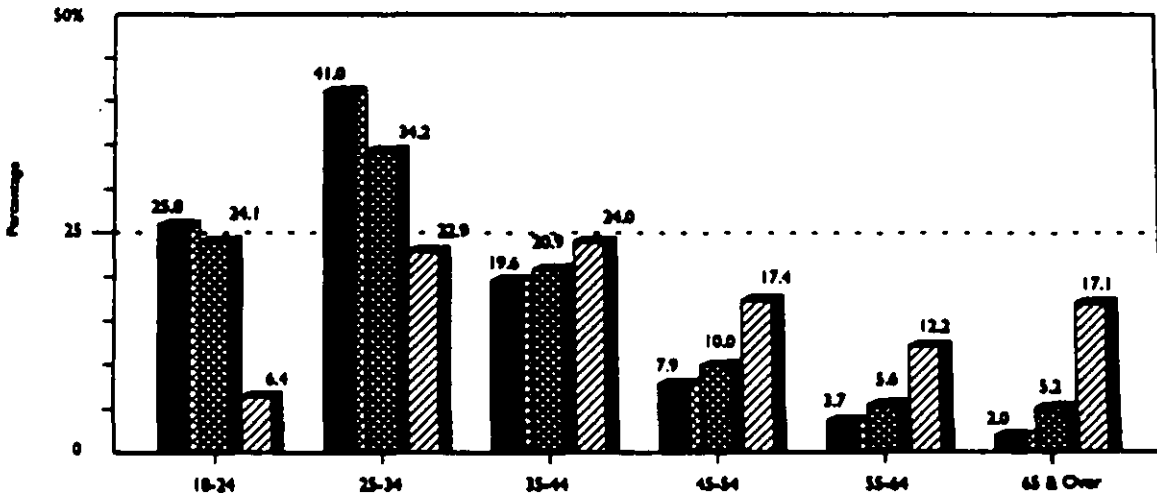
VOTER REGISTRATION & PARTICIPATION STATISTICS  
November 1990 General Election



Voter Participation Rates (%)



Comparative Age Profile of Registry Groups:  
Percentage Distribution of Motor Voter, Mail-in, and Previous Registrants over six Age Categories



Turn out of "motor voters" in the 1990 election can be looked at as a glass half empty or half full. It is markedly lower than the new mail-in registrants (30.4% vs. 47.8%) and barely half of the previously registered voters (59.6%). The respective age profiles of the three groups, however, show the relative youth of motor voter registrants, an attribute generally associated with low participation. Correlation of the motor voter group with age, race, and economic factors that generally produce lower participation rates probably accounts for most of the differential in turnout.

Based on this first opportunity to assess motor voter impact on participation, it is clear that the impact is real and positive, despite its lower rate. Since so many of the motor voter registrants are new to the system, and have entered it without having made an independent effort to do so, it also is likely that their participation rate will rise with further exposure to opportunities for voting. Indeed, the glass is half full, because motor voter is enrolling thousands of unregistered and previously unreachable citizens -- many of whom are in fact voting and all of whom are now within the information loop of the electoral process -- increasing the likelihood and assuring the opportunity of their voting in the future.

### 3. Maintaining an Up-to-Date Voter Registry

When BOEE set out to establish a model voter registration system in the District, two equally important goals were defined:

- (1) to maximize the level of voter registration, extending the District's hardwon franchise to the greatest possible number its citizens.
- (2) to assure the maintenance of an accurate and current voter roll to support the election system.

The second requirement is not often coupled with the first in the thinking of registration reform and voting rights advocates. Indeed, these goals are often seen as requiring two contradictory tasks -- with systematic removal of registrants from the roll occurring to the detriment of the effort to expand registration. In fact, the two processes are inseparable requirements of a registration system, and they are not truly contradictory. Finding the most productive ways to weave them together can enable efforts made in reaching one goal to serve the other as well.

The linkage between the two is found in the recognition that good maintenance of the roll means not only removing invalid records but also keeping valid records up-to-date, so that voting rights are preserved. This involves building a system that works to keep voter addresses current, the basis of voting eligibility, and to process voter name and party changes. A system that works to keep active voter records current, while identifying invalid records for removal, needs registrants to be informed about the system's updating procedures and requirements -- which means that an effective voter education program is essential. Voter education efforts build outreach and participation and connect the maintenance process back to the registration expansion goal.

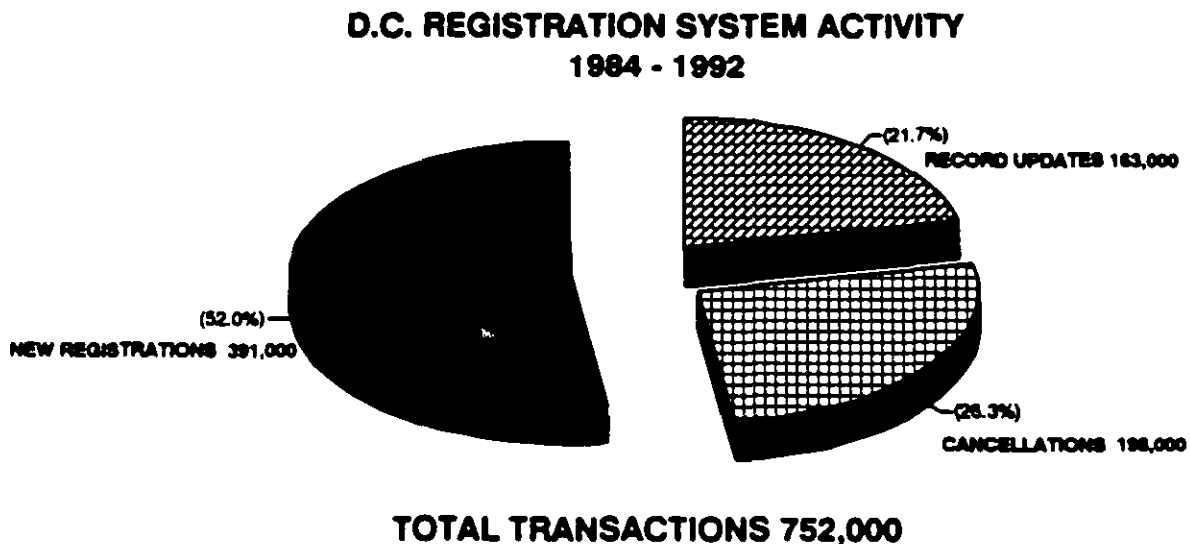
For example, BOEE at the outset established a "Biennial Mail Canvass" voter address verification

process, conducted in each odd-numbered year, to remove registrants from the roll who were no longer living at the address where registered. The mail canvass was intended to replace the four-year "Purge for Non-voting" -- the maintenance procedure used previously in the District and in most states today -- because the purge allows deadwood to accumulate on the rolls for four years and does nothing to educate voters. The mail canvass, by contrast, aims first at facilitating voter address updates to preserve registrations, with cancellation resulting only after two attempts to solicit a current address has produced no response. At the same time, the agency established its policy of issuing election-year voter information mailers -- to disseminate election information and advertise mail-in registration services -- but also included in them a user-friendly pre-paid postcard for sending in changes of address, name, or party.

This coupling of roll maintenance mechanics with voter education and outreach aims is reflected in other ways as well. When a voter registers in D.C., he or she receives a packet of informational material, which may be quickly discarded -- but it includes a plastic Voter Registration ID Card, providing precinct poll location and election districts. This card is saved and carried by voters -- and on the back is a space for the voter to enter a change of address, name or party, along with mailing instructions and deadlines. Education and maintenance objectives are linked.

More recently, BOEE built on the educational message of maintaining a current registration--delivered through mail canvasses in 1985, 1987, 1989, and 1991 and through voter information mailers in the intervening election years -- by successfully arguing for a new law permitting voters in 1992 to file a change of address on election day through the voting process. Because the agency could demonstrate the effectiveness of its systematic programs in keeping most voter records up to date, it made sense to extend service to those relatively few voters who had neglected to change address by the pre-election deadline -- and who were previously disenfranchised as a result. The new law is applicable as well to registrants affected by the mail canvass -- who are now "suspended" rather than removed, for a two-year period, and may be reinstated at the polls by filing an address change on election day. These provisions directly extend the franchise, by using the voting process itself to serve the goal of registry maintenance. (Or is it the other way around?)

The inter-related effect of these activities in the registration system is apparent when the magnitude of total registry transactions is considered. Over the eight-year period we have been tracking in the District, some 752,000 total voter record transactions have been processed, as shown below.



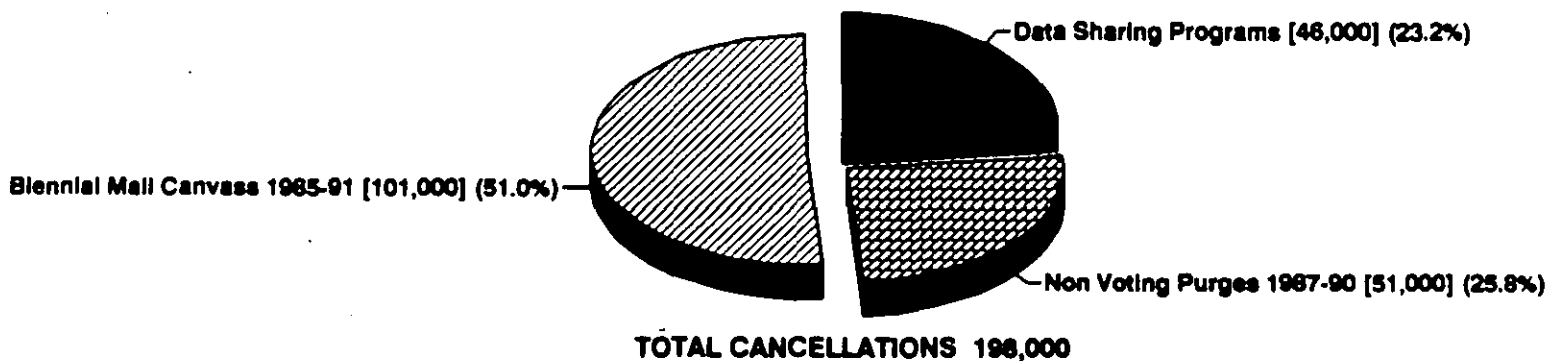
Half of these, 391,000 (52 %) represent new registrations, in a system that has actively pursued expansion of the roll. But the other half of this total, some 361,000 (48 %) transactions, roughly divided between record cancellations and updates, is equally important to the effective operation of the system. We have seen where the registration portion of the activity came from, so what produced the other half of the action?

The answer, of course, is the roll maintenance process, which serves to keep voter registrations current by generating record updates and assuring the integrity of the system by removing invalid records. Over the period three maintenance programs stimulated the updates and cancellations shown -- the biennial mail canvass voter address verification process; the annual purge for non-voting over a four-year period; and monthly "data sharing programs" which delete deaths, registrations in other jurisdictions, and convictions/commitments from the roll. Cancellation activity is shown below:

### D.C. REGISTRY MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS

1984 - 1992

#### RECORD CANCELLATIONS



As with improvements in the registration process, progress in improving maintenance techniques has been ongoing. Repeal of the non-voting purge -- which punishes registrants for the act of not voting and has been shown to produce disproportionate impact on minorities -- was accomplished in 1990, largely because BOEE documented its skewed impact in D.C. and showed that the procedure was outmoded and unnecessary with the mail canvass in place. The mail canvass itself is currently being refined to operate as more of a direct service to voters, through use of postal change of address data now available from the Postal Service, through its National Change of Address (NCOA) program. A provision of the new law authorizes BOEE to develop the technical capabilities to integrate the registry with the postal database through NCOA to further improve record updating -- with the capability notify voters to change their registration address when they file a postal forwarding address order.

The systematic maintenance process described above is what is necessary to preserve voter roll currency in a mail-based registration system. It requires extensive mail outreach, verification, and voter education procedures -- in short, the same level of effort dependency to work effectively as the mail registration system itself. Having "freed the process" of registration, significant follow-up efforts are required to continually "track it down." The great innovation of motor voter, however, offers a whole new approach to registry maintenance, as suggested earlier. In "institutionalizing the process", motor voter also institutionalizes its maintenance -- though ongoing drivers permit updates.

In a statewide motor voter system, for example, the capability exists to cancel and reinstate registrations, as voters in our mobile society move around the state. When a new registration from out-of-state occurs, the election office component of the system can notify the state of previous registration to remove the voter's record -- a process which already operates between state level election offices. Updates within the election jurisdiction, usually a county, are similarly processed though motor voter as in the D.C. system. Evidence of how effective motor voter roll maintenance can be is found the Michigan system which has operated since 1975. With some 85% registration already achieved by the system, the overwhelming majority of motor voter transactions are now for updates that maintain the system, rather than for new registrations. In D.C., with the program just begun, the proportion is reversed, as shown earlier in motor voter statistics -- but in time the impact of maintenance activity will surpass that of registration, as the rate of registration climbs.

### Conclusions

What are the strategies that will increase voter registration in the United States? The answer is whatever works to put in place the available and proven tools that have been identified. There is no great mystery about what can work, only over how to mandate it. The federal legislation that has languished in the Senate for several years would certainly meet this requirement -- but an increasing number of states are moving ahead on their own.

It is sometimes observed that voter registration itself is really a vestigial function -- that it originated only as a mechanism for exclusion -- based on wealth, race, gender, age -- so that the universal franchise we now enjoy makes registration unnecessary. Or, that we have to have registration in the United States only because we don't have a national "internal passport" system and therefore have to sign up to vote as a separate affair. In fact, voter registration systems are entirely necessary for other and quite substantial reasons. Their function is to specifically define the electorate, and for a variety of purposes: localized voting eligibility, candidate nomination, election management, and public/political access to those who may vote, to name a few. We need the registry not to exclude but to communicate, inform, educate, and deliver services to the electorate.

The problem with voter registration has been that we have not effectively integrated the process into societal routine, and have left this vital procedure too much to "individual responsibility" -- meaning that it has to compete with everything else that is also covered by the phrase. As this paper makes clear, there are straightforward and effective ways to do so. Mail registration, with adequate resources, and motor voter registration both work to solve the problem by shifting responsibility for achieving universal registration to the government, a step which does nothing to dilute the responsible

action of anyone on their own to secure their individual registration in the name of personal responsibility.

Given shrinking public sector budgets and competing service priorities, it seems clear that the level-of-effort costs implicit in an active mail registration system may limit effective expansion in this direction. One caveat, however, may lie in the affordable new GIS technology, which has been utilized for redistricting in many election agencies. These microprocessor-based systems, which can run computerized geographic data from the 1990 Census in conjunction with local election data, offer a broad new set of targeting possibilities for mail-system applications that could dramatically improve cost-effectiveness. But based on the D.C. experience, in which a cost-free motor voter program is outperforming a fairly well-funded and outreach-oriented mail system, it seems that the "agency-based" model demonstrated in motor voter is the better answer.

Agency registration, of course, can be expanded to other government agency record processes to expand its breadth and coverage -- welfare, employment, education, and other social service agencies can be used to extend the motor voter model to other settings. Expanding agency-based registration services is a potential that will be explored by BOEE in 1993, and it is clearly possible to approach universal registration over time through a combination of agency services. And in a future where dramatic and permanent expansion of voter registration is the norm, election offices should be able to shift much of their service focus toward programs and outreach aimed at better informing and stimulating turnout. The "early absentee voting" model adopted recently in Texas -- along with a statewide motor voter program -- may be such a harbinger of changes to come.

Factors in motivating turnout and altering voting behavior go beyond the scope of this paper, but it is well known that a respectably high percentage (75 to 80%) of those registered turn out to vote in Presidential Elections. It also may be reasonable to expect that achieving universal registration will create a quantitative change of such magnitude in our election system that a qualitative impact may occur in its wake. What the "critical mass" in the voter registration system of the United States may be that is necessary to alter the status quo of voting behavior is something we can hope to soon discover.