Cost of Elections:
Online Voter Registration & Provisional Ballots

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Maricopa County Profile

• **1,843,698 Active Voters** (2,201,525 with Inactives)
  – 38% Republican
  – 34% Party Not Designated
  – 28% Democrat
  – (Less than 1% Green & Libertarian)

• Voting Rights Act Coverage:
  – Section 203: Spanish & Tohono O’odham
  – Section 4f4: Spanish
  – Section 5 Preclearance

• Conduct elections for all jurisdictions with exception of the City of Phoenix.

• Blended system of optical scan & DREs

• 64% Voters on Permanent Early Voting
Online Voter Registration
History

• Arizona’s Motor Vehicles Department has provided the public the opportunity to update their information online since 1997.

• Because the DMV is an established voter registration agency under the Federal National Voter Registration Act (NVRA—or Motor Voter), this online service was simply extended to voter registration in 2002.
In a Presidential Election Year, not having to process this volume of paper forms is critical.
2012 YTD Voter Registration Sources

70% of all VR was done online

388,633 YTD
In Arizona we have had online voter registration since September, 2002.

In 2007 we separated out the MVD counter forms from those coming via the online Service Arizona site so all totals from 2002-2006 contain both online AND counter forms.
What are the numbers?

• There has been a lot of research, academic studies, and attention to online voter registration & modernization; it’s convenience and efficiencies.
Costs

• In 2002 less than $100,000 was invested in implementation:
  – Purchases: Servers & Licenses
  – Staffing & Labor

• It costs approximately $125,000 a year to maintain:
  – Developers for maintenance & enhancements
  – Mainframe fees
  – Licenses
Impact of Online Voter Registration

Some key points:

• In the first year the number of registrations coming from MVD almost doubled from 47,234 in 2002 to 97,576 in 2003.

• For the first Presidential Election after its implementation the number more than doubled again to 224,299 online registrations in 2004.

• In 2008 we received 462,904 online registration forms which is almost 28 times the number of forms received from MVD in the year preceding the launch of online registration (16,831 in 2001).

• The 2012 election we didn’t see the same volume: 388,633.
Savings

- The savings realized by using online voter registration fall into 3 categories:
  - Cost to process a registration form
  - Printing and materials costs
  - Tangential savings with shifts in staff & resources
Impact of Online Voter Registration

- Online registration saves tax dollars as the voter is keying their own information, eliminating hours of overtime in large election cycles.
- **Standard VR = $0.83 vs. Online VR = $0.03**
- In the 4 year period of 2008-2012 YTD, MCED had 1,721,246 forms sent via the online system at a processing cost savings of almost **$1.4 million**.
That million dollar+ savings is only in 1 county in the state (albeit the largest population):

Statewide we have seen 2,005,390 via internet and another 1,818,876 forms processed electronically at MVD since implementation.
The savings nationally would be tremendous
Impact of Online Voter Registration

☑ From implementation through 2011, printing costs for voter registration forms were reduced by 83%--we went from ordering forms twice yearly pre-implementation at an average cost of $81,000 per year to ordering twice in the entire 8 year period post-implementation and the yearly average of only $14,226. (One as a result of citizenship documentation requirement passage so savings would have been even greater.)
Legislative Costs

• These savings would have extended into 2011/2012, but the content and format of the registration forms changed twice in that time due to legislation, resulting in additional printing runs and their associated costs.

• But we have found other ways for it to allow for good stewardship of the public’s resources...
Impact of Online Voter Registration

• Because our voter registration clerks have the dramatically smaller number of paper forms keyed in advance of Election Day, they are available to complete other operational functions.

• This reduces the number of temporary staff hired as well as overtime hours.
Here VR staff assist in preparing our Inspector Packets which are delivered to the boardworker in charge of the polling place on Election Day. This function was previously done by 10 temps in the week before the election. **Cost savings of $4,000 each election for this single function.**
Impact of Online Voter Registration

✓ Online registration eliminates keying errors by clerks unable to read illegible handwriting—it puts the voter in control of their own destiny.

✓ Although the accuracy of voter-entered data is beneficial, does convenience come at a cost?

✓ The online system expanded to include the ability to request to be on our Permanent Early Voting List (PEVL)
Initial Mailings on First Day of Early Voting

- 2000 G: 155,999
- 2002 G: 171,495
- 2004 G: 239,189
- 2006 G: 198,174
- 2008 G: 637,288
- 2010 G: 593,682
- 2012 G: 1,004,052

Graph showing mailings from 2000 to 2012 with peak in 2010 Online.
Rate of EV Return 1992-2012

With that volume, we saw a decrease in the % return rate in the midterms, a slight recovery this year.
Rate of EV Return 1992-2012

But an increase of 202,318 voters voting by mail: 763,887 in 2008 to 966,205 in 2012
2010 Return Rate

- When we first experienced a drop in the return rate we analyzed the source of those requests.
- Online was the 3rd highest source.
- This type of information is also extremely helpful in litigation as well as cost analysis.
2012 General

• The impact soared this election.

• Our online request comprised 45% of voters who didn’t vote their early ballot and went to the polls and voted provisionally.

Source of Those PEVL Requests?

- Online EZ Voter
- PEVL Card
- Voter ID Card
- AZ Dem Party
- City
- Candidates
- Mi Familia
- Written Request
- Voter Reg Form
- Alt Format
- AZ Ed Assoc
- UFCW
- Promise AZ

45%
2012 General: Registered in 2012

• Voters who registered to vote this year and ended up voting a provisional ballot were even more likely to have signed up for the PEVL online:

Source of Those PEVL Requests?

69% of the provisional voters who registered this year and didn’t vote their EV signed up for PEVL online.
2012 General: Wrong PP

• In Arizona voters have to go to the correct PP in order for their ballot to count.

• We saw an increase in the percent that went to the wrong place, almost a third were on PEVL:

  Why more? It all adds up:
  • 72,185 provisional voters were on the PEVL which means they didn’t get a sample ballot because they were mailed an official ballot—of those going to the wrong place 2344 are on PEVL.
  • The source of those PEVL requests for 97% of the voters was the online VR System...

Thousands of PEVL provisional voters had moved and did not receive their Early Ballot because they had not updated their registration and ballots are non-forward able.
General 2012 Provisionals

- More PEVL = more provisionals.
- We had a **20% increase** in provisionals in the recent General Election.
- The growth was due to half being voters who were on the PEVL—**59,622** to be exact...

Pre PEVL 1% of voters who requested an Early Ballot still went to the polls, post PEVL it increased to 3%.

*This General Election that rose to 5%.*
Our provisionals were everywhere.
COST?

• All this comes with a cost, including staffing.
• We had almost 300 workers post election working on Early Ballots & Provisionals.
• Payroll statistics are some of the easiest data to collect.
Cost of Provisionals

- Provisional form: $0.09
- Envelope: $0.05
- Signature Verification: $2.25 (research of the voter & signature verification)
- Processing: $1.50 (scanning, envelope & ballot processing, etc.)

**TOTAL:** $3.89

Gen 2008= $394,889.46  
Gen 2010= $205,255.85  
Gen 2012= $477,423.59

This doesn’t put a price on the longer lines due to provisionals nor the hits to voter confidence when covered poorly by the media.
Local media told the public that provisional ballots get “thrown in the trash”—there is a cost to that as well.
IF NOT REGISTERED an additional:

- VR form .13
- Envelope .02
- Postage .44
- TOTAL .59 ($4.48 total)

Gen 2008: 8,818 voters costing $39,504.64 total
Gen 2010: 3,113 voters costing $13,946.24 total
Gen 2012: 7,220 voters costing $32,345.60 total
IF ON PEVL an additional:

- EV ballot: $0.30
- Envelopes: $0.14
- Inserts: $0.07
- Postage: $0.10
- Processing: $1.51

**TOTAL**: $2.12 ($6.01 total)

Gen 2008: 25,176 voters costing $151,307.76 total
Gen 2010: 25,475 voters costing $153,104.75 total
Gen 2012: 59,607 voters costing $358,238.07 total

More than doubled!
Permanent “Early” Voting List

- In the recent General Election we had more than 171,000 voters drop their EVs at the polls.
- This saved the County around $77,000 in postage.

This DID delay results however, as all the EVs have to be scanned prior to beginning work on the provisionals which further exacerbated the heightened environment.
Replacement Envelope

- More than **11,000** voters left their EV ballot envelope at home which causes them to use a replacement envelope which isn’t barcoded with their information and it has to be manually researched and entered.

Estimated Cost? $20-25,000
Almost one quarter of a million more voters voted by mail this election—if they had not gotten on PEVL (and gone to the polls instead) the story would have been about lines in Arizona.

This picture was taken just after the polls opened at dawn of voters who had lined up prior to 6:00 AM.
Solution?

It’s a balancing act:

Convenience vs. Security
Education vs. Misinformation
Mistrust vs. Confidence
Privacy vs. Transparency

Pros & Cons—
and all come at a cost.