AVR Implementation in Vermont
Background

- The AVR law passed in Vermont with only a single vote against it.
  - 30-0 in the Senate and 149-1 in the House

- This happened because we got buy-in from the DMV first
  - They were in the committee rooms testifying with us and saying it was doable

  - We had worked closely with them previously to implement electronic transfer of their records - provided a foundation for transition to AVR

- Went into effect on January 1, 2017
Basics of the System

- We implemented electronic transfer in 2015 (standard NVRA opt-in)
  - Determined DMV was collecting (“keying”) all of the data we needed for voter registration - except citizenship.
  - DMV created a “voter flag” instead which meant two conditions were met:
    1. the applicant checked “yes” on citizenship question
    2. the applicant checked the box for voter registration
  - We get all records with that flag.
    - No back door to a non-citizen list because some citizen applicants decline.
Implementation

- Simple
  - Change the language/question on the DMV form from opt-in to opt-out
  - Prepare the clerks for an increase in volume of DMV records
  - We get the DMV file nightly > applicants placed on clerks EMS dashboard.
  - Clerks review/approve them daily.
Substantial Increase in DMV registrations

- # of new registrations or updates to existing records received from the DMV.
  - 2015: 2,929 (4 months - approx. 9,000 for the year)
  - 2016: 12,791
  - AVR IMPLEMENTATION
  - 2017: 19,229
  - 2018: 19,574

(increase and consistency, no fall off in the off year)
Benefits

- More people registered

- Clean-up of existing Voter Records
  - Legacy records are often incomplete, may only contain name
  - Have added many DL #s and birthdates, corrected addresses.
    - Means these people can use our My Voter Page.
Issues

- Initial error being sent records for other non-license transactions
  - Human error in DMV IT sending over-inclusive file
  - We were able to roll back all of those records, and then processed all of the daily files from that period once DMV had corrected the files.

- Voters who did not want to be registered upset with clerks

- People accusing us of registering people “against their will”
Expansion / Improvements

- Approached by advocates about moving to a back-end system
  - Benefit would be removing voter registration questions from the DMV side.
  - We see it as a step back in VT, introduces state staff mailing, delay, “pending” status, and opportunity for error.
  - System now is fast, without mailing cost, no state staff time, and less error prone.
  - There is no cookie cutter approach

- Expansion to other agencies
  - Determine whether collecting (keying) necessary data, inc. citizenship
  - If on paper, incorporate opt-out questions into body of their form.
And remember,

When we do this work to make voter registration for all eligible voter easier, we are all . . .