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Wisconsin State Elections Board
Statewide Voter Registration System

SVRS Overview
January 2004

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Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) overview. HAVA was enacted by Congress to make sweeping reforms and improvements to voting systems and voter access in all states. Many municipalities and counties in Wisconsin perform some function of keeping voter registration records. However, HAVA goes further by mandating that all voter registration records be stored within a single registration system. HAVA mandates the collection of specific information (e.g., driver's license number) and agreements between the state's chief election officer and the state agency for motor vehicles. HAVA includes requirements for a single, centralized, voter registration database, privacy and independence of the voting process, access for people with disabilities and voter outreach. HAVA presents a unique opportunity to design, develop, and implement more reliable voting technology.

Current state of voter registration in Wisconsin. Currently, only municipalities with a population greater than 5,000 people are required to register voters. Thus, approximately 320 (out of 1,850) municipalities have some form of voter registration. These municipalities account for approximately 75% of the estimated total of the voting age population. The 320 use a variety of computer systems, ranging from Excel spreadsheets and Access databases to off-the-shelf voter registration software. Currently, several counties (e.g., Ozaukee, Eau Claire and Racine) serve as the hub of resource and technology sharing for voter registration for most (and sometimes all) of the municipalities within their borders.

SVRS Implementation Project – RFI Study. As stated above, HAVA was signed into law in October 2002. In the spring of 2003, the State Elections Board undertook a study to determine what it would take to implement SVRS in Wisconsin. Through that study, the State was able to learn and document the current voter registration and election management environment, develop and refine technical and business requirements of the new statewide voter registration system (SVRS). The study began the collaboration between the State Elections Board, counties, municipalities, and other State agencies directly impacted by HAVA; namely, the Division of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Health and Family Services, and the Departments of Justice and Corrections.

The study also provided the State with a range of estimates for the possible five-year total cost of ownership of the system. The study identified that a significant cost driver of the new system will be the number of users. To address this concern, and to provide smaller municipalities with an option to serve their voters without incurring significant technology costs, proposed legislation (AB-600) was drafted to allow municipalities the option to partner with another municipality or county to complete the data entry/technology aspects of the new system. The difference to the State between the extremes (i.e., 72 county locations vs. 1,850 municipal locations) could be approximately a doubling of the systems total cost of ownership.

In November of 2003, the State Elections Board began the process of selecting a vendor to provide the SVRS. This process is expected to conclude in the summer of 2004 when a vendor will be selected and implementation will begin. The deadline for implementing HAVA is December 21, 2005.

SVRS and Local Municipalities. From a local perspective, municipal and county clerks need to know what it will take for them to implement HAVA and the State's SVRS plan. As mentioned above, proposed State statutes gives municipalities two options: self-performance of all aspects and technology and resource sharing. In each of these scenarios, the municipality would be responsible for the following functions and tasks:

- Self-performing model
    - Voter contact– working with voters to manage registration forms, etc.
    - Initial hardware (local workstation)
    - Initial hardware installation
    - Ongoing hardware maintenance and replacement
    - Networking (high-speed network connection)
    - Training; initial and ongoing (system upgrades and clerk turnover)
    - Ongoing staffing for data entry

- Technology and resource sharing model
  - Voter contact
  - Provide voter data to technology partner

At this point in the process, municipalities have been presented with the requirements mandated by HAVA and the costs associated with owning the technology responsibilities of SVRS. The municipalities are being asked to state their intention to the State Elections Board whether they will self-perform. The statement of intent is non-binding, pending the creation of a formal Memo of Understanding (MOU) between technology sharing partners. Through their normal planning and budgetary processes, the municipality and its sharing partner will create a formal MOU with a copy being delivered to the state.

In order to make an effective business decision for themselves and the state, a local operating model has been created for municipalities to review (presented below). At this point in time, the State's SVRS project team is meeting with clerks from every municipality and every county.

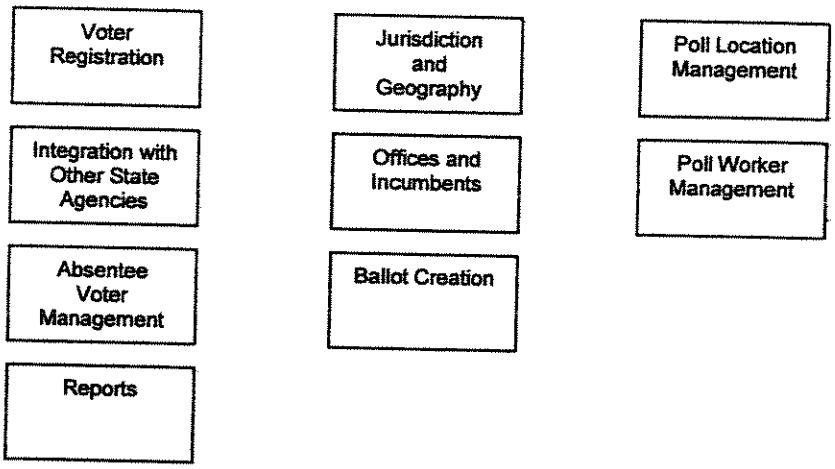
Local Operating Model. The local operating model is a high-level description of the future state of voter registration in Wisconsin from a municipality/county perspective. The local operating model comprises four important domains:

- Functions of the SVRS Computer Program. What will the new system do and what can be done by clerks without the SVRS system?
- Technical Requirements. What type of processor will sit on the desk of the clerk? What kind of connectivity to the main system? What other hardware (e.g., bar-code scanners) can be used with the new system?
- Staffing Requirements. How many full-time equivalent (FTE) staff will be required to perform any additional process? How many FTE may be reassigned based on process efficiencies with the new system?
- Economic Model. The economic model is an estimate of costs and alternatives to municipalities and counties because of the new system. Under proposed State law, municipalities may partner with other municipalities or the county to perform the data entry aspects of voter registration. The economic model looks at the effects on cost of this option. The model looks at the five-year total cost of ownership to the municipality.

A more detailed presentation of the components of the Local Operating Model follows.

Local Operating Model (continued).

SVRS Functions. The functions of election management within the scope of the SVRS project are presented in the figure below. With the exception of voter registration and the integration with other state agencies, each of these functions is already performed by every municipality in the State. The new SVRS system will change how data is electronically processed, stored, and reported.



Technical Requirements. The anticipated technology for the new system is show below. Peripheral technology at the municipal level includes optional bar-code or optical scanners and printers.

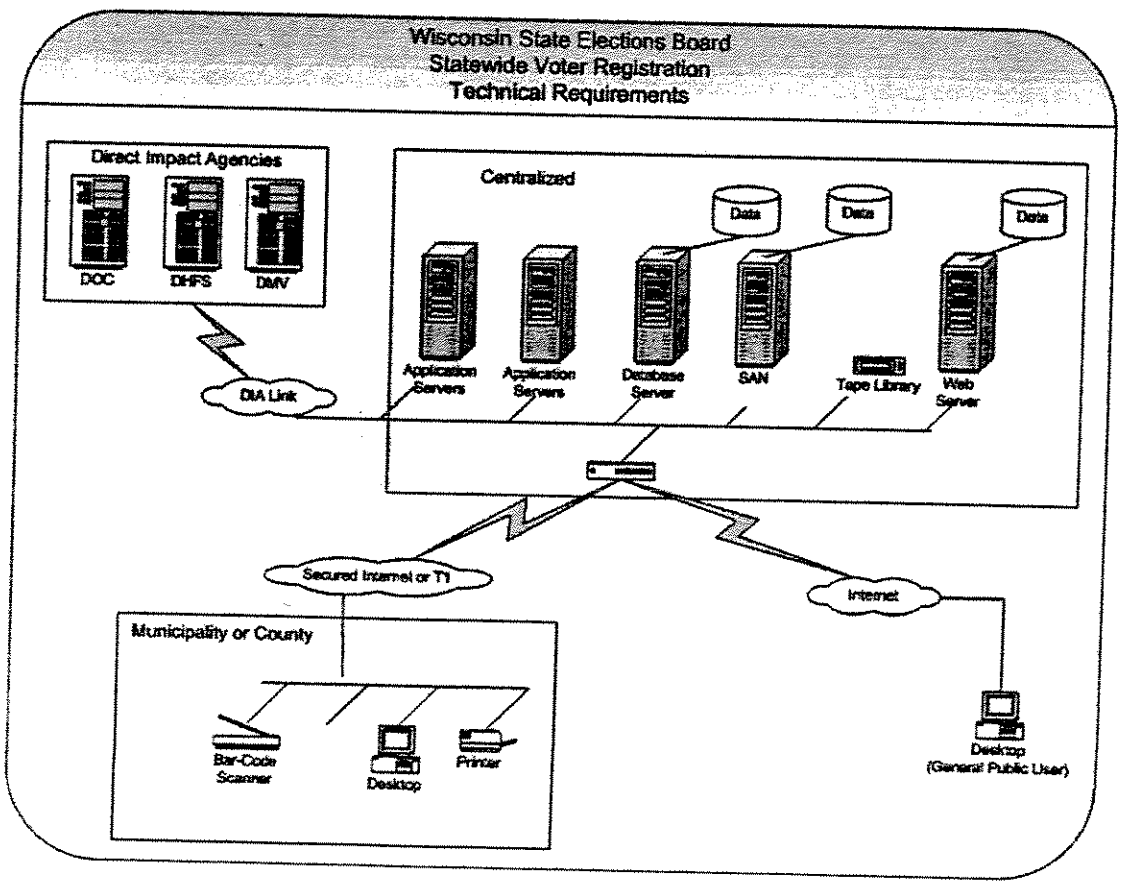


Figure 1. Technical Requirements

Staffing Requirements (initial). If a municipality will self-perform its technology functions, then staff time will be required in the following areas

- Conversion planning and testing
- Training
- Connectivity
- Memos of Understanding

Clerks in municipalities that do not have voter registration currently will require some training related to the processing and storing of election forms.

Staffing Requirements (ongoing). On an ongoing basis, the staffing requirements for the municipality will be a function of whether it partners with another municipality or county to share technology and resources. Functionally, the municipality (or county) will have some responsibility within each of the functions listed in the SVRS functionality section:

- Voter registration
- Absentee voter management
- Election day activities
- Integration with other State of Wisconsin agencies
- Geography and jurisdiction changes
- Ballot creation
- Poll location management
- Poll worker management
- Reporting

Economic Model. The economic model is an outline of the costs that a municipality will incur because of the new SVRS. Because of the possibility to partner with another municipality or county, there are two versions of the economic model. One version of the model is for municipalities that will self-perform and/or is the technology partner for other municipalities and for counties who are the technology partner for municipalities. The second version is for municipalities that partner with another municipality or county. Most of the costs in this second version are eliminated.

Cost Element	Cost to Municipality if Self-Performing	Cost to Municipality if Partnering
Initial software	• Direct cost reduction Reduction if municipality is paying annual maintenance fees, etc. for specialized software	• None
Software modification	• None	• None
Software implementation	• Staffing cost for data conversion, software implementation on local workstations (possibly)	• None
Initial hardware	• Cost of desktop workstation and peripherals (printer, etc.) • Cost of high-speed network connection • Cost of security (i.e., physical access to SVRS workstations)	• None

Cost Element	Cost to Municipality if Self-Performing	Cost to Municipality if Partnering
Hardware implementation	• Purchasing desktop, etc. • Installing desktop, etc. • Installing high-speed network connection	• None
Software maintenance	• Staffing costs during periods of software upgrades	• None
Hardware maintenance	• Ongoing costs of hardware repair • Replacement and upgrades • Monthly network connection fees	• None
Initial training	• Staffing costs	• None
On-going training	• Staffing costs for training on software upgrades and in the case of clerk turnover	• None
On-going staffing	• Data entry for voter registration and all other aspects of SVRS-related election management	Direct costs Possible additional voter registration deputy
Other annual costs	• None	• Shared services fees with municipality/county providing technology and resources