

Election Day Registration is the New Rule; Is Utah Prepared?

Only two of eight county voting offices contacted by the ACLU of Utah had posted information about Election Day registration online.

Public News Service

October 15, 2018

Link: <https://www.publicnewsservice.org/2018-10-15/civic-engagement/election-day-registration-is-the-new-rule-is-utah-prepared/a64298-1>

SALT LAKE CITY – This year's election in November will be the first in which all of Utah's 29 counties offer Election Day registration at the polls.

Advocates for the system are hoping for a smooth rollout.

If you show up to your polling place on Nov. 6 and find your voter registration information is out of date, or you haven't previously registered, you should be able to take care of it on the spot.



Jason Stevenson, strategic communications manager for ACLU of Utah, says this is an important change, since Utah's rate of voter participation has been low compared to that of other states in recent elections.

"That's because there's a lot of barriers to people getting out and voting," he explains.

"People's lives are complex, people move, people are deployed overseas, people even move within their neighborhood and they can end up in a different precinct and all of the sudden find that their names are off the voter rolls."

A 2017 report from [Nonprofit VOTE and the U.S. Elections Project](#) shows states that offer Election Day registration tend to see higher voter turnout.

Stevenson is optimistic that that can happen in Utah, if the program is rolled out effectively.

An [ACLU survey](#) of county clerks' offices found not all were prepared for the new system.

Stevenson says [voting information](#) is a little different in each county, and few county clerks' offices in Utah have posted clear information about Election Day registration on their websites so far.

"But more troubling was when we started asking questions and we found out that some county clerks were either unaware about Election Day registration, thinking vote by mail was really the only system out there, or had not trained their poll workers to be able to handle people showing up on Election Day and asking to register and vote," he states.

With three weeks until Election Day, however, Stevenson says there's still plenty of time for counties to promote voter education, train poll workers and update their websites.