



September 27, 2021

Linda H. Lamone, State Administrator
151 West Street, Suite 200
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, Maryland State Board of Elections
Governor Larry Hogan
Senate President Bill Ferguson
Speaker Adrienne A. Jones

RE: Federal Agency Voter Registration in Maryland

According to the U.S. Census, as of November 2020 nearly a million Marylanders are eligible to vote but aren't registered. On March 7, 2021, President Biden issued an [Executive Order](#) aimed at expanding access to voting across the United States: "The right to vote is the foundation of American democracy.... But many Americans, especially people of color, confront significant obstacles to exercising that fundamental right." To address this, Section 4(b) of the Executive Order empowers states to designate federal agencies as voter registration agencies, and encourages those agencies to agree to such designation "to the greatest extent practicable."

Although the State Board of Elections has long had the authority to designate federal agencies in Maryland as voter registration agencies ([Md. Election Law Code Ann. § 3-204](#)), the current list is sparse. The Everyone Votes Maryland Coalition urges the State Board of Elections to exercise its authority to designate additional voter registration agencies in our state as soon as possible.

Federal agencies operating in Maryland have an important role to play in reaching eligible voters - specifically those who are registered at [lower rates](#) including Black and Brown, low-income, and young people. Designated agencies would use voter registration procedures similar to those employed by the Motor Vehicle Administration and the Department of Social Services. Ideally, this would also include offering nonpartisan education on the voting process itself, because lack of information is also a barrier.

By increasing the opportunities to register to vote when they interact with public agencies, the President's recent Executive Order should help motivate increased participation among Marylanders. Specifically, we recommend prioritizing the following agencies and programs:

- Social Security Administration (SSA), particularly through its administration of the SSI and SSDI programs
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, at naturalization ceremonies
- U.S. Department of Education, particularly through its administration of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), particularly through its administration of healthcare.gov, navigator assistance programs, and Head Start

programs; as well as through any programs serving Native Americans in Maryland (such as Tribal TANF, Tribal TANF Child Welfare program, and Native Employment Works)

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), particularly through the Public Housing Operating Fund, through service coordinator programs like multifamily housing service coordinators and housing counselors, and through any other applicable housing programs for low-income communities
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), particularly through its medical, homelessness, and vocational rehabilitation and employment services for veterans with disabilities—including the Veteran Readiness and Employment Program, the Transition Assistance Program and Chapter 36 - Personalized Career Planning and Guidance program—and through the GI Bill online application and the disability online application for compensation (form 526ez)
- U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), particularly through JobCorps, Transition Assistance Program, and Reentry Employment Opportunities programs like Pathways Home
- U.S. Department of the Treasury, particularly through its Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, Low-Income Taxpayer Clinics (LITC), and Tax Counseling for the Elderly
- U.S. Department of State, through online applications for passport renewals
- U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), through the National Park Service and any programs serving Native Americans in Maryland
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), particularly through its food commodity programs and housing assistance programs like the Section 502 Mortgage Loan program, Section 515 Rental Loan Program, and Rural Rental Housing Assistance
- United States Postal Service, through post offices in our communities

There are likely additional programs within these agencies, and possibly additional agencies, that are good candidates for voter registration. We encourage you to consider this list a starting place rather than an exhaustive list of places to offer voter registration to eligible Marylanders.

Like the State Board of Elections, the Everyone Votes Coalition is committed to advancing civic engagement and fairness by ensuring that every eligible Marylander can easily register to vote. When more citizens are registered, more citizens will vote, and our democracy and our state will be stronger.

Thank you for your consideration.

Joanne Antoine, **Common Cause Maryland**
Nancy Soreng, **League of Women Voters of Maryland**
Kim Coble, **Maryland League of Conservation Voters**
Emily Scarr, **Maryland PIRG**
Caylin Allen Young, **ACLU of Maryland**
American Federation of Teachers - Maryland
Larry Ottinger, **Our Maryland**
Rich Norling, **Sierra Club Maryland**
Christine Lemyze, **Indivisible Howard County**
Laura Williamson, **Demos**
Andy Ellis, **Baltimore City Green Party**
Charly Carter, **Democracy Initiative**
Raymond Perez, **College Democrats of Maryland**
Robin C. Murphy, **Disability Rights Maryland**