Citizens, Not Spectators

Lesson 2: Becoming a Voter: Who Can Vote?

Student Handout 3: National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (Motor Voter Act)

Pre-lesson Homework Assignment

The following excerpts are from the National Voter Registration Act of 1993.

Source: http://www.eac.gov/assets/1/workflow_staging/Page/27.PDF

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993, also known as the Motor Voter Act, was signed into law by President Bill Clinton on May 20, 1993, and became mandatory in 1995. Qualified citizens can register to vote at departments of motor vehicles, schools, public libraries, and a number of other public offices. The Motor Voter Act also supported mail-in registrations and voter registration drives held by individuals and nongovernmental organizations.

The Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice offered the following explanations:

1973gg. Findings and purposes
(a) Findings
   The congress finds that—
   (1) the right of citizens of the United States to vote is a fundamental right;
   (2) it is the duty of the Federal [National], State, and local governments to promote the exercise of that right . . .

(b) Purposes
   The purposes of this subchapter are—
   (1) to establish procedures that will increase the number of eligible citizens who register to vote in elections for Federal offices;
   (2) to make it possible for Federal, State, and local governments to implement this subchapter in a manner that enhances [adds to] the participation of eligible citizens as voters in elections for Federal offices . . .

(a) In general
   . . . in addition to any other method of voter registration provided for under State law,
each State shall establish procedures to register to vote in elections for Federal office—
(1) by application made simultaneously [at the same time] with an application for a motor vehicle driver’s license pursuant[required in] to section 1973gg-3 of this title;
(2) by mail application pursuant to section 1973-4 of this title . . .

1973gg-3. Simultaneous [at the same time] application for voter registration and application for motor vehicle driver’s license
(a) In general
   (1) Each state motor vehicle driver’s license application (including any renewal application) submitted to the appropriate State motor vehicle authority under State law shall serve as an application for voter registration with respect to elections for Federal office unless the applicant fails to sign the voter registration application.

1973gg-4. Mail registration
(a) Forms
   (1) Each state shall accept and use the mail voter registration portion of an application form prescribed [written into law] by the Federal Elections Commission . . . for the registration of voters in elections for Federal offices.

1973gg-5. Voter registration agencies
(a) Designation [assignment]
   (1) Each State shall designate] agencies for registration of voters in elections for Federal office.
   (2) Each State shall designate as voter registration agencies –
      (A) all offices in the State that provide public assistance; and
      (B) all offices in the State that provide State-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities
   (3) (A) In addition to voter registration agencies such as public libraries, public schools, offices of city and county clerks (including marriage license bureaus), fishing and hunting license bureaus, government revenue offices, unemployment compensation offices, and offices not described in paragraph (2) (B) that provide service to persons with disabilities; and
      (ii) Federal and nongovernmental offices, with the agreement of such offices.

Questions
1. What was the purpose of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (Motor Voter Act)?
2. By what means did the Motor Voter Act plan to accomplish its purpose?
3. To what level of elections did the Motor Voter Act apply?
4. Does the Motor Voter Act extend voter registration services to private organizations that may want to offer voter registration services?