Citizens, Not Spectators

Lesson 2: Becoming a Voter

Student Handout 2: 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. Numbers and letters, such as 1973gg, indicate sections of the law.

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, 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 the participation of eligible citizens as voters in elections for Federal office; . . .
(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 with an application for a motor vehicle driver’s
   license pursuant to section 1973gg-3 of this title;
   (2) by mail application pursuant to section 1973gg-4 of this title; . . .

1973gg-3. Simultaneous 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) Form
   (1) Each state shall accept and use the mail voter registration application form prescribed
   by the Federal Election Commission . . . for the registration of
   voters in elections for Federal office.

1973gg-5. Voter registration agencies
(a) Designation
   (1) Each State shall designate agencies for the 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 designated under paragraph (2) . . .
      (B) Voter registration agencies . . . may include—
         (i) State or local government offices 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 services 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?