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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-06-247](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) was enacted in part to help ensure that only eligible persons are registered to vote. Under HAVA, as of January 1, 2004, states were to create computerized statewide voter registration lists to serve as official rosters of legally registered voters for elections for federal office. States, however, were given the option to seek a waiver to postpone implementation of HAVA provisions until 2006. All but nine states did so.

This report discusses the experiences of the nine states that were subject to the original HAVA deadline—Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Minnesota, South Carolina, South Dakota, and West Virginia. The report describes actions election officials in these states reported taking to meet specific HAVA requirements—as applicable to their states—for (1) establishing computerized statewide voter registration lists and (2) verifying the accuracy of information on voter registration applications and maintaining accurate computerized voter lists. GAO is also reporting what states said about challenges they faced and lessons learned implementing the requirements.

Draft sections of this report were reviewed by the nine states; the Election Assistance Commission, which was responsible for coordinating HAVA waivers; and the Department of Justice. GAO incorporated technical comments, as appropriate.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-247.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact William O. Jenkins, Jr., at (202) 512-8777 or jenkinswo@gao.gov.

ELECTION REFORM

Nine States' Experiences Implementing Federal Requirements for Computerized Statewide Voter Registration Lists

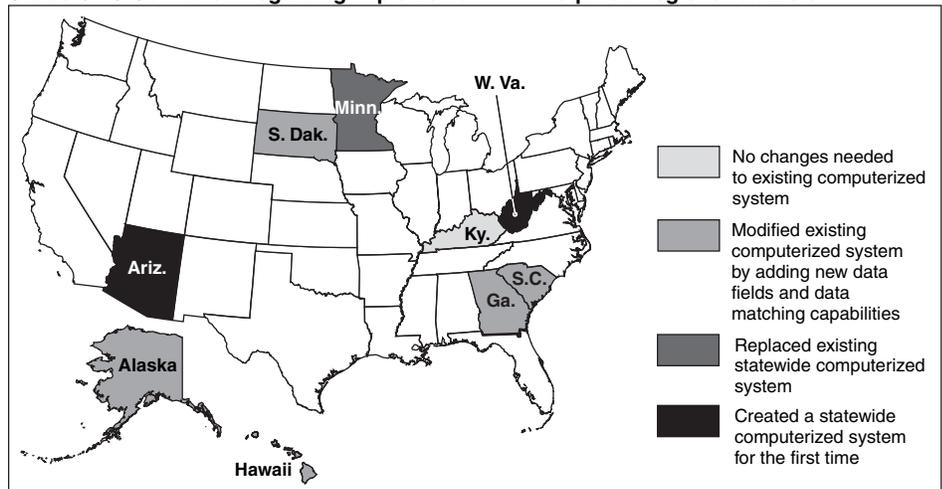
What GAO Found

To establish the HAVA-required registration lists, five states modified existing computerized statewide voter registration systems; one state replaced an older system with a new one; and two states created statewide voter registration systems for the first time, according to election officials (see below). Officials from the ninth state reported no actions were taken because the state had such a registration list in place prior to HAVA.

State election officials reported they took steps to verify information provided on voter registration applications and maintain their voter lists as required by HAVA. States either completed or were in the process of completing the required matches of voter registration information with state motor vehicle agency or Social Security Administration records. Officials from all nine states reported conducting the list maintenance activities required by HAVA: eliminating duplicate registrations and coordinating the voter list with state agency records on felons and the deceased to identify and remove the names of ineligible registrants. According to officials from four states, implementing HAVA improved the accuracy of the voter lists, for example, by correcting errors in voter information before they were entered into the statewide list. Officials from the other five states reported little to no improvements to the accuracy of their lists in part, some said, because they had established systems similar to those required by HAVA prior to the enactment of the law.

State election officials reported they faced challenges and learned lessons while implementing the HAVA requirements. For example, officials from seven states reported their experiences taught them that collaborating with local officials to develop the computerized statewide systems later helped them successfully implement the systems.

States GAO Contacted Regarding Implementation of Required Registration Lists



Source: GAO interviews with state election officials.