

DECREASED VOTER REGISTRATION AT PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AGENCIES AFTER THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION – FINDINGS, ANALYSIS & SUGGESTIONS BASED ON OHIO’S EXPERIENCE -- **VERSION 9-3-13**

Norman Robbins, Research Director, Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates

INTRODUCTION

Low income voters in America are disproportionately under-registered¹. The NVRA Act of 1993, which required voter registration by Bureaus of Motor Vehicles (BMV’s) and public assistance agencies, increased registration over the ensuing years. However, voter registration through the BMV is far simpler and more seamless than at public assistance agencies. As a result, BMV registration has held steady over the years whereas public assistance agency registration has fluctuated before and after Presidential elections and also with law suits leading to improved compliance. The under-registration of low-income people, in part due to these inconsistencies and in part to technologic barriers, detracts from their civic engagement and challenges our claims of being a representative democracy. In addition, in states like Ohio, insufficient updating of voting address by low-income populations contributes substantially to the large number of provisional ballots that must be processed -- incurring costs, delays, and controversy over election outcomes.

This new report shows that in the 8 months after the 2012 election, Ohio (one of the nation’s best public assistance agency performers²) and at least several other states experienced large and sustained drops in voter registration by public assistance agencies. In Ohio alone, this report projects that in calendar 2013, 87,000 fewer low-income registrations will be made through ODJFS (Ohio Department of Job and Family Services) than in previous years if no remedial action is taken. It is imperative to determine the cause of this gap in voter registration between low and higher income Americans and to devise effective remedies: over the next year, many more low-income citizens will become eligible for “public assistance” voter registration due to the expansion of Medicaid and subsidies offered for HealthCare Exchange participants under the Affordable Care Act. Data mainly from Ohio and Cuyahoga County are used here to document and analyze the current issues, and to begin a discussion of solutions. It is already clear that the seamless ease of voter registration (including change of address) provided by BMV’s must be extended to low-income voters in order to level the playing field of civic engagement.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In many of the years since 1996, voter registrations at public assistance agencies nationally have plummeted 25-50% in the two years after Presidential elections, and the same drop was found in a sample of 6 states in the months after the 2012 election. Ohio alone, in the 8 months beginning November 2012, witnessed a 45% drop, of about 50,000 registrations by the Ohio Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS), compared to the same months in the 2 preceding years. Projected to the calendar year of 2013, this would result in 87,000 fewer ODJFS voter

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Voting and registration in the election of November 2012, available at: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>

² A preliminary analysis of the public assistance agency data within the Election Assistance Commission 2011-2012 biennial NVRA Report, available at: <http://www.demos.org/publication/preliminary-analysis-public-assistance-agency-data-within-election-assistance-commission>

registrations. In contrast, national voter registrations from the Bureau of Motor Vehicles have stayed relatively constant before and after these elections. Analysis of Ohio data showed that the “yield” of voter registrations, from ODJFS in-person, telephone, and attached-application contacts, also suddenly dropped 45% beginning in Nov. 2012, accounting for nearly all of the total decrease in ODJFS voter registrations. The analysis also revealed that the growing use of on line applications apparently had only a small effect on the decline, whereas fewer in-person interviews may have played some role.

- “Saturation” of voter registration of the ODJFS population running up to the 2012 election does not account for the post-election drop in registrations. For instance, data from the Cuyahoga County JFS appear to show that in March 2013, a large fraction of its clients was still unregistered 5 months after the election. Also since low-income people move far more frequently, changes of address (which accounted for over 70% of registrations coming from the Cuyahoga JFS) would be an ongoing necessity regardless of the timing of the election.
- Several steps could be taken so that ODJFS clients, often under stress when they apply for benefits, are afforded the same ease and automaticity that BMV clients currently experience in registering to vote (e.g. by introducing automatic transfer of change-of-address information to local BOEs by ODJFS, automatic printing and mailing of completed registration forms except for signature, and return postage-paid envelopes for completed forms). Postage-paid envelopes and on line tracking will also be needed to document the number of agency-promoted registrations in the same way that BMV registration data are readily available. Technologic innovation could facilitate on line change of address for NVRA clients with this capacity. Increased automation and on line transfers of information would also increase accuracy and decrease costs of registration.
- The large drop in voter registrations by ODJFS since November 2012 could further increase Ohio’s perennially high level of provisional ballots cast (costing at least \$0.8 million dollars in 2012) because voters have not updated their registration address. A constellation of findings reported below shows that low-income populations, which move the most, live in zip codes with the highest percent of provisional ballots. In addition, without updates of their addresses, registered voters will not receive notifications of elections or new polling locations, or vote-by-mail applications.
- Another recommendation is to greatly enhance the awareness and promotion of voter registration by other “registration agencies” such as public libraries, which are heavily used by low-income people.
- On the national level, the Elections Assistance Commission could proactively alert the public and our political leaders to the drastic losses in voter registration, as reported here.

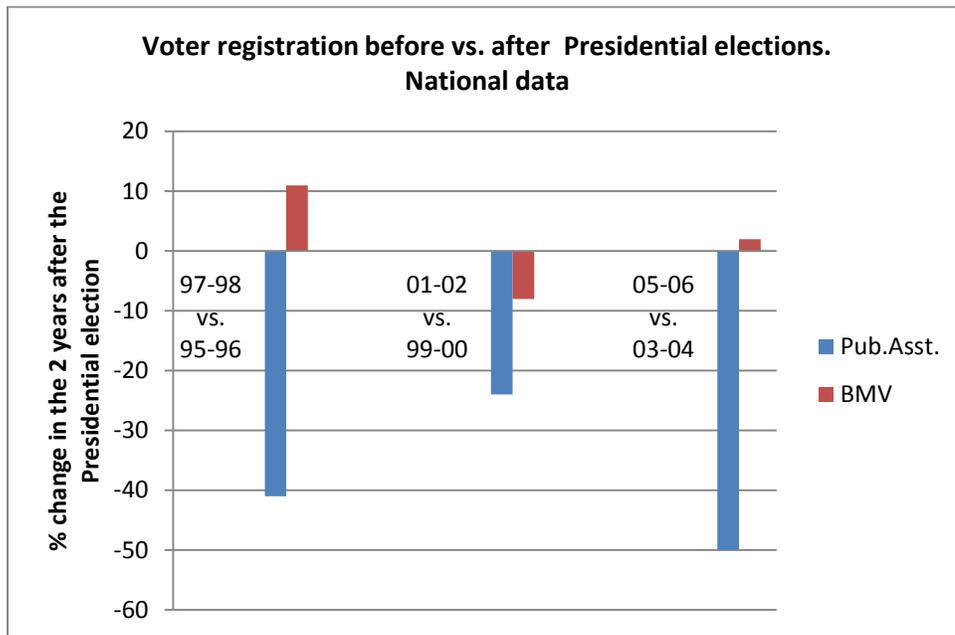
REPORT

A. THE PROBLEM:

1. National and multi-state. The federal Election Assistance Commission (EAC) reports registration data on a biennial (two-year) basis for most but not all states. Voter registrations at public assistance agencies began to increase after a nadir in 2005-2006 in part due to successful legal

actions to obtain compliance². Before these legal actions (from 1995 to 2006), a pattern was evident: after the two years leading up to the Presidential election, the next 2 years showed a 24-50% drop in voter registration by public assistance agencies (Table 1 and Fig. 1). This report presents more recent data on voter registration after the November 2012 election. Even in several states where court cases had led to more effective registration programs and where monthly data were available, the drop in registrations in the 6-8 months after November 2012 ranged from 25 to 45% (Fig. 2), with Ohio showing the largest (45+%) decrease. It is also striking in the national data (Fig.1) that the post-Presidential-election drop in registrations from public assistance agencies was not consistently found in registrations from BMVs in the post-election two years compared to the pre-election 2 years³. The “Recommendations” section of this report will address what may explain this disparity in voter registration between public assistance agencies and BMV’s, and what might be done to reduce it. Finally, in the years after 3 Presidential elections (“After” in Table 1), registrations did not mount up to restore the previous pre-election numbers: rather, there was a steady decline in these numbers (as noted previously). In other words, the decrease after Presidential elections was not fully compensated by increases building up to the next Presidential election. Rather, subsequent increases after 2008 probably reflect the effect of numerous legal actions in those years².

Fig. 1⁴ Note consistent post-election drops in registration by public assistance agencies (“Pub.Asst.,” blue bars) vs. small and inconsistent changes in registration by BMV’s (red bars).



³ In Ohio, the number of voter registrations obtained by the BMV and reported to the EAC dropped in the 2 years after the 1996, 2000 and 2004 Presidential elections by 10%, 10% and 28%, respectively (as opposed to the national data cited). However, the available data for 2012-2013 (in Cuyahoga County) show no post-election decrease. ODJFS 2009-2010 biennial data registrations were not usable in this connection because of large increases in ODJFS registration related to a legal settlement that went into effect January 2010.

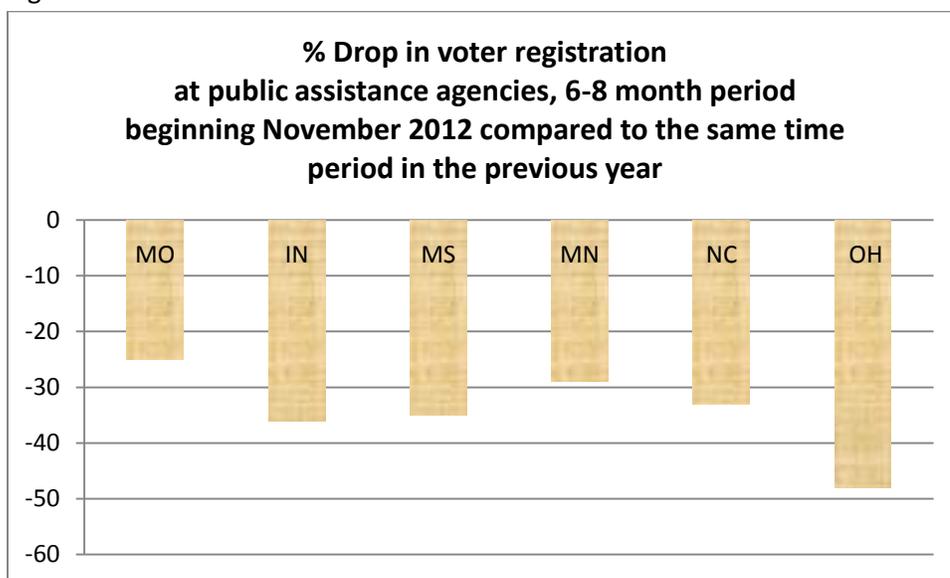
⁴ Computed from Elections Assistance Commission data compiled by DEMOS

Table 1. NATIONAL NVRA VOTER REGISTRATION TOTALS, from the Elections Assistance Commission (compiled by Demos⁵). These two-year data start from the end of registration in the year before to the end of registration in the later year of the two-year interval (e.g. 95-96 means from close of registration in October 94 to the close of registration in October 96).

Years	Before or after a Presidential election	Public Assistance Agencies	Bureaus of motor vehicles
95-96	Before	2602748	13722233
97-98	After	1546671	15175653
99-00	Before	1314500	17393814
01--02	After	999042	16026407
03--04	Before	1050479	16120091
05--06	After	527752	16486702

Data from '07 to '10 were not included because in this period registrations from public assistance agencies increased in response to law suits and compliance settlements

Fig. 2



⁶Source

2. Ohio, Cuyahoga and other counties⁷. Monthly registration data from ODJFS, beginning January 2010, showed a seasonal annual variation, but a very much larger drop beginning in November 2012 than in previous years (Fig. 3). The pattern was almost identical in Cuyahoga County (figure not shown) for the same period. The 8 months, November through June, were used for

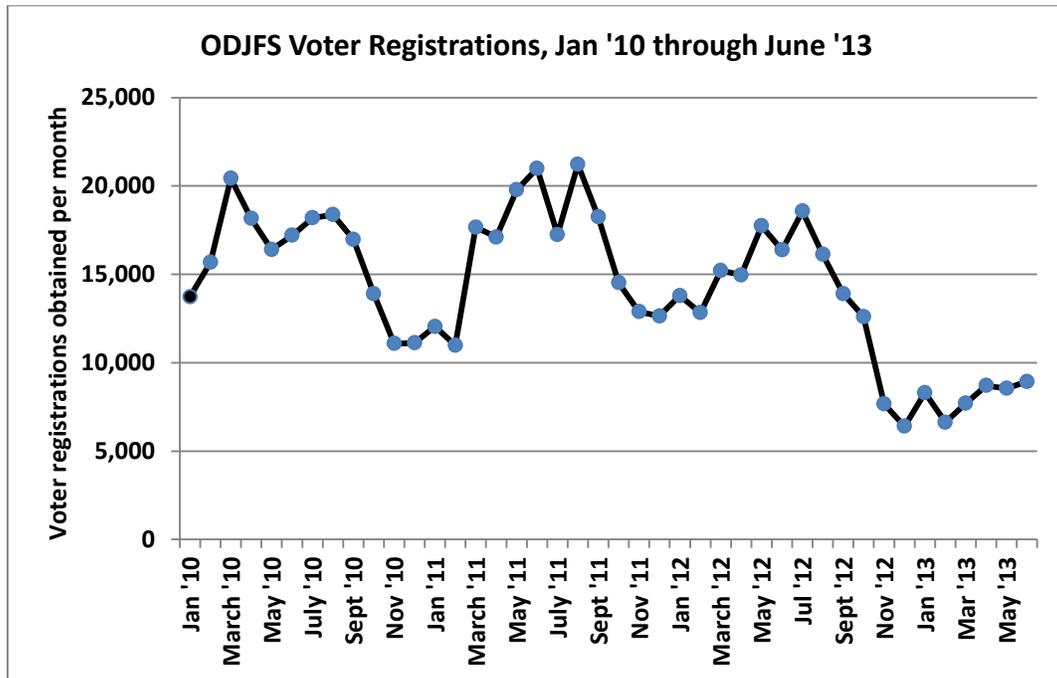
⁵ Table 2 in “Registering Millions: the success and potential of the National Voter Registration Act at 20”, J.M.Ch, 2013. Available at: <http://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/RegisteringMillions-NVRA-Demos.pdf>

⁶ Computed from Elections Assistance Commission data compiled by DEMOS

⁷ Data from ODJFS, DEMOS

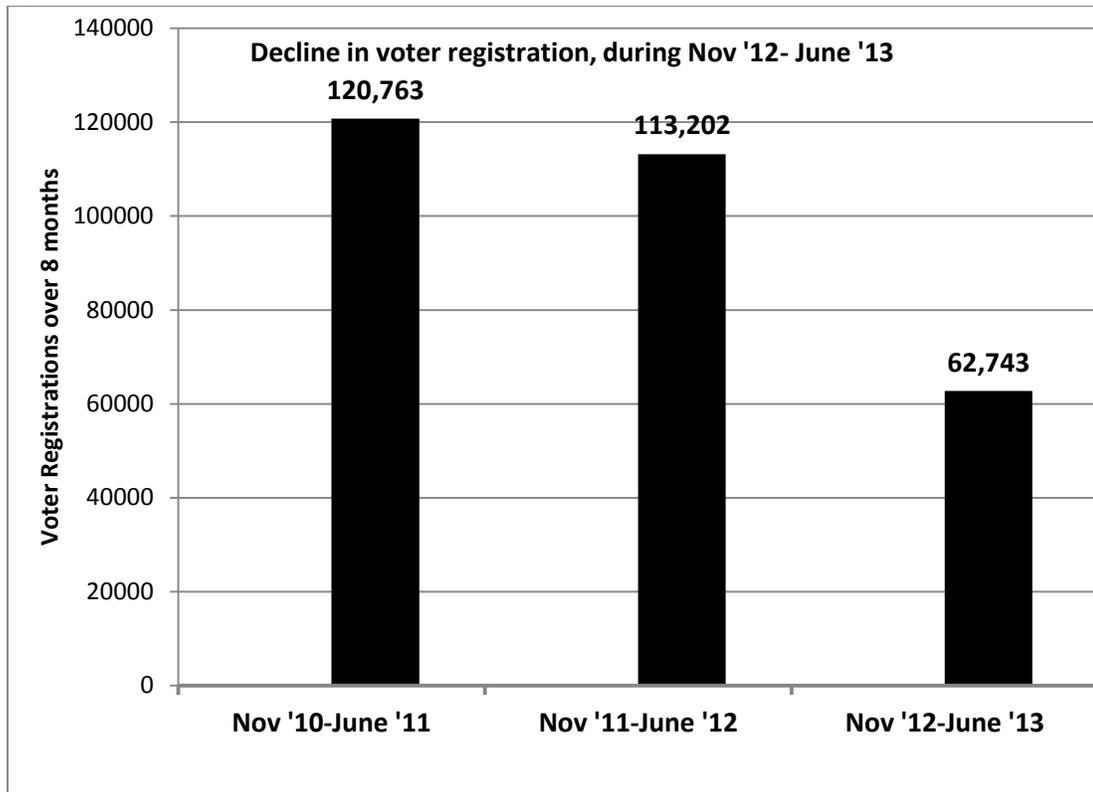
comparison to maximize the newer data available since the November 2012 election. In both state and Cuyahoga County data, registrations in Nov '12-June '13 fell by 45% when compared to the same months of the previous 2 years (Fig. 4). In these 8 months, there were over 50,000 fewer registrations than in the same 8-month period of the two previous years. If the same percent reduction lasts throughout 2013, there would 89,000 fewer registrations not including on line registrations. If we add back possible registrations which were initiated on line and then sent to the Board of Elections (BOE) or the Secretary of State⁸, the **projected annual losses in voter registration in 2013 would be closer to 87,000 statewide and 9,500 for Cuyahoga County.**

Fig. 3



⁸ In Calendar 2011, there were 197,203 ODJFS voter registrations. If a 45% reduction in registrations persists through all of 2013, there would be 45% fewer registrations, i.e. $.45 \times 197,203 = 88,742$ fewer ODJFS voter registrations. Since an estimated 2,000 voter registrations may have been submitted by ODJFS clients directly to the BOE or Sec. of State, this would reduce the “deficit” of registrations for calendar year 2013 to 87,000 (rounded). 2011 was chosen as the year for comparison because unlike 2010, it was not the beginning of a new ODJFS registration program, and unlike 2012, it was not a year that included registration drives for a Presidential election.

Fig. 4. Registrations obtained by ODJFS in comparable 8-month periods



B. WHAT EXPLAINS THE POST-ELECTION DROP IN VOTER REGISTRATION AT ODJFS?

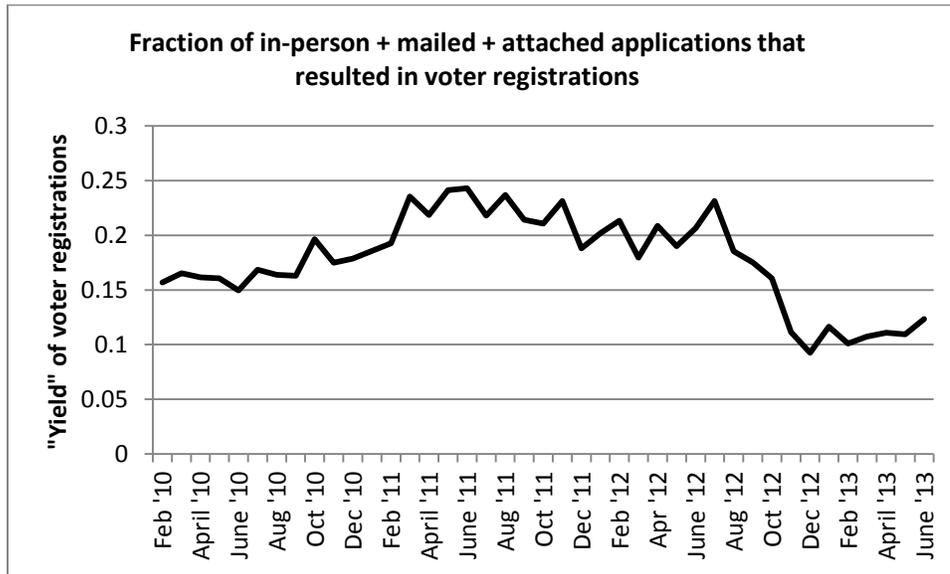
1. “Yield” of voter registrations⁹. As part of the Harkless vs. Brunner legal settlement¹⁰, effective as of 2010, ODJFS reported separately the monthly number of in-person, mailed, and attached offers of registration – i.e. the numbers of “contacts” with clients on applications, reapplications, and changes of address. In order to see if the efficacy or “yield” of these contacts changed over time, the monthly number of registrations was divided by the total number of contacts (in-person + mailed + attached to applications), and plotted over time (Fig. 5). This normalizing approach eliminates effects due simply to changes in the numbers of contacts in any particular month or time period. In fact, the total number of contacts in the time periods compared was similar (561,000 in Nov’11-June’12 and 574,000 in Nov’12-June’13). However, the change in yield was striking: after yields averaging about 0.20 from Nov ’11 through June ’12, the yield rapidly dropped to and stayed fairly steady at 0.11 (beginning in October and reaching a nadir in Nov-Dec 2012). This 45% drop in yield is identical to the percentage drop in registrations reported above. Since ODJFS does not separately report the number of voter registrations resulting from each type of contact (in-person, mailed, or attached), it is impossible to know whether the drop in yield is primarily due to changes in efficacy of one rather than another of these 3 kinds of contacts.

⁹ Computations on data from ODJFS, or on data collected from the ODJFS by DEMOS

¹⁰ Settlement statement available at:

http://www.lawyerscommittee.org/admin/voting_rights/documents/files/Harkless-Settlement.pdf

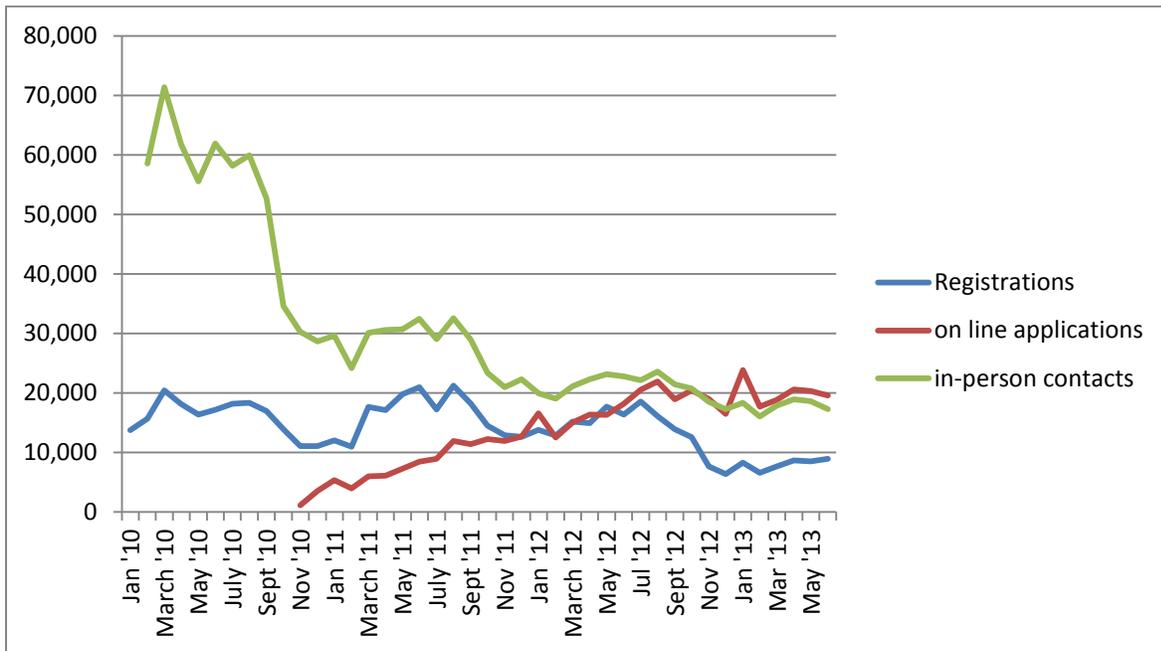
Fig. 5



2. Did the advent of on line application or loss of in-person contacts reduce the “yield” of voter registrations beginning November 2012? On-line applications began in November 2010, reaching a fluctuating plateau around May 2012¹¹(Fig. 6). In-person contacts declined from October 2010 until arriving at a much slower decline around Jan 2012. Since both on line and in-person contacts were in a more-or-less steady state by May 2012, with little change thereafter, changes in their relative numbers could not have produced the large drop in yield noted beginning November 2012. Indeed, there was no correlation between the changes in monthly numbers of VR’s and of on line applications. However, there was a strong ($r^2=0.83$) correlation between monthly VR and in-person contacts during 2012-2013. The slight decline in in-person contacts during Nov’12-June’13 therefore may have contributed to the reduced total yield.

¹¹ Data from ODJFS

Fig. 6



Those who went on line to make applications, reapplications and changes of address, were asked, as prescribed by Section 7 of the NVRA Act of 1993 and ORC 3501.10, "If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to apply to register to vote here today?" If the client clicked "yes", they were linked to a site for which they could print a registration form or (if they had a Driver's License or state ID) make a change of voting address directly on line. Analysis of data supplied by ODJFS showed that the percent of online applicants who clicked "yes" was 12% and 10%, respectively, in the time periods Nov'11-June'12 and Nov'12-June'13. However, it is uncertain how many of these positive responders followed through to submitting a complete registration, especially since there were added steps required. Those without a driver's license or state ID would have had to print out and fill in a form, and mail it to their BOE or the Secretary of State, or to request that a blank registration form be sent to them by mail. Since only about 10% of on line applicants entered "yes" in response to the query, and assuming that those carrying through to actual registration might be about 4%, then perhaps 5,000 to 6,000 forms were completed in each of the compared time periods. The difference in numbers of on line registrations in the period Nov'12-June'13 compared to the same months in the previous year was only an additional 1500 registrations. **In other words, online-initiated registration did little to compensate for the 50,000 drop in registrations in this time period.** Projected to a full 12-month year, on line registrations would mitigate the projected calendar year loss of 89,000 ODJFS registrations by only 2,000, for a net loss of 87,000 registrations compared to previous years. However, according to ODJFS¹², most on line applications were followed up with phone calls by case workers who again offered voter registration. These contacts or mailings would be included in the numbers of mailed or attached

¹² Information from the Cuyahoga JFS.

registration forms that were used to calculate yield, i.e. it is likely that most of the on line applications were folded into those obtained by other forms of contact, and were used in the calculation of “yield”.

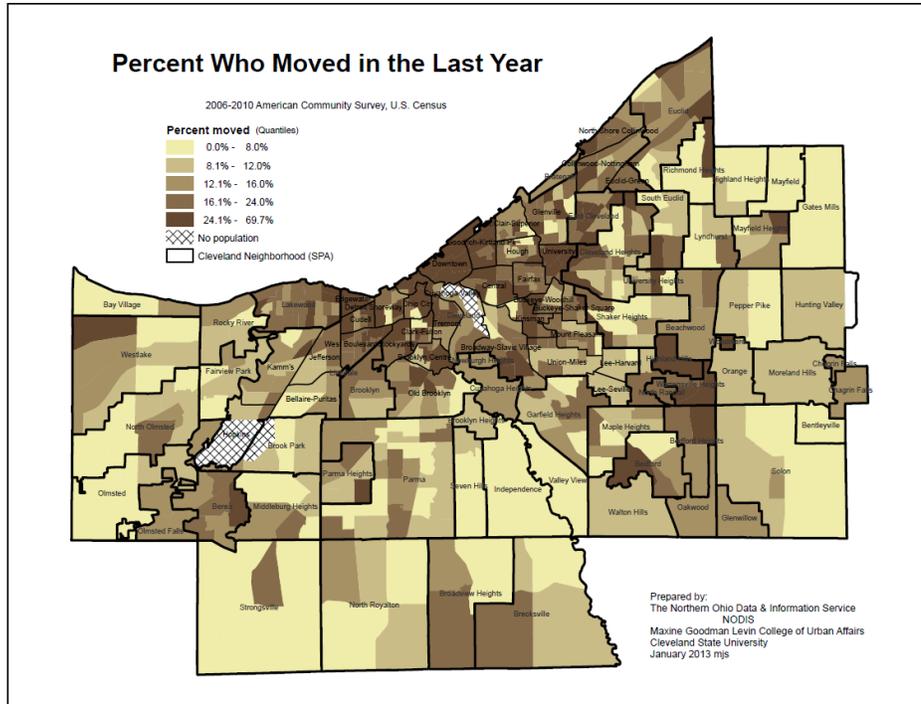
3. Could the drop in registrations have occurred because all ODJFS clients needing registration in the run-up to the November 2012 election were completely registered by ODJFS or through registration drives, so that almost no one needed registration right after the election? There are two strong reasons why this cannot be true. First, in March 2013, the Cuyahoga JFS attempted to match its clients against the Cuyahoga BOE list of registered voters, and found that about 45% of the clients were matched as registered¹³. The real percentage of clients registered to vote is probably higher because the matching, by law, could not include important identifiers such as the driver’s license number, the last 4 digits of the social security number, or the exact date of birth, nor would it have included those with changes of address that had not been reported to the Agency. Still, the interpretation (per this author) is that a large fraction of Cuyahoga JFS clients were not registered shortly after the 2012 election. These results are very consistent with the finding on the national level that up to about 130% of family poverty, only 65% of adults were registered to vote¹⁴. Second, in the quarterly reports including sources of all voter registrations issued by the Cuyahoga BOE (Oct’10-June’13), 70% of registrations coming from the Cuyahoga JFS were actually changes of address (not new registrations)¹⁵. This is not surprising since low-income people move almost twice as often as high income people. Indeed, in geo-mapping of Cuyahoga County, between 24 and 70% of one-fifth of the population, concentrated in the lowest income areas, had moved within the previous year (Fig. 6). Thus, a substantial number of JFS clients would move every month and need registration, even if they had last updated or had newly registered prior to the November election.

¹³ Data from the Cuyahoga Department of Job and Family Services.

¹⁴ <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>

¹⁵ NVRA quarterly reports supplied by the Cuyahoga County BOE

Fig. 7



C. EFFECT OF DECREASED ODJFS VOTER REGISTRATIONS ON THE NUMBER OF PROVISIONAL BALLOTS

Because of its diversity, size, and commitment to transparency and public input of both its BOE and its Office of Job and Family Services, Cuyahoga County supplies an important picture of the relation between provisional ballots, poverty and race. As noted above, 70% of registrations submitted by the Cuyahoga JFS were changes of address. In a voter survey done in Cuyahoga County just after the 2004 Presidential election¹⁶, the “number of voters who had moved since the last time they had voted...were 6.7 times more likely to vote provisionally than voters who had not moved”. And, in Fig. 7, the highest percent of moving is in many of the areas associated with the lowest incomes¹⁷: in the poorest one fifth of Cuyahoga County, 24 to 70% of people have moved in the prior year (legend, Fig. 7). Moving is closely related to provisional ballots, because 92% of provisional envelopes received by the Cuyahoga BOE in the course of the November 2012 election were associated with a voter change of address¹⁸.

¹⁶ <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~wmebane/Ohio2004/OhioReportCover2Cover.pdf>

¹⁷ See map showing geographic location of Cuyahoga County household incomes at: <http://www.nova-ohio.org/2012maps.html#MHI>

¹⁸ Quarterly NVRA report for Oct. 1 to Dec 31, 2012, provided by the Cuyahoga BOE.

There is even more direct evidence of the connection between income and provisional ballots cast. A zip code analysis of the Cuyahoga County 2012 elections showed a clear and statistically significant correlation between median income and number of provisional ballots cast as a fraction of votes cast (Fig. 8). The median income of the “bottom” 10 zip codes with the least provisional ballots was \$59,000 while the “top” 10 zip codes with the most provisional ballots, had a median income of \$24,000 (The County’s median household income is \$44,000). The percentage of African Americans in the 10 zip codes with the fewest provisional ballots (as a fraction of total votes cast in that zip code) was 1% and in the 10 zip codes with the most provisional ballots (as a fraction) was 27%. Put together, all these data indicate that the 45% drop in voter registrations (mainly changes of address forms) by low-income and/or African American clients of ODJFS is likely to produce still more provisional ballots in a state which already has more than most other states. Since the post-election decrease in ODJFS registrations was also found in lower-income mainly white Ohio counties¹⁹, the effects on provisional ballots are likely to affect low-income voters statewide. These results may explain another peculiar finding: in 2012, for the first time as permitted by law, 106,000 Ohioans who had driver’s licenses made on line changes of address prior to the November 2012 election²⁰. Yet, this did not reduce the state’s number of provisional ballots, which were almost identical in 2008 and 2012. A possible explanation is that higher-income driver’s license owners would have made these changes of address in any event: if lower-income voters without licenses had been provided with an equally easy way to update their addresses, fewer provisional ballots might have been cast.

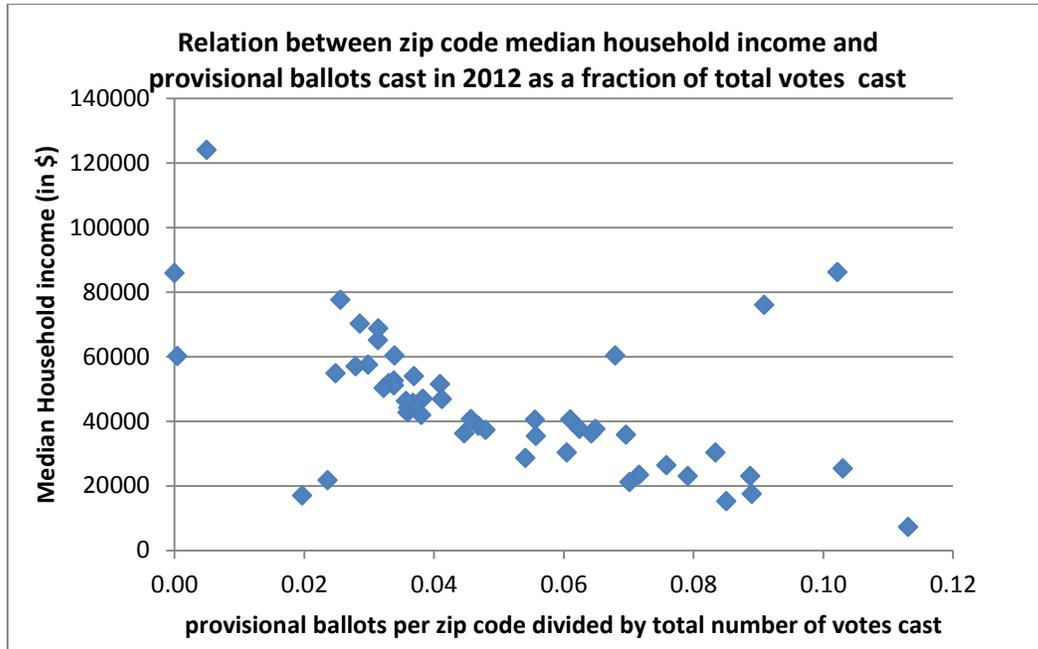
It is difficult to find published cost estimates for processing provisional ballots, but one from Maricopa County, Arizona, estimated about \$4 each²¹. Multiplied by Ohio’s 200,000 provisional ballots gives \$800,000 at least.

¹⁹ Voter registration by ODJFS in 7 Ohio counties with %African-American population less than 0.6% and median household incomes less than \$44,000 showed a median drop in ODJFS registrations of 31% between Jan-June 2012 and Jan-June 2013. (8 counties fit this description but data were incomplete for one of them which was not used).

²⁰ Letter to the Editor of the Columbus Dispatch by Ohio State Rep. M. Stinziano, March 17, 2013, at: <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/editorials/2013/03/17/1-bill-would-make-voting-easier-for-ohioans.html>

²¹ <http://www.pewstates.org/research/analysis/cost-of-provisional-ballots-maricopa-county-az-85899454045>

Fig. 8 Cuyahoga County, zip code analysis, November 2012 General Election



“Votes cast in the November 2012 election” were compiled from an August 2013 Cuyahoga BOE list of registered voters because a comparable list at the time of the November 2012 election was not available.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide ODJFS clients with a similar ease of voter registration that is available to BMV clients. A striking observation in this report was the stability from year-to-year in the national numbers of BMV clients registering to vote or changing address, regardless of whether the years in question were before or after Presidential elections (See Section A1 above). This stability contrasted sharply with the enormous fall-off in voter registration by ODJFS and other states’ public assistance agencies in the year(s) immediately after the Presidential elections. As explained above (Section B) this fall-off was not due to technical issues posed by growing use of on line registration or to “saturation” of the registration status of ODJFS clients. Rather it was due to a lower “yield” apparently related to clients more often choosing not to register in the post-Presidential months. Numerous anecdotal reports from ODJFS staff agree that part of this “yield” problem is due to multiple social problems faced by ODJFS clients at the time they apply for benefits or change address (as opposed to the relatively stress-free problem of applying for or updating a Driver’s license). As a result, except during the run up to a high profile Presidential election, registering and voting is not a relatively high priority for many ODJFS clients facing difficult life situations. If so, then the barrier of dealing with filling out a voter registration form at a time when the client is understandably focused on crisis issues (such as food stamps or child services) is much higher than that facing an applicant for a Driver’s License or State ID.

It is therefore surprising that the NVRA Section 5 dealing with applications or changes of address at BMV's²² is far more user-friendly, prescriptive and seamless than Section 7 dealing with clients applying for public assistance²³. On application for a driver's license, the client is presented with a completely filled out voter registration form, and in fact has to fail to sign it in order to avoid voter registration. The only action required of the client is to sign the form and check 2 boxes. The same is true of change of address requests to the BMV, whether on line or in person: an already registered voter actually has to opt out of having their address change delivered to the local BOE. It's clear that few BMV clients would reject these offers of easy registration except for those who may have already registered to vote, changed address in some other venue, or refuse to vote for other reasons. In contrast, the ODJFS client who may be in the midst of applying for a desperately needed benefit is loath to take the time to completely fill out a registration form, whether the contact is in-person or by mail. If there isn't an important incentive such as an upcoming Presidential election, this option is likely to be refused. In short, **NVRA Section 7 does not require the same ease of registration and opt-out procedure for public assistance clients as does Section 5 for Driver's license clients: there is not an equal playing field for ODJFS clients with average incomes of about \$17,500 or less (see Appendix 1) and the average Ohio driver's license holder with an average income of around \$48,000.**

In order to approximate for ODJFS clients the ease and automaticity of BMV registration, ODJFS and other public assistance agencies could do the following:

- Provide completely filled out voter registration forms (except for signature and the 2 boxes requiring checks) to all clients making any type of application, whether in-person, over the telephone, or online; and for all non-in-person contacts, provide in addition a postage paid return envelope to the public assistance agency (which also serves to document the agency's numbers of registrations). Indeed, The Department of Justice states that "agencies may consider" supplying clients with such completed VR forms.
- If the ODJFS client is already registered to vote and is making a change of address, the client should be informed:
 - a) that unless they opt out, the change of address will be forwarded to the local BOE. This would be the least complicated and expensive way to handle 70% of the ODJFS voter registrations, or
 - b) that if they have a driver's license, they can update their voting address on line or at a BMV office. The URL supplied to such clients should include a report back to ODJFS that the client has indeed updated registration, so that "credit" for this change of address can be given to ODFJFS. Alternatively, ODJFS could, unless the client opts out, inform the BMV of the client's change of address, which could then be relayed to the BOE.

²² http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/42usc/subch_ah.php#anchor_1973gg-3

²³ http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/42usc/subch_ah.php#anchor_1973gg-4

- As Medicaid expansion and health care exchanges provide more opportunities for NVRA voter registration, ensure that the system provides feedback so that the number of voter registrations promoted through public assistance agencies can be tracked and documented, as is the case with the BMV. In this way, costs and time for unnecessary mailings can be avoided, but problems can be identified and redressed.
 - Invest in technologies which facilitate sharing of data between public assistance agencies and state voter data bases²⁴. This would also decrease long-term costs and increase accuracy.
 - Once a year, match the list of ODJFS clients against that of registered voters in the same county²⁵, and send all apparently unregistered ODJFS clients a filled out voter registration form (except signature and the 2 check-boxes) and a postage paid return envelope.
 - Instead of just in alternate years, BOE's on an annual basis could use US Post Office Change of Address lists to reach out to all matched registered voters who seem to have moved without updating their address, to confirm they are the person in question and to send a return postage-paid registration form.
 - Seek grant funding for programs piloting the remedies recommended above, to better understand the complications and opportunities before launching more comprehensive programs.
 - In all mailings of registration forms, include a set of non-partisan motivational statements explaining why votes on all elections (e.g. bond and tax issues, local candidates and issues), not just Presidential elections, are important if the voter is to weigh in on e.g. health, schools, taxes, and judges.
 - Offer a CEU-credit workshop for social workers at public assistance agencies explaining the importance and the process of voter registration.
2. Apply lessons learned from experience to date of NVRA voter registration by public assistance agencies to the new applicants for health insurance subsidies via health exchanges or for Medicaid, who will also be covered under Section 7 of the NVRA Act²⁶. Once again, suggestions similar to those above, e.g. providing a filled-out application and automatic change of address (unless the client opts out) would greatly enhance voter registration. In addition, the expected

²⁴ The benefits and precedents for this approach are discussed by the Center for State Innovation at:

<http://www.stateinnovation.org/Publications/All-Publications/CSI-BeyondMotorVoter.aspx>

Although technical innovations and both necessary and extremely important, this report focuses on the companion need to find simple, effective and user-friendly ways that will engage low-income citizens in voter registration (and address update), despite their considerable stresses.

²⁵ The name, address, and birth year available from the CRIS-E system or the next generation of data systems could be used in this matching, as already shown by the Cuyahoga County JFS. However because other “confidential” data such as full birth date and last 4 digits of the SSN are not provided by the BOE for matching, the matching is incomplete and probably underestimates the percent registered.

²⁶ “Building a Healthy Democracy”, L.J. Danetz, Demos. Available at:

<http://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/NVRA%20Health%20Exchange.pdf>

introduction of “telephonic signatures” will pose new technologic problems that should be anticipated now.

3. Provide low-income individuals additional opportunities to register at other “registration agencies”, especially public libraries, and at other sites
 - a. Public libraries, recognized as “registration agencies” by Ohio law, are areas of high traffic for low-income voters, e.g. for using the publicly available computers or checking out materials. Ideally, every library customer could encounter some kind of offer of voter registration. For instance, the check-out desk or check-out screen, or the public computers could all prominently ask the NVRA question, "If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to apply to register to vote here today?", as well as inform library customers that voter registration and assistance are readily available.
 - b. Offer a location near the entrance of major ODJFS facilities for 501c3-approved non-partisan registration groups (e.g. League of Women Voters, NAACP, Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates) where voter registration could be conducted in a venue different than that provided for applications related to benefits. Indeed, more individuals than just clients (e.g. staff, people accompanying clients, others just seeking general information) would be registered at the same time, so in terms of confidentiality, there would be no way of knowing if a given registration came from an ODJFS client.

4. Ask the Elections Assistance Commission to take a more pro-active stance on problems arising with Section 7 of the NVRA Act. Drops in voter registration by public assistance agencies have been occurring since 1997-1998, but the EAC which collected the data, has apparently not vigorously pursued states which failed to supply data, nor has it recommended administrative action. In the future, the biennial EAC data collection on NVRA registration should be done annually and should include further analyses of problems arising, such as decreased public assistance voter registration after Presidential elections. Thus, in a timely manner, these problems would be highlighted in reports to congress and in letters to Secretaries of State. Public and Congressional awareness of these problems would be a good first step in their ultimate solution.

APPENDIX ONE: Estimating household income of ODJFS clients vs. that of Ohio driver’s license holders.

Approach 1: Assuming, as one knowledgeable official offered, that the high end family income of public assistance clients is about 130% poverty, and using 2012 census data (<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>) one can compute the average income of persons earning less than \$10,000 up to \$29,999. This comes to \$17,520. For Driver’s License holders, the median household income for Ohio, \$48,000 (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39000.html>), is assumed to reflect a representative cross-section of Ohioans.

Approach 2: Over 75% of ODJFS clients receive nutritional assistance, which provides another way to estimate the average income of ODJFS clients. Of the 150,164 Cuyahoga county households which received nutritional assistance in June, 2013, 116,555 families reported no earned income²⁷. From the same data we know that about 8,600 of these families received Ohio Works First (OWF) assistance cash. A typical OWF monthly payment is \$450²⁸ which totals to \$5,400 yearly. We will make the conservative assumption that households which report earned income report the maximum allowable income to receive nutritional assistance, 133% of the federal poverty line, or \$29,776 for a family of four. We calculated a crude average reported income (including OWF assistance, and those with no income) for ODJFS nutritional assistance clients (over 75% of total clients) at a yearly income of just \$6,974.

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²⁷ Cuyahoga County ODJFS 2013 2nd Qtr. Report

²⁸ Ohio Works First Fact Sheet