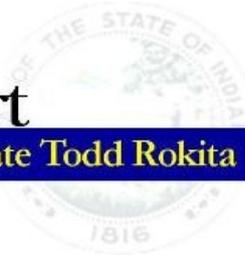




The Rokita Report

Office of Indiana Secretary of State Todd Rokita



From the desk of Secretary Rokita

Innovative ideas, harnessing the power of technology and cutting government spending are among the main goals my office and I set out to achieve during the last eight years. Through creative problem solving and utilizing the power of technology many of our goals are now realities.

One of those goals became reality when www.indianavoters.com was launched. On the website, Hoosiers can prepare themselves for Election Day in many ways; by viewing who will be on their ballots, finding their polling places and looking through the state's campaign record database - an online database individuals can use to see who is financially backing a candidate and how the money raised is being spent.

Continuing to capitalize on the advantages of technology, my office recently unveiled the latest addition to www.indianavoters.com - online voter registration. The tool allows Indiana residents with a valid Indiana driver's license or Indiana state-issued identification card to submit a new voter registration application or update their existing voter registration record.

Before, voters most commonly registered by mailing a paper-based application form or registering in-person at a county voter registration office, the Indiana Election Division or a branch office of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV).

In order to prevent identity or voter fraud, applicants using the online voter registration tool are required to verify their voting eligibility and personal information, which will then be cross-referenced with databases from the BMV. Voters will instantly receive a confirmation of their application to print and keep for their personal records. Once confirmed online, the county's voter registration office will approve or reject registrations subject to the same criteria used for other applicants, such as residency or incarceration following conviction of a crime.

Not only will this new online portal increase accessibility for Hoosiers who want to register or update voter information, it could produce significant cost savings. States adopting an online voter registration option have seen a 60 to 70 percent shift away from paper-based registrations over time. A similar shift in Indiana would greatly reduce pressure on county election administrators to facilitate data entry, especially during peak times at the close of the voter registration period.

We have already seen great success with the Online Voter Registration tool. Just one month into launching the portal, more than 1,900 individuals have used the online tool. During my office's recent visit to the Indy Black Expo, more than 700 people visited the Secretary of State's booth and learned about the advantages of the new online tool.

While we have accomplished much throughout the years, I believe we can still work together to find new ways to use innovation, technology and smart business practices to reduce the costs of government and to empower and engage Hoosiers.

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Quick Pic



Secretary Rokita speaks to the LaPorte Rotary Club on July 26, 2010. Rokita's speech centered on how Indiana can rethink redistricting by taking the politics out of the redistricting process and create compact, sensible political boundaries.

Voter photo ID update: Court upholds Indiana photo ID law

In a 4-1 decision, the Indiana Supreme Court upheld the state's photo ID law.

Following the June 30 decision, Justice Brent Dickson wrote the court's majority opinion explaining the new law is not unconstitutional and follows current Indiana laws.

"It is within the power of the legislature to require voters to identify themselves at the polls using a photo ID," Justice Dickson said.

Enacted in 2005, Indiana's voter photo ID law requires Hoosiers to present a state issued driver's license or a valid Indiana issued voter ID card at the polls. Protecting voters against voter fraud was part of the motivation behind the law.

Soon after being enacted, the new law was placed in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. Plaintiffs in the case believed the law disenfranchised voters from casting their choice on Election Day. In the end, the court ruled 6-3 in favor of Indiana's photo ID law. However, another group filed suit against the voter ID law and the case was brought before the Indiana Supreme Court.

It is important to note, this latest ruling by the court does not change the current Indiana voter ID law. You may remember this law has been in place for the past seven elections and several special elections.

With the November 2 general election drawing closer, here are few reminders before going to the polls to cast your ballot:

- Bring your Indiana issues driver's license or state issued voter ID card.
- Visit www.indianavoters.com to make sure you are registered to and your voter information is accurate.
- Find your polling place. Polling locations can also be found at www.indianavoters.com.

More than 11 percent of office's annual budget returned to Indiana General Fund

Secretary Rokita's office returned earlier this month more than \$260,000 of the office's annual budget back to the Indiana General fund, according to final figures from the Indiana State Auditor's office.

"Through the hard work of dedicated professionals, we're proving that government doesn't have to spend to survive and doesn't have to be bloated to be able to provide world-class services to constituents," Secretary Rokita said. "In fact, we are showing you can actually do more with less through technology, innovation and smart solutions."

For example, the Dealer Services Division (DSD) introduced the Plates On-Demand program, which allows automotive dealers to access and print temporary plates online at their dealership as needed. This new program is expected to save the DSD \$28,000 per month. Additionally, new technology enhancements also include a program allowing Notaries public in Indiana to register exclusively online.

Additionally, the Secretary of State's office has forged strategic public/private partnerships with technology organizations such as Baker Tilly, Quest Information Systems, Inc., BC Forward, Indiana Interactive and the Indiana Office of Technology.

With the office's initial budget request for the year being voluntarily reduced by 4 percent and this recent reversion of more than 11 percent, the Secretary of State's office is currently operating on a budget less than its 1987 budget.

Secretary Rokita calls for end to Federal Election Assistance Commission

In 24-2 vote, Secretary Rokita joined fellow members of the National Association of Secretaries of States (NASS) recently in support of extending a resolution urging Congress to dissolve the Federal Election Assistance Commission (EAC) and return the responsibility to craft smart, fair voting policies back to state and local officials.

"Congress should preserve the states' abilities to serve as independent laboratories of change through thoughtful and well-planned innovations in election reform, as stated within the Constitution, and not require taxpayers to foot the bill for an ever-growing, ineffective and constitutionally baseless bureaucracy," Secretary Rokita said. "Indiana is a shining example of cost-effective, accurate and innovative election reform that has installed confidence in the process for voters and taxpayers."

Currently, under the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), the EAC serves as an independent, bipartisan commission responsible for developing guidelines to meet HAVA requirements. Additionally, the EAC is responsible for adopting voluntary voting system rules, certifying voting equipment and accrediting voting system laboratories.

However, Secretary Rokita along with numerous secretaries of state who make up NASS believe the EAC has accomplished its original goals under HAVA and should be dissolved. Furthermore, no new EAC commissioners have been confirmed despite the expiration of two of the commissioners' terms in December 2009 as well as the vacancy of a third commissioner in February 2009.

"Allowing the EAC to evolve into a regulatory body is contrary to the spirit and letter of the United States Constitution and the Help America Vote Act of 2002," Secretary Rokita said. "Discontinuing the EAC is appropriate since it achieved its initial goals and would ultimately save taxpayer dollars."

(Secretary Rokita was one of the original authors of the resolution which was first adopted in 2005. He served as NASS president from 2007 to 2008, and has also advised the federal government on election reform matters as a member of the EAC's Board of Advisors.)

