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Connecting Customers to Data: eSign - Electronic Signature Image Gathering Network

Denver Elections Division - Denver, CO

Submitted by:
Amber McReynolds
Director of Elections
200 W. 14th Ave. Ste. 100
Denver, CO 80204
720.865.4850
amber.mcreynolds@denvergov.org
www.DenverVotes.org

OFFICE OF THE CLERK AND RECORDER
ELECTIONS DIVISION
Amber F. McReynolds, Director

Debra Johnson
Clerk and Recorder
Public Trustee

Connecting Customers to Data: eSign – Electronic Signature Image Gathering Network

The Denver Elections Division along with local technology partner 303 Software has launched eSign, a first-in-the-nation mobile petition signing application. This cutting edge application has the potential to transform the petition process - providing easier access to the ballot and efficiencies never seen before in this country. Petition circulators gather signatures using a tablet and stylus. Circulators are able to confirm that a signer is a registered voter in the appropriate district (if applicable) because the app interfaces with the voter database. Unregistered voters may also use the app to register to vote and subsequently sign a petition. Prior to the app, candidates had to collect signatures on paper petitions, turn them in to the Denver Elections Division, and wait for them to be verified. Historically 30%-35% of those signatures were invalid, compared to 1%-3% of signatures collected using eSign. Many candidates went through this process multiple times before obtaining a sufficient number of signatures. The app was first available to candidates in the upcoming Municipal General Election and EVERY candidate who elected to use eSign reached their signature threshold the first time!

Historically, candidates or issue committees were required to circulate paper petition sections to gather signatures to obtain access to the ballot. This process was tedious, unsecure, not accessible to signers with disabilities, and ineffective. The Denver Elections Division searched for a more effective and efficient solution to provide customers with easy access to the ballot, and eSign was born. Data has become such an integral part of elections and it made sense to connect our customers with that data in the petition process. eSign is a full service front and back end tool that allows candidates or issue committees to verify a signers eligibility prior to the signer signing the petition. Previously signers would sign the petition unknowing if they were eligible. This resulted in thousands of signatures each cycle rejected because the signer was not in district, not registered, not registered at the proper address, etc.

How it Works

eSign uses cloud based technology to store voter data which connects to tablet devices using wireless or 4G internet. Candidates authorize their campaign to use the technology through a disclosure agreement. The Denver Elections Division using an eSign web management tool create campaigns and sign up users (campaign managers or circulators). Campaign Managers and circulators were required to attend a one-hour training on the basics of the system and left able to circulate using eSign. Circulators used tablet devices to search potential signers. The Denver Elections Division with partner 303 Software designed an intelligent algorithm that searches voters using minimal search criteria and yet return a targeted number of results. If a potential signer returned as eligible, signers were then allowed to sign the petition. If a potential signer returned as ineligible (not registered to vote, registered at a different address, not registered in the district for which the potential candidate is running, already signed a petition, etc) they are able to sign manually if they would like. Signers who

are not registered or registered at a different address are able to register to vote and change their address through the app. Once they have done so they are eligible to sign the petition. Once all signatures have been collected campaigns bring their circulators back into the Denver Elections Division to submit their petitions. Again using the eSign web management tool, elections staff are able to print the petition sections, notarize circulator affidavits, and submit for processing.

The Results – How effective is eSign?

eSign was a phenomenal success. Every candidate who used the petition application was sufficient and obtained access to the ballot on their first submission. Of the 60 campaigns circulating petitions, 33% were required to submit two times due to an insufficient number of signatures. Of the 33% who submitted twice, 100% of the campaigns used paper and opted not to use eSign. Of the 33% who were required to submit twice, 25% were required to submit three or more times due to insufficient signatures. Twenty percent of the total number of campaigns during the 2015 Municipal General Election used eSign. Candidates using eSign submitted a total number of 872 signatures for review of which 843, or 97%, were accepted. Only 29 signatures, or 3%, submitted through eSign were rejected. Statistics for paper petition sections however was much different. Campaigns using paper petitions submitted over 12,000 signatures of which only 8,944 signatures, or 70%, of signatures were accepted. Of the 12,000 plus signatures submitted using paper nearly 4,000 signatures, or 30%, were rejected.

Although eSign was only used by 20% of campaigns during the 2015 Municipal General Election, signatures submitted through eSign only accounted for 1% of the total number of rejected signatures.

The Future

The Denver Elections Division is currently working with 303 Software to better enhance the accessible features of the application to ensure ballot access is a totally inclusive process. The Denver Elections Division and 303 Software are also building a robust reporting system for elections staff and campaigns. The reporting module is projected to include maps that show where signatures were gathered by circulators, cumulative data for the campaign manager, goal setting data for campaigns and circulators, and an open ended report to allow campaigns to set their own parameters for reports.

The Denver Elections Division is working on a licensing fee to allow any other election jurisdiction who could benefit from this technology to use the software. The product can be used out of the box or customized for specific rules, regulations, or county preference.

Denver Elections Division has launched eSign

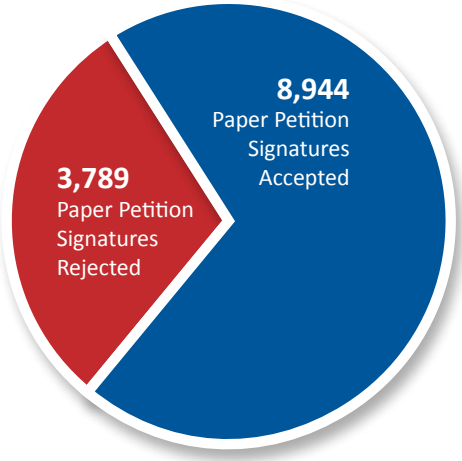
A FIRST-IN-THE-NATION MOBILE PETITION SIGNING APPLICATION

This cutting edge application has transformed the petition process - providing easier access to the ballot and efficiencies never seen before in this country. Petition circulators gather signatures using a tablet and stylus.

- Circulators are able to confirm that a signer is a registered voter in the appropriate district (if applicable) because the app interfaces with the voter database.
- Circulators begin by searching for a voter in the database. If the voter is not found, they can manually enter their information.
- Circulators are able to check results in real time to give a total of signatures captured. Also campaign managers can see a total of all signatures gathered by all circulators at any time. There is a second signature line if the voter needs a assistance or a witness.

Unregistered voters may also use the app to register to vote.

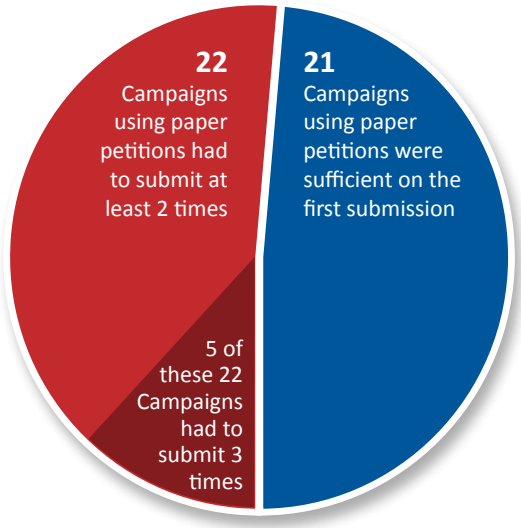
Prior to the app, candidates collected signatures on paper petitions, turned them in to the elections office, and waited for them to be verified. Often a significant number of those signatures were invalid.



70% of 12,733
Signatures Collected on Paper Petitions were Accepted

97% of 872
eSign Signatures Collected were Accepted

43 Campaigns used Paper petitions only.



- EVERY candidate who elected to use eSign reached their sufficient signature threshold the first time!
- eSign was used by 20% of campaigns petitioning, but only accounted for less than 1% of total rejected signatures.

Denver eSign is intellectual property developed and owned by the Denver Elections Division. It is a mobile application software system using current and future IOS operating systems (iPad) that provides a digital method for candidates or petitioner committees to complete and submit a Petition for review and determination of sufficiency or insufficiency. "Petitions" include digital petition sections for candidate nomination or digital petition sections for an initiative, referendum, or recall.

DENVER ELECTIONS DIVISION
DenverVotes.org
200 W. 14th Ave., Suite 100
Denver, CO 80204
720-913-VOTE (8683)

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Attachment #2
Election Online Weekly | February 12, 2015

There's an app for that

Denver Elections Division creates app to streamline petition process

By M. Mindy Moretti

Coffee stains, bad penmanship, rips, tears and lots of folds and crinkles.

From elections office staff to candidates to campaign volunteers, anyone who has worked an election knows what a mess ballot petitions can be. That's why the Denver Elections Division has come up with what's believed to be a first-in-the-nation way to gather signatures that is fast, efficient and coffee stain free. Beginning with the qualifying process for municipal elections this May, the office is test piloting a program that allows candidates to use a tablet and stylus to gather ballot petition signatures. "This cutting edge application has the potential to transform the petition process - providing easier access to the ballot and efficiencies never seen before in this country," said Denver Clerk & Recorder Debra Johnson. "For years the hallmark of Denver Elections has been innovation and progress - 2015 will be no different. This bold approach has one thing in mind: our customers." eSign, as the office is calling new application, allows circulators to gather signatures on a tablet that is registered with the Elections Division. "We verify every signature on every petition," said Alton Dillard, spokesman for the Denver Elections Division. "Think of eSign as petition marking device similar to a ballot-marking device. The printed pages go through the same legally required signature verification process that paper petitions go through." The app allows circulators to verify the voter registration of the signer before collecting the signature and keeps a running tally of the number of signatures collected. Tablets can be "borrowed" from the Elections Division for a $375 deposit or campaigns may register personal iPads with the Elections Division and download the app to gather signatures. "The signatures are housed on our server so in the event a tablet is lost or stolen the signatures wouldn't be accessible to unauthorized persons," Dillard explained. "The voter information on the tablets that are used to confirm voter eligibility comes from a database of voter information that is public record." Currently about 18 campaigns are using eSign for the May election cycle and as the deadline for qualification approaches — March 11 — Dillard expects more potential candidates to get on board. The office worked with a local vendor — 303 Software — to create the app, which cost about $60,000 to create and implement. "We actually created eSign for the convenience of the candidates and to modernize the signature gathering process," Dillard said. "Being able to confirm on the spot that a voter is eligible to sign a candidate petition leads to a increased acceptance rate." Because Denver is a Home Rule City and County, and the app is only being used for municipal elections, the elections division did not need a legislative change or go-ahead from the secretary of state's office in order to implement the new technology. The office did, however, promulgate its own rules for the use of the app. The app can be used for local campaigns ballot initiatives, but due to existing state law cannot be used for City Charter Amendment petitions. The hope is that following a successful pilot, eSign can be adopted not only statewide, but also for other jurisdictions throughout the country. "We would hope to see eSign rolled out for broader use in the future," Dillard said. "Since eSign is a first-in-the-nation technology, we are already hearing from other municipalities about how to create a similar system."

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Attachment #3

Ballot Access Should Be Easier for Candidates, Too | NYC Votes | May 13, 2015

We talk a lot about modernizing our elections. One thing that's often overlooked in that discussion is modernizing how candidates get onto the ballot. Right now, it's a rickety system that harkens back to the early 20th century with sheaves of nominating petitions printed on specially-sized paper. Experienced candidates, or those who have the support of the major parties, find it easier to navigate the process, while new candidates often find petition-gathering a major obstacle. (Even this rule has exceptions: a prospective major party candidate for state Assembly failed to make the May 5 ballot in Brooklyn due to a paperwork error.) It is worth noting that the 2010 NYC Charter amendment greatly reduced the number of signatures city candidates must collect, but the higher thresholds for other offices remain. But this spring there was exciting news out of Denver where election officials have broken ground on a petitioning process for the 21st century. The Denver Elections Division launched a pilot program allowing candidates to gather ballot petition signatures on a tablet for the first time. Using a new application, called eSign, candidates and their petitioners were able to collect signatures directly onto a tablet and instantly check the voters' eligibility against the voter roll. The Denver Elections Division still verified every petition signature collected via tablet just as with the traditional paper petitions. But eSign allowed campaigns to verify on the spot that petition signers were registered to vote. The program also tallies the number of signatures gathered in real time so campaigns can track their progress towards the threshold. The software firm that developed the application says that the nearly two dozen candidates that used eSign "had a 2.7 percent rejection rate [for their petition signatures], whereas paper candidates had a 35-40 percent rejection rate." According to the Denver Elections Division, all of the candidates who used the new application "hit their signature threshold the first time." Denver made eSign available to any candidate who wanted to use it to get on the May 5th municipal election ballot. Candidates were able to borrow petitioning tablets from the city (after putting down a $375 deposit). Candidates also could register personal tablets for eSign. Either way, signatures collected with eSign were housed on a secure Denver Elections Division server to ensure they weren't accessible to unauthorized users even if a tablet was misplaced or stolen. All the voter information contained on the tablets to help campaigns confirm voter registration comes from a public voter information database and is not private data. For now, state law only permits candidates for Denver's municipal offices and for local ballot initiatives to use the eSign technology. But Denver elections officials hope that the success of their trial program will spur statewide adoption. New York City should consider adopting a similar program to streamline this important piece of the election process and make it easier for more candidates to get involved.

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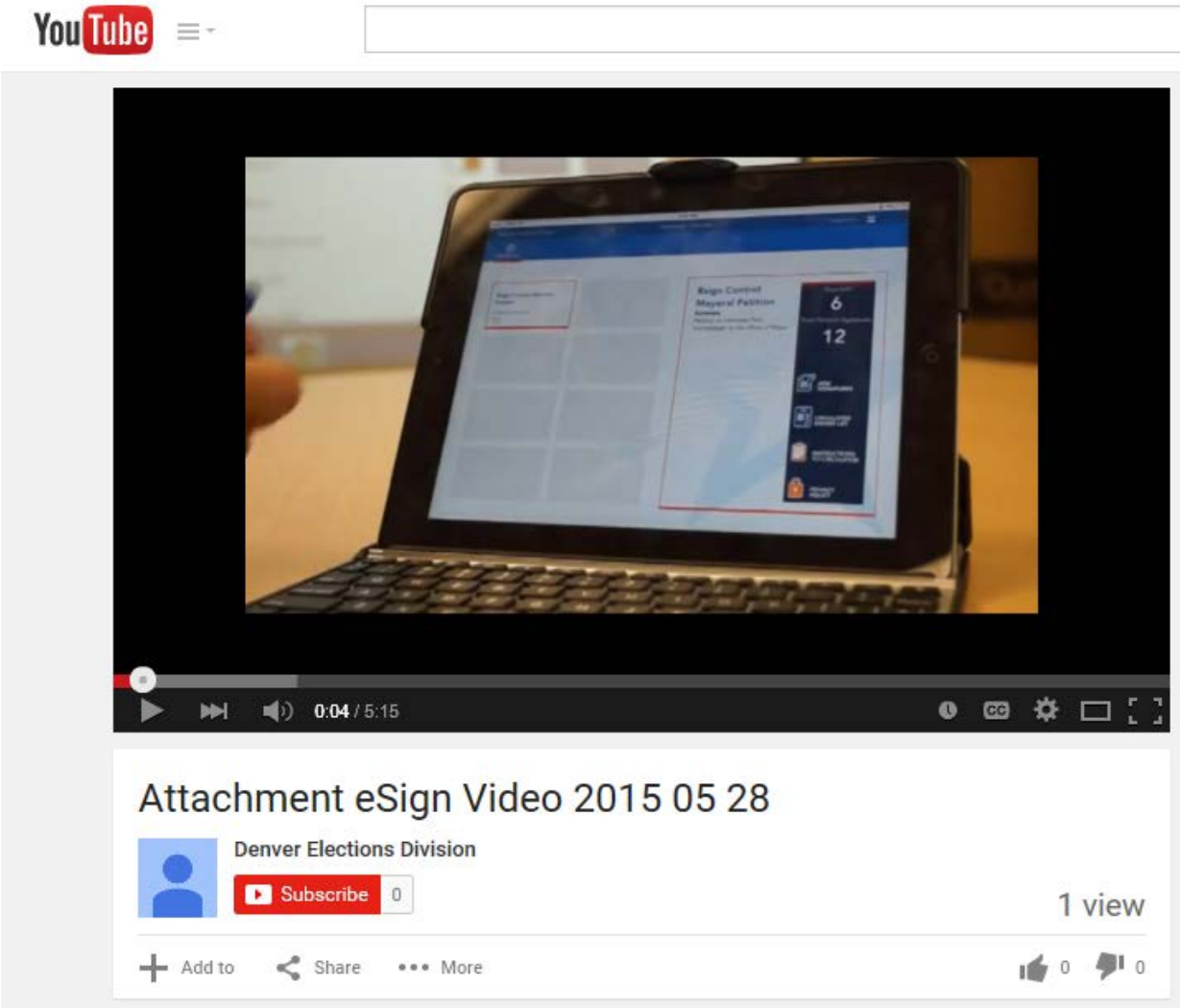
Attachment #4 – Video Demonstration of eSign

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WQjxJdip_o&feature=youtu.be



200 West 14th Ave., Suite 100, Denver, CO 80204 www.denvervotes.org
Phone: 720-913-VOTE (8683) TTY: 720-913-8657 Fax: 720-913-8600