



**NASS 2017 IDEAS Award
Application
State of Colorado**

Nominating State Office:

Secretary of State Wayne W. Williams
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Project Lead and Staff Contact for Questions:

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Program Title:

Online Certifications

Program Description:

In October 2015, the Colorado Secretary of State launched Online Certificates, a long-awaited and sought-after new service. Our customers can now obtain all the possible certified documents from our office online. These include a Certificate of Fact of Existence, a Certificate of Fact of Trade Name, a certified copy of a filed document, and a Certificate stating that the attached documents are all the documents filed for a specific entity. This free service is available for all entity records in our registry online and accessible 24/7. This innovative service has greatly improved internal efficiencies in terms of employee processing and time requirements. The number of employees processing paper requests decreased. Remaining employees are now cross-training with other work units, broadening our institutional knowledge base and positioning our office to better handle changing customer needs. Externally, our customers have been overjoyed at how quick and easy it is to obtain certified documents for free.

General Subject Area:

Business Services

Executive Summary

History

The Colorado Secretary of State's office has changed its operations over the last 15 years, transitioning from paper to digital filings, and in recent years, focused on improved online services. In 2015, we went live with online certifications, so that customers could obtain certified copies of all business filings with our office online.

A certified document conveys to outside parties that the record is a true copy of what's on file with the Secretary of State's office. Customers need certified copies of records for a variety of reasons, including: use in a foreign country; use in another state; court proceedings; and contract actions, such as mergers and acquisitions.

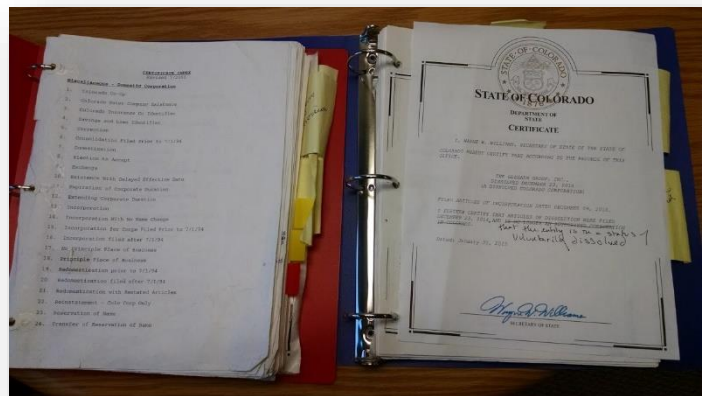
Previously, customers had to obtain paper copies of certified documents. Under the original paper model, customers had to place orders by phone, by walking into the office, or by mailing in a request. Staff then created an invoice and gave it to the customer along with the completed order. This process was time consuming for customers and staff. Customers had to wait for our regular business hours. They had to take time to come in to our downtown office and either pay for parking and wait while the order was processed, or wait longer for mail delivery.

Customers and staff were both frustrated by frequent mistakes. These started with misunderstandings over what was ordered, typos on the certificate, or invoice errors. These all caused delays for customers and ate up staff time. Unpaid invoices meant sending second notices, which caused additional customer inquiries and staff time spent researching the order. If an invoice remained unpaid after a second notice, it was sent to collections, which caused the same circle of customer inquiries, employee research, etc. Our finance division had issues with the time they were spending on voiding invoices, reconciling payments with the correct invoices, and sending unpaid invoices to collections. So we made the first change in the process, requiring payment up front.

We simplified the fee schedule and created an order form that was available on our website. However, customers were still required to either hand deliver the order and payment or place them in the mail. There were still misunderstandings on what the customer ordered, such as typos on the business entity name or incorrect payment. These continued to delay service delivery and frustrate all parties.

There were two to three employees dedicated to completing certification orders. There were roughly 200 different types of certificates our customers requested. This complexity added to the employee time it took to fill orders. Staff worked from three-ring binders that had examples of the approximately 200 certificates. The binders were impossible to keep up-to-date and organized.

Staff spent a great deal of time not only processing orders, but responding to



The old way of categorizing certificate requests.

customer inquiries about the status of orders. Throughout any given day, employees staffing phones or the front counter were either taking customer requests or searching to see if, and when, an order was completed. Supervisors would get involved when a customer became frustrated over misunderstandings or lost orders.

Employees were frustrated. Customers were unhappy. Both needed a new process.

Customers could obtain the most common Good Standing certificate starting in 2004. The complexity of the remaining 200 or so certificates made providing a fully online offering difficult. It took eight years of staff discussions, research, and collaboration to write requirements. We grouped those roughly 200 types of requests into four categories:

- Certificate of Documents Filed: certified copies of all documents relating to an entity or record in the secretary of state records.
- Certificate of Document Filed: a certified copy of an individual document filed in the Secretary of State's records.
- Certificate of Fact of Trade Name: certifies that a statement of trade name for a specific name was filed with the Secretary of State's office and provides its effective date.
- Certificate of Fact of Existence: certifies that a constituent-filed document for a non-reporting entity—one that is not required by law to file annual reports, such as limited partnerships, water companies, or railroads—was filed and that no dissolution document has been filed for that entity.

In 2012 we received the necessary programming resources to turn those requirements into action. During the 2012 legislative session, we assembled a suite of online enhancements we had wanted to deliver to customers—including online certifications. The legislation passed, providing funding to complete the backlog of projects over the next three years.

The projected cost to implement was \$209,640, including \$66,000 in reduced fees with free online certifications. We estimated saving approximately \$117,315 per year in productivity improvements, meaning the project would pay for itself in less than two years.

Our business employees worked closely with IT to document system requirements. Our legal staff consolidated the different types of certificates as outlined above. Since each of our Good Standing certificates had a unique confirmation number that could be validated on our website, our customers were familiar with this security feature. We decided to continue using that option on our new certificates. We surveyed customers as to why they were ordering certified records outside of Good Standing certificates to ensure that our online offering would continue to meet their needs.

Once programming was done, our employees tested the system using test scripts to identify coding issues. Next we reached out to our multi-filer representatives and various law firms and asked them to come to the office to help test. They eagerly came and gave us valuable critiques, which were sent back to IT to include in the program. Our stakeholders also went back to their offices and spread the word among their coworkers and associates. Stakeholder engagement was key to project success for two reasons: first, it provided crucial system usability feedback so that the final product truly met our customer needs, and second, it began the process of notifying our customers of the coming change so that they could change their own behavior and processes to take advantage of the more convenient new system.

Significance

Online certificates beneficially impacted our customers as well as our internal operations. Customers no longer pay for certified records—saving \$5 to \$35 per request. They can obtain certified records immediately online, from anywhere in the world, during regular business hours or in the middle of the night. The need to obtain certified documents from our office no longer imperils a pending business deal.

Internally, personnel that previously processed certified document requests have cross-trained in other work units. This creates a virtuous cycle where we are able to deliver better customer service in other functional areas as well, because we have more resources and broader ability to cover tasks.

For example, we identified peak periods for phone calls to our Service Center and have re-assigned employees that were working in the certification work unit to answer customer calls during these peak times to reduce wait times.

This also provides additional resources for our customers in any work unit that may be short-staffed on any given day due to vacations, illness, emergencies, or training. The Operations management staff meet for 30 minutes or less every morning to review staffing, schedules, and workloads for that day and the near future to determine which unit has the greatest staffing need and which employees are best suited to fill that need, all while keeping the other work units functional. Online certificates was key to freeing up resources and allows us to flex to other needed functions.

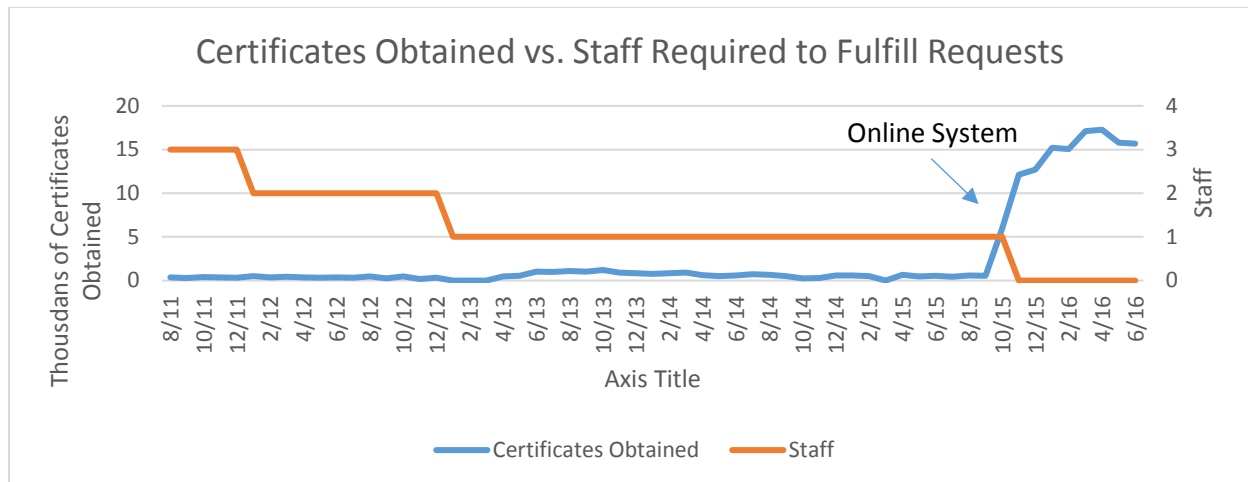
Impacts/Results

The new online certifications went live on October 20, 2015. During the first year (through October 19, 2016) customers accessed 182,445 certificates online. At \$5-\$35 per certificate, customers saved over \$1 million obtaining certificates online. They obtained certificates from the convenience of their computer, either 350 miles from our office in Durango, Colorado, or 9,000 miles away in Singapore, at whatever time of day or day of the week was most convenient for them. In addition, nearly 45,000—almost 25 percent of the total—of those certificates were obtained outside of normal business hours, which shows how much business takes place when government offices are not open. Our customers are now able to complete these tasks whenever it's most convenient for them.

First Year Metrics

- 182,445 certificates obtained online
 - Over \$1 million saved by customers
 - 44,809 certificates obtained outside business hours
-

Prior to our online certificates going live, customers were able to obtain a Certificate of Good Standing and plain copies of any document filed. We collected monthly statistics for the number of Certificates of Good Standing requested but did not track the number of copies of documents printed. We were amazed at the demand for certified copies as shown by the statistics we started getting every day.



Customers have been thrilled with the new online offering, including feedback such as:

“Just for the record, I think your office and its website is the best.”

“Nice job! I really like how you set this up.”

“I am very impressed ... I gave it a test and it is very easy and fast.”

“... just ecstatic over it!”

“Thank you so very much, this was just what I needed.”

Supporting Materials

1. Example certificate of document filed
2. Validation process
3. Press release announcing launch of online certifications
4. Press clip

EXAMPLE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE
OF THE STATE OF COLORADO

CERTIFICATE OF DOCUMENT FILED

I, Wayne W. Williams, as the Secretary of State of the State of Colorado, hereby certify that, according to the records of this office, the attached document is a true and complete copy of the
Filed Document

with Document # 19981159325 of
VAIL RESORTS

(Entity ID # 19981159325)

currently registered by VAIL TRADEMARKS, INC.
consisting of 2 pages.

This certificate reflects facts established or disclosed by documents delivered to this office on paper through 01/04/2017 that have been posted, and by documents delivered to this office electronically through 01/05/2017 @16:35:53 .

I have affixed hereto the Great Seal of the State of Colorado and duly generated, executed, and issued this official certificate at Denver, Colorado on 01/05/2017 @16:35:53 in accordance with applicable law. This certificate is assigned Confirmation Number 10005399



*****End of Certificate*****

Notice: A certificate issued electronically from the Colorado Secretary of State's Web site is fully and immediately valid and effective. However, as an option, the issuance and validity of a certificate obtained electronically may be established by visiting the Validate a Certificate page of the Secretary of State's Web site, <http://www.sos.state.co.us/biz/CertificateSearchCriteria.do> entering the certificate's confirmation number displayed on the certificate, and following the instructions displayed. Confirming the issuance of a certificate is merely optional and is not necessary to the valid and effective issuance of a certificate. For more information, visit our Web site, <http://www.sos.state.co.us/> click "Businesses, trademarks, trade names" and select "Frequently Asked Questions."

Mail to: Secretary of State
Corporations Section
1560 Broadway, Suite 200
Denver, CO 80202
(303) 894-2251
Fax (303) 894-2242

For office use only

MUST BE TYPED
FILING FEE: \$50.00
MUST SUBMIT TWO COPIES
and TWO FACSIMILES
OF THE TRADEMARK

FILED
VICTORIA HUNTER
CLERK OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

**APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION
OF
TRADEMARK OR SERVICEMARK**

19981159325 N
\$ 50.00
SECRETARY OF STATE
09-02-1998 11:27:23

**Please include a typed
self-addressed envelope**

1. NAME AND BUSINESS ADDRESS OF OWNER/APPLICANT:

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 7
Vail, Colorado 81658

Vail Trademarks, Inc. ^{ncys} 137 Benchmark Road
NAME STREET SUITE/APT. #
Avon Colorado 81620
CITY STATE ZIP
STATE OF INCORPORATION Colorado (COMPLETE ONLY IF A CORPORATION)

2. DESCRIPTION OF TRADEMARK - Complete A or B, BUT NOT BOTH

A.
WORDS Vail Resorts
CHECK ONE: ☐ WORDS ONLY ☐ WORDS WITH STYLIZED LETTERING ☒ WORDS AND DESIGN
NO FACSIMILE REQUIRED 2 FACSIMILES REQUIRED 2 FACSIMILES REQUIRED
B.
DESIGN ONLY - NO WORDS IN TRADEMARK (2 FACSIMILES REQUIRED)
BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE DESIGN

3. CLASSIFICATION - Choose ONLY ONE from list on instruction page. Class Number (16)

4. DATE FIRST USED by applicant or the predecessor in the same business.

FIRST USED ANYWHERE 8/1/98 FIRST USED IN COLORADO 8/1/98
Date first used anywhere must be same as or earlier than date first used in Colorado.

5. MANNER IN WHICH TRADEMARK IS USED - Be Brief
Travel Planners, Brochures, Advertising

6. The applicant hereby appoints the Secretary of State as agent for service of process in any action relating to this registration if the applicant is or becomes a nonresident or foreign corporation not licensed to do business in this state or cannot be found in this state.

7. The applicant signs this application for registration under penalty of perjury and states that s/he is the owner of the mark and that no other person has the right to use such mark in this state, either in the identical form thereof or in any near resemblance thereto which might be calculated to deceive or to be mistaken therefor.

SIGNATURE James S. Mandel
(Applicant, owner, authorized agent) Senior Vice President

COMPUTER UPDATE COMPLETE

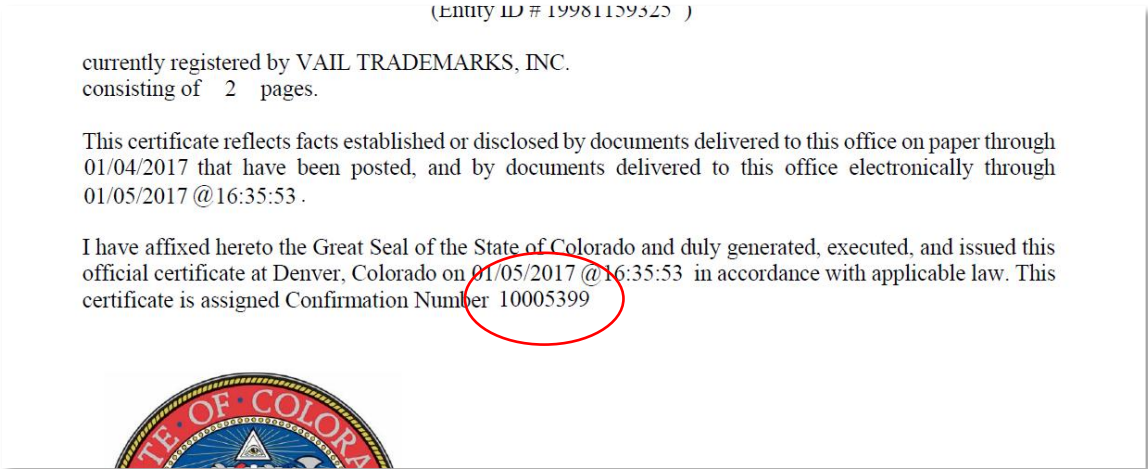
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VAIL RESORTS

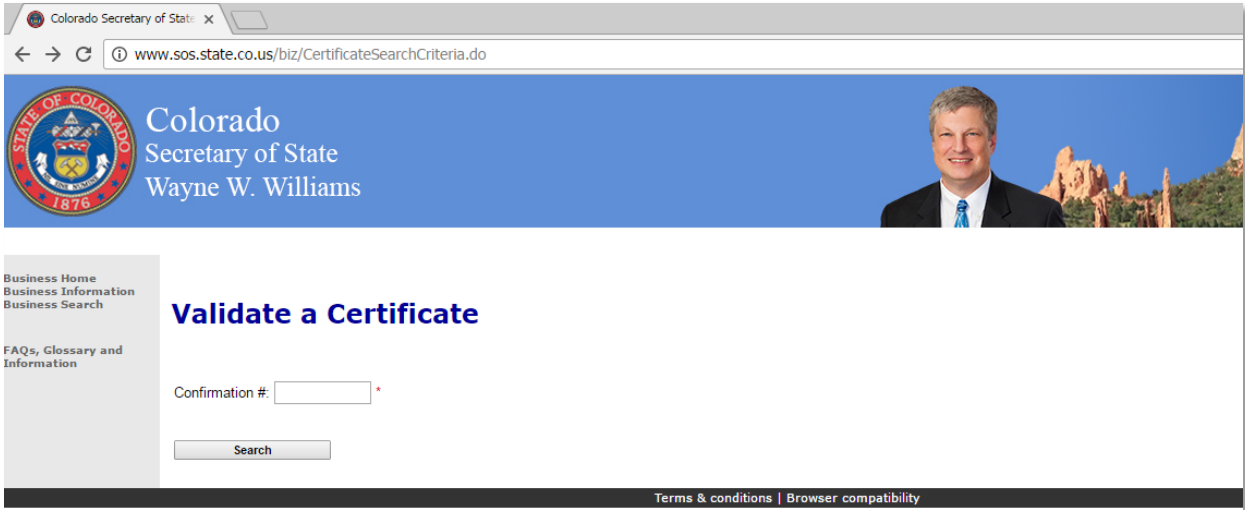
2

Each certified document includes a confirmation number so that interested parties can validate its authenticity. See the images below for an example of the validation process for the attached example certificate.

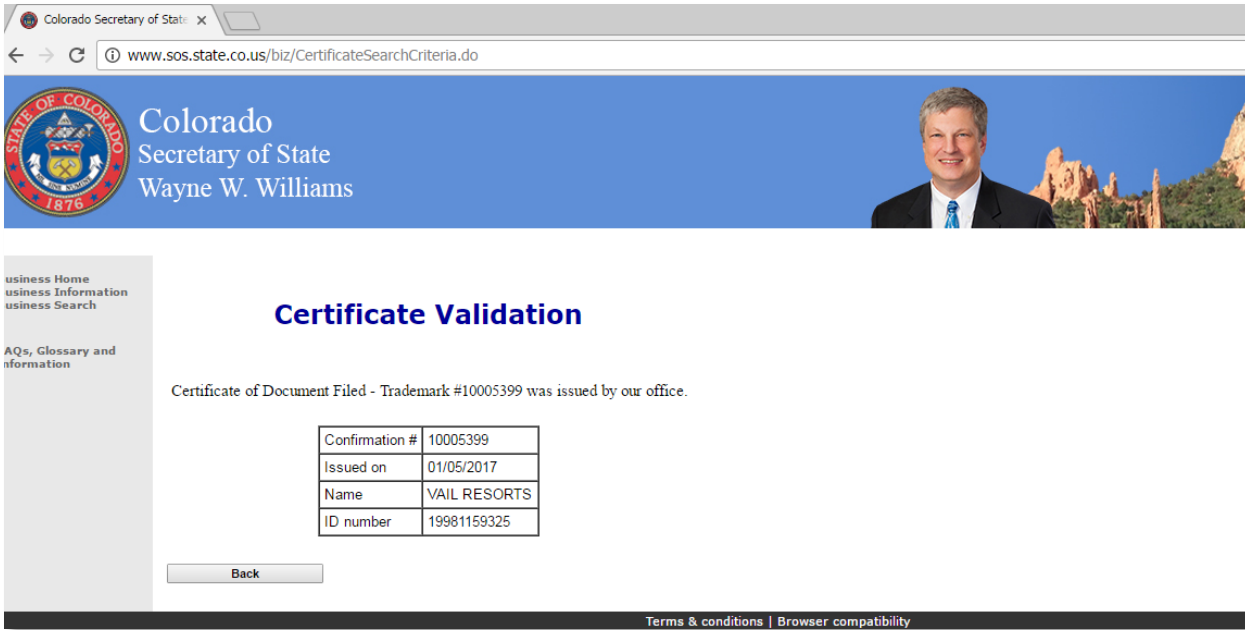


Validating a certificate is easy on our website.

Step 1:



Step 2:



STATE OF COLORADO
Department of State
 1700 Broadway
 Suite 200
 Denver, CO 80290



Wayne Williams
Secretary of State

Suzanne Staiert
Deputy Secretary of State

News Release

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 Lynn Bartels
lynn.bartels@sos.state.co.us

Secretary of State to offer free online business certification

DENVER, October 9, 2015 – Colorado on Oct. 20 will become the first state in the country to offer business certification services online.

Customers currently receive certification by either mailing the Colorado Secretary of State's Office or visiting it in person. A fee is involved, but the online services will be free.

"I'm excited that we can offer this valuable service to our customers in Colorado and nationally," said Mike Hardin, director of business and licensing for the secretary of state.

Certificates of Good Standing already were available online, but the following certificates will also be available free on the secretary of state website:

- Certificate of Documents Filed: provides certified copies of all documents relating to an entity or record in the secretary of state records.
- Certificate of Document Filed: provides a certified copy of an individual document filed in the Secretary of State's records.
- Certificate of Fact of Trade Name: certifies that a statement of trade name for a specific name was filed with the Secretary of State's office and its effective date.
- Certificate of Fact of Existence: certifies that a constituent filed document for a non-reporting entity was filed and that no dissolution document has been filed for that entity.

Each certificate will contain a unique confirmation number that can be validated on our website. In addition, each record's history can be displayed in a print-friendly version.

Once this system is launched, our office will no longer issue certificates or certified copies in person or by mail. The new online certificates will be accessible via the Secretary of State's Business Organizations pages.

For more information, please contact our office at 303-894-2200 (option 2) or by email at business@sos.state.co.us.



Colorado secretary of state visits Summit during voting season

October 22, 2015

Greg Ellison

Colorado Secretary of State Wayne Williams paid a visit to Summit County last week as part of a statewide tour to provide election support for county clerks and promote new projects to improve voter registration.

"I like to get a feel for how the election is run outside of Denver," he said.

Prior to taking office this January, he had been the clerk and recorder in El Paso County starting in 2011. He also served as a county commissioner in El Paso from 2003 to 2011.

"I know what its like to be from a rural county," he said.

Summit County Clerk and Recorder Kathleen Neel welcomed the visit and noted the agencies strong working relationship.

"I think it's great that he stops in and touches base," she said. "We have a good relationship with that office, which is good for the citizens, as well as us."

With Williams' prior experience, Neel feels a natural camaraderie.

"He's been in these shoes before," she said.

Although at this point in the election cycle most of the mail in Neel's office is incoming ballots, she said there are still a few days remaining for ballots to be mailed out.

"Tuesday, Oct. 27 is the last day we can mail out a ballot," she said.

If you are still patiently waiting for your ballot to arrive at your post office box, she advises you contact her office.

"Lots of people move around Summit County," she said. "Please call us because they don't forward ballots."

The clerk and recorders office can verify your information, so you can register to vote on Election Day or cast an early ballot next week.

She also said on Nov. 3, the clerk and recorders office would be closed for all non-election services, including motor vehicle, public search room and recording office.

NEW AND IMPROVED

While Williams expressed no concerns over election procedures in Summit County, he said there are huge needs around the state.

"It's a big state and just about everything is online. You should not have to come to Denver to do business with the state. If you want to start a business or a nonprofit, you should be able to do it from your living room."

-- Secretary of State Wayne Williams

In many smaller jurisdictions, routine issues such as where ballots are counted can become tricky, as there are generally not year-round rooms dedicated for such purposes, he explained.

Also on the agenda during his trip to Summit County were recent efforts his office has undertaken to help conduct business remotely.

“It’s a big state and just about everything is online,” he said. “You should not have to come to Denver to do business with the state.”

On Oct. 20, Colorado became the first state in the country to make business certification services available over the Internet.

“If you want to start a business or a nonprofit, you should be able to do it from your living room,” he opined.

Previously certifications were obtained, for a fee, by mail or in person at the Secretary of State’s office in Denver, but the online services are provided at no cost.

Back in August, Williams was in attendance at a ribbon cutting for the Colorado DRIVES project, which aims to provide a modern, user-friendly digital medium to process driver’s licenses and vehicle registrations. The previous computer systems were at least 20 years old.

Colorado DRIVES is short for Drivers License, Record, Identification and Vehicle Enterprise Solution.

“Many people register to vote for the first time when they obtain their driver’s license,” he wrote in a press release. “This allows us to improve the process of updating someone’s voter registration when that person updates his or her driver’s license.”

When updates are made to addresses or voter registration information, the new Colorado DRIVES system automatically shares the information with the Secretary of State’s office. Gov. John Hickenlooper said the goal is to reduce wait times in state driver’s license offices to an average of 15 minutes.

Reducing or eliminating waiting times is a recurring theme in much of Williams’ undertakings. Echoing Neel’s comments about ballots arriving in mailboxes by this week, he had an alternative to visiting the clerk and recorders office.

“Instead of driving over to Breckenridge, you can go online,” he said.

The link govotecolorado.com will take you to a page on the Secretary of State’s website where you can register online to vote as well as confirm voter registration information.