An important part of the Election Assistance Commission's (EAC) mission is to support election officials in their efforts to ensure accessible, accurate and secure elections. This fact sheet highlights how election officials conduct list maintenance, the importance of accurate voter registration lists, and the National Voter Registration Act's (NVRA) provisions to ensure voter lists are maintained. It also gives guidance for voters wishing to check the status of their own voter registration.

What is voter list maintenance?

Voter list maintenance is the process election officials use to maintain accurate and up to date voter lists. It includes adding, updating, and removing voters from lists. Officials must follow appropriate state and federal laws to determine whether a voter should be removed from a list.

Why is voter list maintenance important?

Maintaining an accurate voter registration list is essential to protecting election integrity. Americans deserve an election system that produces an accurate result based on each eligible voter casting a single ballot in their proper jurisdiction. Maintaining an accurate voter list benefits voters because it lowers the likelihood of lines at the polls, reduces voter confusion, and decreases the number of provisional ballots. Updated records also allow election administrators to plan, better manage their budgets and poll workers, and improve voter experience.

What is the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA)?

Commonly referred to as the "motor voter" law because it contained provisions about voter registration at local DMV offices, the NVRA also provides guidance for when election officials may remove the name of a voter from a list. The 2020 Election Administration and Voting Survey found that states removed over 18 million voters from voter registration lists that election cycle. A voter may be moved from an inactive to a cancelled list of voters if no voter activity occurs for a period of two federal general elections. Other reasons for removal include death, specific criminal convictions if state law requires it, moving from one jurisdiction to another, mental incapacitation if state law requires it, or at the voter's request.

Do states automatically share and cross-check voter list information?

The short answer is no. Each state makes its own determination about how best to maintain an accurate voter registration list. The NVRA does permit states to use uniform and non-discriminatory practices to ensure the accuracy of these lists, including using mechanisms to check information across states. One cross-state effort is the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), which as of March 2023 is used by more than half the states and the District of Columbia. States participating in ERIC can compare voter list data, motor vehicle data, change of address data, and death records to keep voter lists up to date.

What other sources do election officials use to ensure accurate voter lists?

States can use government records to check the accuracy of their voter lists. Examples include DMV records, death records from health departments or the Social Security Administration, specific disqualifying criminal convictions from courts, and notices from other election officials. Many states also use the U.S. Postal Service's National Change of Address data.

How can I check the status of my own voter registration?

If you have questions about your own voter registration status, local election officials can guide you on the procedure for ensuring an accurate registration. Most state election websites have online tools to check your status. Visit eac.gov/vote for more information.