



Secretary of State

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Good morning Co-Chairs Bauer and Ginsberg, and members of the commission. My name is Shane Hamlin. I am the Chair of the Electronic Registration Information Center, or ERIC, and the Deputy Director of Elections for the State of Washington. Thank you for inviting me to speak today on the topic of voter registration list maintenance, and specifically ERIC.

I am going to cover five topics in my presentation:

1. ERIC's mission and brief explanation of ERIC
2. Washington State's experience with ERIC
3. Other ERIC benefits to states
4. Briefly touch on privacy and security
5. Closing thoughts on voter registration, ERIC and improving elections administration

ERIC

ERIC's mission is to assist states with improving the accuracy of America's voter rolls and increase access to voter registration for all eligible citizens.

Using powerful data comparison software, ERIC provides more comprehensive and accurate information by analyzing voter registration and driver identification information from all of the participating states. It also includes national death data from the Social Security Administration, and national change of address data.

Using reports from ERIC, election administrators can more confidently remove duplicate registrations, cancel registrations of deceased voters, better process address updates and more efficiently manage records of voters who have moved and registered in another state. They can use ERIC reports to do all these activities in a manner that complies with federal laws that protect voter rights, but also require states to maintain clean voter rolls.

ERIC also identifies potentially eligible but unregistered residents, giving states information they can use to conduct targeted, more cost-effective voter registration programs.

Washington State's experience with ERIC

To help add context to my comments on Washington's experience with ERIC, I'll begin by sharing a few basic points about elections in Washington. We have about 3.9 million registered

voters, we conduct all elections by mail and elections are administered at the county level by 39 separately elected County Auditors.

A couple of weeks ago, Washington broke new ground when we began updating over 53,000 voter registration records and mailed voter registration information to more than 140,000 potentially eligible, but unregistered residents. Updating such a large number of records and conducting focused registration education was only possible because of our participation in ERIC.

Washington has long conducted list maintenance activities using many of the same tools other states use. For example, we routinely check for duplicate registrations and deceased voters. We've engaged in cross-state voter registration data matching with Oregon and Alaska using off-the-shelf software, and we just joined the Kansas cross-state check. Given the technology available to elections officials today through ERIC, there is room for improvement.

How much better is data matching through ERIC than our current list maintenance efforts? In the first ERIC report on deceased voters, the new system identified 947 voters missed in by our existing procedures. This is about 25 percent more records than we found through our routine deceased check process.

This outcome demonstrates that ERIC adds real value. Washington has used national death data from the Social Security Administration for years, but using the same data ERIC found 25 percent more matches than we did. It sounds cliché, but I think ERIC is a real game changer.

Benefits to states

ERIC states should see cleaner voter rolls, which means cost savings at election time because there will be fewer problems at the polls or fewer ballots returned as undeliverable. Helping a voter who has difficulty voting on election day due to a registration issue consumes staff time and energy at time when there is little of either to spare, and it increases use of provisional ballots.

ERIC members will see cost savings through joint purchases with other ERIC states of Social Security Death Index data and national change of address services. Buying data services as group, and not as individual states, results in savings for all ERIC states.

Voter registration activity occurs over 48 month cycle, spiking dramatically at the registration deadline in a Presidential election year. ERIC states that conduct routine voter registration mailings, well ahead of deadlines, should see a flattening of this spike.

Finally, perhaps less tangible but just as important, there is something to be said for demonstrating to interests groups, candidates, the media and Legislatures that your state is doing everything it can to maintain the integrity of the voter rolls and help eligible residents get registered.

States are in control, data and privacy are protected

Privacy and security were built into ERIC from the beginning. The ERIC workgroup asked the Center for Democracy and Technology to review ERIC's technical design and governance structure. The center's recommendations were incorporated into ERIC.

ERIC member states retain control over their data. ERIC is not a national registration database. Sensitive data is anonymized, meaning rendered unintelligible to humans before the data leaves the state and again when it gets to ERIC. Data is transmitted in a secure manner and the ERIC system is not accessible through internet.

Voter registration is an important aspect of elections administration

In closing, I want to highlight the importance of voter registration and the need to modernize our registration system through programs like ERIC.

Voter registration is a key consideration when election administrators are planning an election. It is a critical variable in most decisions regarding resource allocation; decisions which certainly impact voters on Election Day.

Coming from a state that had one of the closest gubernatorial elections in history, I know public trust in the outcome of an election begins with confidence in the voter registration system. The public expects voter elections officials to keep voter rolls up-to-date. They also want voter registration to be easy and convenient.

Election officials have a duty to maintain accurate voter rolls, but this can be a real challenge. The process of collecting hand-written paper forms, manually entering the data into computers, and maintaining up-to-date information is inefficient, slow, prone to error and expensive. Additionally, as research demonstrates, the current system simply cannot keep pace with our highly mobile society.

Modernizing voter registration will help improve other aspects of elections administration that impact the voter experience. Better data sharing through ERIC is a vital part of modernizing registration. ERIC provides states with a powerful new set of tools that will improve the accuracy of voter rolls and expand access to voter registration, achieving both goals more efficiently.

Thank you for the opportunity to share information about ERIC. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.