

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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January 14, 2019

Honorable Louis J. Luchini
Senate Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0100

Honorable John C. Schneck
House Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0100

Dear Senator Luchini, Representative Schneck and Members of the Committee:

Maine election law, Title 21-A section 195, requires the Secretary of State to report annually “on the administration of the central voter registration system” (i.e. CVR). The law permits that the report may “address issues of public access to the information from the central voter registration system, taking into consideration the compelling state interests to prevent voter fraud and the potential disenfranchisement of voters and to ensure voters are not discouraged from participating in the voting process”. The following is the required 2018 report.

Appendix A of this report provides the background and history of implementation of the CVR, as well as current voter registration figures and a summary of CVR management and maintenance activities and statistics for 2018. This data provides valuable insight into a major tool of election administration -- indeed, the backbone -- of Maine’s voter registration, absentee voting and election results tracking and reporting system.

I would like to highlight the fact that in the 11 ½ years since full implementation of the system, Maine has gone from a completely decentralized voter registration process, involving the maintenance of disparate voter registration lists in about 500 municipalities, with no uniformity of data or automation tools, and little access to accurate voter registration data or statistics statewide; to a robust, functional and uniform voter registration software and database that allows for local control of data input, while providing central oversight and management of data accuracy. Moreover, it is worthwhile to take note that the application and database have had an extremely low incidence of system downtime.

Like any good tool, the CVR is never static. The database is being accessed and updated on a daily basis by state and local election administrators in response to information received from voters and reliable data maintenance sources such as death records and notices of cancellation from election administrators in other jurisdictions. Likewise, the software application and system functionality undergoes an annual review to identify and implement enhancements needed to comply with new laws and procedures, and to create process efficiencies.

However, as with any tool, the CVR must be maintained and used by humans. Accordingly, the effectiveness of the CVR is dependent upon the diligence of users to accurately enter, maintain and report on the voter registration data it contains, as well as the voters themselves to provide complete and accurate information on the voter registration application or change forms. Accordingly, deficiencies in the voter registration data are attributable to human clerical omissions and errors. To help improve and maintain data integrity, the Elections Division personnel continually and periodically monitor CVR data; plan and execute annual system-wide, non-discriminatory data maintenance activities as required by the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA); and provide guidance and training to a constantly changing set of local election officials in 500 municipalities.

As a result of the Russian interference in the 2016 federal elections, Congress appropriated in 2018 the remaining authorization of the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (\$380 million nationally, which included \$3,130,979 for Maine) and titled it the “2018 HAVA Election Security Grant”. Maine received the federal share of the grant on July 19, 2018. We are required by the grant terms to provide a State Match of \$156,549 by March 23, 2020. We have included this amount in our FY20-21 biennial budget request. Maine’s application for the grant funds proposed to spend about \$300,000 on equipment and software upgrades to enhance cyber security for the CVR. Previous to the grant award, we upgraded the CVR application to require complex passwords for users to access the system. We hope to implement the additional cyber security enhancements over the next two years.

Although municipal and state users access CVR via the internet, no users have direct access to the application server or database server. All user access is strictly controlled via complex passwords and defined user roles and permissions. Users connect to the web server, which is accessible via a web link. The web server connects to the application server, which is located in the Secretary of State’s Data Center, and is protected by the State’s firewall system. Only the application server can access the database via a private network with the database server. The database server also is located in the Secretary of State’s Data Center.

I look forward to working with you as you consider this report, and as our Department continues to maintain the CVR, administer other federal laws and initiatives and fulfill its ongoing obligations. As always, you may contact me at 626-8400 if I can provide you with any additional materials, answer any questions, or assist you in any way.

Sincerely,

Matthew Dunlap
Secretary of State

2018 Report on the Administration of the Central Voter Registration (CVR) System
Appendix A

Description of the Central Voter Registration (CVR) System

The CVR is a statewide system for maintaining voter registration and election information by State and local election officials, which was implemented in compliance with the Help America Vote Act of 2002 and state law. The CVR consists of a highly-modified, proprietary software application (called *ElectioNet*), developed and supported by a vendor, PCC Technology, Inc.; and an Oracle database that is maintained by the Department of the Secretary of State in the Department's secure data center. The application is accessed by municipal clerks and registrars, as well as State elections staff, over the internet. Updates and changes are made in real time and are immediately visible to authorized staff, as well as available for reports pursuant to the law. However, CVR is not available to municipal election officials on Election Day except for inquiries, updating absentee information, and printing reports. New voter records or changes to existing voter records must not be done on Election Day. They must be done within 15 business days following the election. This decision was made to ensure that a data entry error would not incorrectly remove a voter's record from the municipality of registration on Election Day.

Clerks and registrars in over 500 municipalities are primarily responsible for individual voter record maintenance, including: adding new voter records, updating records with address changes, party changes, or other changes; and entering voter participation history (i.e. the voters who voted at an election). The CVR is the computer system that enables these municipal clerks and registrars to maintain voter registration records and to administer key election management activities, such as issuing and tracking absentee ballots and printing the incoming voting lists for Election Day.

State election officials conduct system-wide data maintenance efforts and batch updates as allowed by law. Consequently, the success and accuracy of the CVR relies not only on the Department's performance of its system maintenance duties, but also on the accurate and timely use of the system by municipal clerks and registrars.

History of CVR Implementation

By the spring of 2007, the Department of the Secretary of State had fully implemented the CVR, meeting the requirements of the state and federal law. The Department successfully deployed all required CVR infrastructure, including municipal equipment and network connectivity; the CVR application, *ElectioNet*, became fully operational; voter registration data from all municipal jurisdictions was loaded into the statewide database; and election officials from all municipalities received initial training on how to use the new system.

Benefits of the CVR

The Department and municipal election officials are able to realize the benefits of an integrated software application and database for maintaining voter registration data. Municipal election officials have a functional voter registration system that requires no local licensing or maintenance fees, and that facilitates voter registration and election activities.

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The CVR allows clerks and registrars to share information through the use of electronic notices, so that when a voter registers in a new municipality, the voter's old record may be updated by the election official in the new municipality, and automatically removed from the municipality of prior registration, saving the election officials both time and mailing costs.

The CVR also allows the Department to more efficiently complete activities that were once left to municipalities to perform. These activities include biennial mandatory federal reporting of voter registration statistics and Election Day voting information; and the conduct of voter list maintenance functions required by the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA). The Department routinely works with municipalities to identify and remove records of deceased voters, voters who have moved, and duplicate voter records.

Voter Registration Statistics and Activities

As of January 1, 2019, Maine has 1,058,120 active status voters and 3,957 inactive status voters. Statewide, active status registered voters comprise over 97% of Maine's Voting Age Population (VAP) of 1,085,446. (The Voting Age Population figure is derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's July 1, 2018 population estimates.)

In 2018, municipal election officials (clerks and registrars) across the State processed 40,802 new voter registrations and 105,096 registration changes (such as party enrollment changes or new addresses).

The CVR was also used to process over 196,000 absentee ballot requests for the November 6, 2018 General and Referendum Election, including 3,069 ballot requests processed by the Elections Division for the Uniformed Service and Overseas Voters (UOCAVA). UOCAVA voters were able to request ballots using mail, fax, email and the online Absentee Ballot Request (ABR) service; and to return their ballots via mail, fax, or as a scanned image attached to an email.

2018 Data Maintenance Statistics

In 2018, State or municipal election officials performed individual and statewide, periodic voter list maintenance activities that resulted in records of voters being removed from the database (i.e. cancelled) for the following reasons:

- 10,541 - voters deceased
- 1,245 – duplicate records
- 0 – voters inactive for 2 federal general elections (done in odd-numbered years only)
- 15,291 – voters moved from the municipality of registration
- 201 – registrar hearing determined voters ineligible
- 438 – voter requested removal from list
- 27,716** – Total records cancelled due to required voter list maintenance activities

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Summary of Data Maintenance Statistics from June 2007 to the Present

The following is a summary of the data maintenance statistics from June 2007 to the end of 2018, reflecting the total number of voter records cancelled from the database to date:

- 119,082 – voters deceased
- 38,544 – duplicate records
- 109,285 – voters inactive for 2 federal general elections
- 232,970 – voters moved from the municipality of registration
- 862 – registrar hearing determined voters ineligible
- 5,199 – voter requested removal from list
- 505,942** – Total records cancelled due to required voter list maintenance activities

Ongoing Obligations, Improvements and Enhancements

Help Desk

In addition to its election-specific CVR activity, the Department has ongoing responsibilities to maintain the system and provide support to its municipal partners. The Department maintains and staffs a toll-free Help Desk line to provide assistance to municipal clerks and registrars and offers annual refresher training. In 2018, CVR staff logged 1,095 calls to the Help Desk.

Of the 1,095 Help Desk calls, 589 calls (54%) related to voter registration, enrollment and absentee voting. Another 219 calls (20%) related to CVR data requests and Voter Participation History; 241 calls (22%) related to scanning and reporting functions, and maintaining municipal data (maintaining Street Libraries and Elections, and managing CVR user accounts); and 46 calls (4%) related to internet browser, system requirements, and other technical issues.

Site Computing Equipment

Prior to implementation of the CVR, the Department conducted an extensive review/needs assessment of local computing equipment and capabilities, and found that nearly half of the jurisdictions had either no equipment or equipment with insufficient memory or processing speed to use the CVR application. Additionally, in order to ensure that all municipalities had the same equipment, and to facilitate the State's support of local CVR users, the State used HAVA grant monies to purchase a desktop computer, printer and peripherals to allow every municipality to perform CVR functions in a consistent manner. This equipment is now obsolete and has been retired. Municipalities now use a municipal computer to access CVR, and the State is not intending to supply site computing equipment in the future.