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Department of the Secretary of State

Bureau of Corporations, Elections and Commissions

Shenna Bellows
Secretary of State

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January 15, 2022

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

The Honorable Christopher Caiazzo**,** House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Dear Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo 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 2021 report.

Appendix A of this report provides additional CVR information including current voter registration figures and a summary of CVR management and maintenance activities and statistics for 2021. 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.

The CVR is a statewide system for maintaining voter registration and election information by state and local election officials. Implemented in 2007, in compliance with the Help America Vote Act of 2002 and state law, Maine's customized CVR is a highly secure uniform registration software application and database that allows for local control of data input, while providing central oversight and management of data accuracy. It is worthwhile to take note that the application and database have had an extremely low incidence of system downtime.

Data in 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.

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. As such, any 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 monitor CVR data; plan and execute periodic, 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. To improve the accuracy of voter registration data, the 130th Legislature enacted Parts UUUU-1 and UUUU-6 of chapter 398 of the Public Laws of 2021, to authorize and direct the Secretary of State, by January 1, 2023, to enter into a membership agreement with the Electronic Registration Information Center, Inc. (ERIC). The ERIC program provides for the periodic sharing of voter information between the ERIC member states to enable list maintenance activities. The Secretary of State began the process of becoming a member of ERIC in August of 2021 and was approved for membership and completed the onboarding process. The Department is now able to obtain available list maintenance reports (such as the federal death records report and reports of Maine voters who may have moved within or outside of Maine) to review and update the Maine voting records in accordance with the NVRA list maintenance requirements.

Although municipal and state users access CVR via the internet, no users have direct access to the application or database servers. 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.

Technology modernization is a vital consideration when it comes to protecting the integrity and security of voter registration information. Almost fifteen years after the CVR's implementation, the Department recognizes the need to upgrade or modernize the system. In order to address this critical need, the Department first gathered information on various system vendors by issuing a Request for Information (RFI) in June of 2021 and met with the respondents in July to gain an understanding of available systems and features. We then drafted and issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) in early October of 2021 and awarded the successful bidder in late December of 2021. As there was no appeal to the award by January 5, 2022, the Department is now beginning the process of negotiating a contract with the successful bidder, with an anticipated system implementation date of July 1, 2023.

I look forward to working with you as you consider this report, and as our Department continues to uphold the integrity and security of Maine elections through faithful and diligent maintenance of a secure CVR system. Please feel free to contact me at 626-8400 if I can provide you with any additional materials, answer any questions, or assist you in any way.

Sincerely,

Shenna Bellows

Shenna Bellows
Secretary of State

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 2007 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, CIVIX (formerly 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 is 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 electronic software application and database 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.

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.

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, 2022, Maine has 1,119,992 active status voters and 2,364 inactive status voters. Statewide, active status registered voters comprise 102% of Maine's Voting Age Population (VAP) of 1,095,366. The Voting Age Population figure is derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2020 population estimates. We are now a member of the Electronic Registration Information Center, Inc. (i.e., ERIC), and are working through the various data reports to conduct voter list maintenance efforts moving forward.

In 2021, municipal election officials (clerks and registrars) across the State processed 13,804 new voter registrations and 35,192 registration changes (which includes 16,493 moves to new municipalities and 18,699 changes of party or other changes).

The CVR was also used to process over 120,925 absentee ballot requests for the November 2, 2021 General Election, including 5,589 ballot requests processed by the Elections Division or 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.

2021 Data Maintenance Statistics

In 2021, State or municipal election officials performed individual and statewide, periodic voter list maintenance activities that resulted in records of voters being designated as cancelled for the following reasons:

o   14,871 – voters deceased
o   3,218 – duplicate records
o   1,396 – voters inactive for 2 federal general elections (done in odd-numbered years only)
o   11,438 – voters moved from the municipality of registration
o   15 – registrar hearing determined voters ineligible
o   312 – voter requested removal from list
    31,250 – Total records cancelled due to required voter list maintenance activities

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 2021, reflecting the total number of voter records cancelled from the database to date:

o 157,842 – voters deceased
o   45,868 – duplicate records
o 112,623 – voters inactive for 2 federal general elections
o 269,359 – voters moved from the municipality of registration
o   1,278 – registrar hearing determined voters ineligible
o   6,215 – voter requested removal from list
   593,185 – 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 2021, CVR staff logged 817 non-security related calls to the Help Desk. Of these 817 Help Desk calls, 401 calls (49%) related to voter registration, enrollment and absentee voting. Another 218 calls (27%) related to scanning and reporting functions and maintaining municipal data (maintaining Street Libraries and Elections and managing CVR user accounts); 174 calls (21%) related to CVR data requests and Voter Participation History; and 24 calls (3%) related to internet browser, system requirements, and other technical issues. Additionally, CVR staff handled 409 calls related to CVR security, most related to password assistance. Management staff handled another 562 calls related to CVR security.