



Wisconsin Elections Commission

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DATE: October 7, 2019

TO: Members, Wisconsin State Senate
Members, Wisconsin Assembly

FROM: Wisconsin Elections Commission

SUBJECT: Answering Common Questions about Wisconsin's Membership in ERIC

This month, the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) is mailing letters to more than 234,000 Wisconsin voters who may have moved and need to reregister. The mailing is required under the membership agreement for the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), which the Legislature required Wisconsin to join in 2016. This fact sheet is designed to help legislators and their staffs answer common questions about ERIC and the required mailings to voters.

What is ERIC? ERIC is a nonprofit group of 29 states that securely share information about their voters. ERIC uses that shared information to help member states improve the accuracy and efficiency of their voter registration systems. Meagan Wolfe, Wisconsin's chief election official, is Secretary of ERIC's Board of Directors.

What specifically does ERIC do? ERIC helps its members identify voters who have moved or died, as well as people who are eligible to vote but are not registered. ERIC does this by comparing information about registered voters and people with motor vehicle licenses from each member state with U.S. Postal Service address changes and Social Security death records. The membership agreement requires participating states to contact Wisconsin residents ERIC has identified as eligible to vote but who are currently unregistered and provide them the opportunity to register to vote. Member states are also required use data provided by ERIC concerning voters who may have moved or have died in another state to improve the accuracy of voter rolls.

Is Wisconsin's data safe with ERIC? Yes. WEC and DMV encrypt their data before sending it to ERIC. ERIC secures the data, and undergoes regular security audits.

What information does Wisconsin get back from ERIC? Wisconsin gets reports that show voters who have moved in-state, voters who have moved out of state, voters who have died, duplicate registrations and persons who are potentially eligible to vote but are not yet registered.

What gaps does ERIC fill? ERIC gives Wisconsin elections officials access to death records nationally, which is particularly helpful if a voter dies while out of state. ERIC also provides information about voters with current registrations in Wisconsin who may also be registered in another ERIC member state.

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What does Wisconsin do with ERIC reports? We use this data to contact voters who may have changed their address, connect with people who are eligible to vote but unregistered, and assess voter participation. This allows us an opportunity to identify questionable, duplicate or inaccurate voter records and reach out to voters to correct these problems. The results of these list maintenance processes are voter rolls in Wisconsin that are both more accurate and updated at a more rapid pace than when only the statutorily-required 4-Year Maintenance process is used.

What is the Movers Mailing? Every two years, Wisconsin sends a mailing to voters identified as having potentially moved from their current registration address. Wisconsin's first mailing took place in 2017 and the second is scheduled for October 2019. The recipients of this mailing will remain active and can confirm their residential address is valid on MyVote.wi.gov or by participating in an election through Spring 2021. If they have moved, they can register at their new address through MyVote.wi.gov, submit a new registration to their municipal clerk, or complete an election day registration at their new polling place. If no action has been taken through the Spring 2021 elections, the voter's record will be inactivated.

If a legislator's office gets questions from voters who receive the movers letter, you can assure them that it is official and that it is designed to help eligible voters stay actively registered while also keeping the voter rolls accurate and up-to-date. If they have questions you are not able to answer immediately, please let us know or refer them to the WEC and we will be happy to answer them.

What is the Eligible but Unregistered Mailing? By comparing Wisconsin voter records and Wisconsin DMV records, ERIC identifies unregistered citizens who are potentially eligible to vote. Wisconsin is required to send a mailing to these potential voters which provides them with information to register. We can only contact a person once, so the initial postcard mailing in September of 2016 was to 1.28 million people while the second, in June of 2018, was to 384,000 newly-identified people who were eligible but unregistered to vote.

What are Voter Participation checks? ERIC matches voter participation records across state lines and generates reports of individuals who may have voted in the same election in multiple states. ERIC sends reports of possible matches to each state for investigation. When WEC staff and clerks are able to verify possible matches, we make referrals to District Attorneys for further investigation and possible prosecution. ERIC began sending these voter participation reports to member states after the 2018 General Election.

Is ERIC similar to Four-Year Voter Record Maintenance? Both are designed to improve the accuracy of Wisconsin's voter registration list, but Four-Year Maintenance statutes set specific procedures and exact timelines for deactivating voters who have not voted in four years and who do not respond to a mailing. The data provided by ERIC gives the WEC and local election officials additional tools to clean up voter rolls, but the membership agreement does not outline specific procedures in regard to the inactivation of voter records. ERIC serves as a supplement to the 4-Year Maintenance process as it gives Wisconsin access to data from the 28 other member states that is essential to timely updates to the voter rolls.

ERIC Resources

- ERIC Website: <https://ericstates.org>.
- WEC Memo to Clerks about 2019 Movers Mailing: <https://elections.wi.gov/node/6581>
- WEC Memo to Clerks about 2018 Eligible But Unregistered Mailing: <https://elections.wi.gov/node/5877>
- Wisconsin ACT 261 – <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2015/related/lactmemo/act261>
- State Statute 6.36(1)(a)(e) – <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/6/II/36/1/ae>