

Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

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Elections Commission Deactivates More Than 205,000 Voters

MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Elections Commission announced today it has deactivated more than 205,000 voter registrations through two separate voter list maintenance processes.

“The first group of more than 174,000 voters we deactivated have not voted in the past four years and did not respond to a mailing,” said Meagan Wolfe, administrator of the Wisconsin Elections Commission. “This deactivation process is required under Wisconsin State statute. Many of the deactivated voters have moved and can re-register at their new address. Some of the voters had died and a few others asked to have their registrations canceled.”

A second, separate group of more than 31,000 voters from the 2019 ERIC Movers List mailing were also deactivated on July 31, according to Wolfe.

“The Wisconsin Elections Commission and its staff take voter list maintenance very seriously,” Wolfe said. “The WEC is working every day to help local election officials keep the registration lists current by identifying and removing deceased voters, people serving felony sentences, and others who are ineligible to vote.”

2021 Four-Year Voter Record Maintenance

Wolfe explained that the Commission is required by law every two years to conduct voter record maintenance to identify individuals who have not voted in the previous four years and to deactivate them unless they wish to remain registered. “The process is designed to ensure the integrity of the active voter list,” Wolfe said. “It is not designed to keep any active voter’s name off the poll list.”

In June, the commission identified 186,982 registered voters who had not voted since the November 2016 presidential election. The commission mailed “Notice of Suspension” postcards to these voters, asking them whether they wanted to remain active on the state’s voter list. To remain active, voters had 30 days to mail a return postcard to their municipal clerk, which 12,121 voters did. Voters who did not respond or whose postcard was returned as undeliverable by the Post Office were deactivated on July 31, as required by state law.

Here’s how the numbers from the 2021 Four-Year Voter Record Maintenance mailing break down:

Voter Maintenance Summary Statistics	Total
Total number of notices mailed	186,982
Number of notices that were returned requesting continuation of registration	12,121
Number of notices that were returned as undeliverable	62,853
Number of voters mailed a notice who requested cancellation of registration	38
Number of voters mailed a notice who clerks determined to be deceased	736
Number of voters mailed a notice who clerks deactivated for reasons other than being deceased or at the voter's request	121
Number of duplicate voter records identified and merged together	385
Number of voters who did not respond to the notice	112,008
Total number of voters mailed a notice whose status changed from eligible (active) to ineligible (inactive)	174,307

Information about past Four-Year Voter Record Maintenance projects is available on the WEC's website: <https://elections.wi.gov/publications/reports>.

2019 ERIC Movers List Update

On July 31, the WEC staff also deactivated all the remaining voters from the 2019 ERIC Movers List, as directed by the Commission, Wolfe said.

In the summer of 2019, the WEC mailed postcards to 232,579 voters who were identified by the Electronic Registration Information Center (<https://ericstates.org>) as having possibly moved. The Commission voted unanimously in June 2019 not to deactivate voters within 30 days based on the mailing, but to wait until after the 2021 elections to give voters on the list several opportunities to affirm that they had not moved. The Commission directed staff to create a poll book watermark for voters on the 2019 ERIC Movers list, which prompted poll workers to ask them if they had moved. Those who had moved were required to reregister before receiving a ballot. Those who had not moved affirmed that by signing the poll book.

In November 2019, the WEC was sued for not removing ERIC Movers List voters within 30 days if they did not respond to the mailing and request continuation of their registration at their same address. The Commission maintained that the plaintiffs were mistaken, and that a Wisconsin law regarding voters who may have moved did not require the WEC to remove those voters. The case, *Zignego v. Wisconsin Elections Commission*, was finally resolved by the Wisconsin Supreme Court on April 9, 2021, when the court ruled that the law applied to municipal clerks and the Milwaukee City Election Commission, not WEC.

Of the 232,579 voters on the original ERIC Movers list, 136,800 or 58.8% updated their registration at a new address while 16,390 or 7% updated or affirmed their registration at the same address.

After the April 2021 Spring Election, there were still 69,441 active voters on the Movers List. Of those, 37,587 were already scheduled to be deactivated as part of Four-Year Voter Record Maintenance on July 31 because they had not voted in four years or responded to the postcard mailing. That left 31,854 on the Active Movers List. At its June 2, 2021 meeting, the Commission considered what to do with those 31,854 voters and whether to modify its June

2019 directive to deactivate them. After an extensive discussion, there were not four votes to modify the June 2019 directive, so the Commission took no action. As a result, the WEC's 2019 directive prevailed and on July 31 the remaining voters were deactivated.

Voters Can Check Their Records and Reregister if Necessary

Voters who think they may have been deactivated may wish to check their registration status and can do so on the MyVote Wisconsin website at <https://myvote.wi.gov> or by contacting their municipal clerk's office.

If a voter was deactivated because he or she did not respond to the "Notice of Suspension" postcard or because of the Commission's ERIC Movers List directive, he or she may reregister to vote in one of several ways. Anyone with an up-to-date Wisconsin driver license or state ID card may register online up to 20 days before an election at <https://myvote.wi.gov>. Voters with or without a current Wisconsin driver license or state ID card may also register by mail up to 20 days before an election, after which they may register at the clerk's office until the Friday before the election. Finally, any voter may register at the polling place on Election Day with proper proof of residence.

Wolfe said that in addition to sending out postcards every two years, the WEC is continually helping Wisconsin's 1,849 municipal clerks keep the voter list current. "Working together with Wisconsin's clerks, the Commission is continually making the voter list more accurate," Wolfe said. "This has many benefits to Wisconsin voters and taxpayers, both in protecting the election process and in the costs of conducting elections."

Voter Registration and List Maintenance Facts

- Wisconsin has a voting-age population of 4,536,293 people, according to estimates by the [state's Demographic Services Center](#).
- Of those, 3,535,850 people were actively registered to vote on August 1, 2021.
- [State law](#) requires the Elections Commission to conduct voter list maintenance every two years after each General Election. The procedure is to identify people who are registered but have not voted in the past four years, contact them by mail, and deactivate them if they do not respond or do not wish to remain registered.
- Congress exempted Wisconsin from the National Voter Registration Act (Motor Voter law) in 1993 because Wisconsin has Election Day Registration. Motor Voter has certain restrictions on list maintenance that do not apply to Wisconsin.
- Wisconsin has had a [statewide voter registration list](#) since 2006. This is the sixth time the state has conducted voter list maintenance since creating the statewide list.
- The number of postcards mailed every two years varies greatly, depending on whether it follows an election for president or for governor. In 2019, the state mailed approximately 113,000 postcards to voters, compared to approximately 381,000 postcards in 2017.
- The percentage of Four-Year Voter Record Maintenance deactivations is also cyclical. In 2021, 93 percent of people who were mailed postcards were deactivated, compared to 84 percent in 2019. The pattern is similar to previous cycles.

- The Elections Commission works closely with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections to identify and remove voters who have died or been convicted of a felony.
- In 2016, Wisconsin joined the multi-state [Electronic Registration Information Center](#) (ERIC), which provides the state with additional tools to identify voters who may have moved or died out of state.

A report to the Governor and Legislature about the results of the four-year voter record maintenance process is available on the Commission's website:

<https://elections.wi.gov/publications/reports/2021-four-year-maintenance>.

NOTE TO EDITORS AND REPORTERS: A spreadsheet containing detailed statistics about how many voters were deactivated in each Wisconsin county, city, village and town is attached to help you localize the story.

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The Wisconsin Elections Commission is responsible for administration and enforcement of election laws in Wisconsin. The Commission is made up of six Commissioners – four appointed directly by the State Senate Majority Leader, Speaker of the Assembly and the Minority Leaders in the State Senate and Assembly. The remaining two Commissioners are by the Governor with confirmation by the State Senate from lists of former municipal and county clerks submitted by the legislative leadership in each party.