

Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

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Elections Commission Completes 2016 Voter List Maintenance

MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Elections Commission announced today it has deactivated more than 350,000 voter registrations as required by state law.

“These are voters who had not voted in the past four years and did not respond to a mailing,” said Michael Haas, administrator of the Wisconsin Elections Commission. “We believe most of the deactivated voters have moved, which would require them to re-register. Some of the voters had died and a few others asked to have their registrations cancelled.”

Haas said the Commission is required by law every two years to conduct list 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 improve the conduct of elections and the voting experience by ensuring the voter registration list remains up to date,” Haas said. “It is not designed to keep any active voter’s name off the poll list.”

In June, the commission mailed “Notice of Suspension” postcards to approximately 380,000 registered voters who had not voted since the November 2012 presidential election. The postcard asked recipients whether they wanted to remain active on the state’s voter list. To remain active, voters had one month to mail a return postcard to their municipal clerk, which 28,169 voters did. Voters who did not respond were marked as inactive on the list on July 31. Voters were also deactivated if the postcard was returned as undeliverable by the Post Office.

2016 Four-Year Voter Maintenance Summary Statistics	Total
Total number of notices mailed	381,495
Number of notices that were returned requesting continuation of registration	28,169
Number of notices that were returned as undeliverable	153,416
Number of voters mailed a notice who requested cancellation of registration	250
Number of voters mailed a notice who clerks determined to be deceased	799
Number of voters mailed a notice who clerks deactivated for reasons other than being deceased or at the voter’s request	7,692
Number of duplicate voter records identified and merged together	532
Number of voters who did not respond to the notice	189,702
Total number of voters mailed a notice whose status changed from eligible to ineligible	351,733

Voters who wish to check their registration status may do so at the [MyVote Wisconsin website \(www.myvote.wi.gov\)](http://www.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, 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 [MyVote Wisconsin website \(www.myvote.wi.gov\)](http://www.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.

WEC Assistant Administrator Meagan Wolfe said that in addition to sending out postcards every two years, the WEC is continually helping Wisconsin's 1,853 municipal clerks keep the voter list current. "Working together with Wisconsin's clerks, the Commission is improving data quality to make the voter list more accurate," Wolfe said. "This has many benefits to Wisconsin voters and taxpayers, both in the election process and in the costs of conducting elections."

Wolfe noted that more voters were inactivated this year than in previous list maintenance years because the Commission's new WisVote system, launched in 2016, was better able to identify potentially inactive voters than the old Statewide Voter Registration System.

"Several clerks asked why some voters got postcards this year but not in the previous years when they should have," Wolfe said. "We found a lot of old voter records that should have been included in the maintenance many years back, but were not identified by the old system."

Mailing postcards also helps identify duplicate registrations that the system misses, Wolfe noted. After the postcards were mailed, the commission and local clerks received many calls from people who had voted in recent elections. In most cases, they received a postcard because they were in the system twice, but one of the records contained a misspelling or other data entry error that had prevented the system from recognizing both records belonged to the same active voter. In all, list maintenance identified 532 voter records that needed to be merged.

Voter Registration and List Maintenance Facts

- Wisconsin has a voting-age population of 4,461,159 people, according to estimates by the [state's Demographic Services Center](#).
- Of those, 3,351,591 people were actively registered to vote on [August 1, 2017](#), compared to 3,707,701 active registered voters on [June 1, 2017](#).
- [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 fifth 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 2013, the state mailed nearly 300,000 postcards to voters, compared to nearly 100,000 postcards in 2015.
- In 2017, 92 percent of people who received postcards were deactivated, compared to 83 percent in 2015.
- 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:

<http://elections.wi.gov/publications/reports/2017-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.