

Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC)



H. 582 — Rep. Moran

The Problem

One in eight voter registration records in the U.S. contains a serious error, while more than 51 million citizens remain unregistered to vote.

The Solution

Join the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a voluntary organization of states that digitally shares information from their voter registration rolls and other databases, including the DMV, Social Security Administration, and Postal Service national change of address registry, to compare lists and ensure accurate records, as well as reaching out to new voters eligible for registration.

How does it work?

Using advanced algorithms, ERIC compares databases from its members and determines inaccuracies in states' voting lists — who has moved, who has died, and who is eligible to vote but is not yet registered. Citizens that are no longer eligible to vote are then removed from the voting rolls after a confirmation process with the voter, and those that are eligible but have not yet registered to vote receive registration forms in the mail and/or online at least once every two years. ERIC does not purge voters from individual states' registration rolls and utilizes the highest level of encryption to ensure data confidentiality.

ERIC is a voluntary organization run by its member states. Only states that have opted in share their records. The more states that join then, the more comprehensive its information exchange will be.

Which states have joined?

Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Washington, D.C. Other states have passed legislation and are in the process of joining.

Who controls ERIC?

The member states control ERIC themselves. Each member gets a vote, and the first 15 states to join are members of the Board of Directors. The chief elections official from each member state designates a representative to the ERIC Board.

Benefits of ERIC

- Increased voter registration rates through improved access to the registration process.
- Reduced provisional ballots and shorter lines at polling places due to clarity in registration status and accuracy of registration data.
- Modernized record keeping for election administration offices that lowers costs through electronic efficiency, reduction of paper, less errors, and less manual processing.

Presidential Commission on Election Administration Recommends

January 22, 2014

“The Commission endorses state programs to share data and to collaborate in the synchronization of voter lists so that the states, on their own initiative, come as close as possible to creating an accurate database of the eligible electorate.”

What about individual state control?

The interstate data exchange is not an official record, and states continue to maintain control over their own voter lists and records. The data-matching exchange is a tool to help states crosscheck information and keep more accurate voter rolls. ERIC will never automatically purge or add any voter registration records to a state's own database; and no state actions will be taken without confirmation procedures.

How is ERIC paid for?

As of 2013, member states pay for ERIC operations through annual dues, which are determined by a formula approved by the ERIC Board of Directors. The formula includes voting age population as a factor. Large states pay a bit more than small states. The annual budget as of 2014 is approximately \$500,000.

Each state also contributes to start-up costs associated with implementing the upgraded system in their state and configuring statewide voter registration systems to make use of the improved data. Those costs will be recouped over time, however. States that have already begun modernizing their systems have recovered costs within two to four years and continued to build up additional savings in subsequent years.

Additionally, States with remaining Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds, such as Massachusetts, will be able to use some of those funds to pay for any necessary capital expenditures and ongoing expenses associated with improving the administration of elections, including ERIC.

PEW often offers grants to help defray some of the initial costs associated with ERIC membership.

Are there privacy concerns?

No. State-of-the-art privacy protections have been built into data protocols from the beginning to reduce any potential security risks. For instance, the data-matching exchange:

- Reviews and contains information that is only directly relevant and necessary for voter registration.
- Anonymizes, before the data leaves state control, any private or confidential data (such as drivers' license numbers or the last four digits of Social Security numbers) by converting information into an indecipherable string of characters so it is unreadable and unusable to potential hackers.
- Maintains tamper-proof audit logs that track every activity conducted in the system—including access, data entry and reports—and will conduct regular independent audits to monitor security as a whole.
- Requires states to adhere to agreements establishing the highest standards of security and restricting use of the data for election administration purposes only.
- Receives regular guidance from an advisory board of privacy experts to ensure robust privacy protocols at all times.

Here's how to clean up messy voter rolls

Washington Post | Nov. 3, 2013

"Election administrators across the country face the tightrope of making sure their voter rolls are accurate while avoiding erasing a valid record...the answer: The Electronic Registration Information Center, or ERIC..."