



Secretary of State

Kim Wyman

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 5, 2013

Contact:

David Ammons

Communications Director

(360) 902-4140

Shane Hamlin

Deputy Elections Director/ERIC board chair

(360) 725-5781

Washington upgrades voter registration program

The Office of the Secretary of State and Washington's 39 County Auditors are breaking new ground in the coming weeks when they begin updating over 53,000 voter registration records and mail voter registration information to more than 140,000 potentially eligible, but unregistered residents.

Updating such a large number of records and conducting focused registration education recently has become possible, thanks to the state's leadership and participation in the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC).

ERIC is a non-profit organization that assists states with improving the accuracy of America's voter rolls and increasing access to voter registration for all eligible citizens. It is governed and managed by states that choose to join, and was formed by seven states in 2012 with assistance from The Pew Charitable Trusts. The seven participating states include

Colorado, Delaware, Maryland, Nevada, Utah, Virginia and Washington. More states are expected to join.

“ERIC provides states with a powerful new set of tools that improve the accuracy of voter rolls and expand access to voter registration, achieving both goals more efficiently,” said Secretary of State Kim Wyman.

Using reports from ERIC, elections officials will remove duplicate registrations, cancel registrations of deceased voters, better process address updates and more efficiently manage records of voters who have moved and registered in another state. The program follows strict state and federal guidelines to protect voter rights and maintain clean voter rolls.

“We need to continue modernizing our voter registration system to be more accurate, cost-effective, and efficient,” Secretary Wyman said.

“The process of collecting hand-written paper forms, entering the data into computers, and maintaining up-to-date information is too slow and expensive to keep pace with our highly mobile society,” Wyman added.

“Research confirms there is more we can do to improve the current system,” said Lori Augino, Director of Elections. “By joining with other pioneering states, ERIC members are leading the way in upgrading voter registration.”

States have conducted “list maintenance” programs since at least 1993, when sweeping new federal voter registration requirements went into effect, but there is room for improvement, especially with the technology available to elections officials today, she said.

Using powerful data comparison software, ERIC provides more comprehensive and accurate information by analyzing voter registration and driver identification information from all of the

participating states. It also includes national death data from the Social Security Administration.

How much better is data matching through ERIC? In the first ERIC report on deceased voters the new system identified 947 voters that were previously missed. This is about 25 percent more records than Washington finds through its routine processes.

“This outcome demonstrates that ERIC adds real value,” said Shane Hamlin, Deputy Director of the Elections Division and chair of the ERIC board. “We’ve used national death data for years, but ERIC found more matches than we did. It sounds cliché, but ERIC is a real game changer.”

The Secretary of State will mail eye-catching and informative postcards containing information on how to register to vote to residents who don’t appear to be registered. The postcards include the eligibility requirements for registering, the web address for online registration and a toll-free number if the recipient wants to request a paper form or has questions about the card.

The Secretary’s office mailed similar postcards last fall. Numerous registered voters received that postcard due to date-of-birth errors or name variations in the individual’s record, and as a result, many errors in individual records were corrected. Improvements to the matching software this year should significantly decrease the number of registered voters who mistakenly receive a postcard.

“This year, we make it clear that if you’re already registered, you received the postcard in error. We want these folks to call us so we can see what the error is, for example a typo in the date of birth, and correct it. This mailing is about increasing the number of eligible people registered to vote, not taking people off the rolls,” said Hamlin.

The state is using federal grant dollars to pay the estimated \$32,000 cost of mailing the postcard to 140,000 people. That's about 23 cents per person, or half the cost of a postage stamp to enfranchise a person, he said.

ERIC member states see targeted voter education as an added benefit and a great way to reach people who may lack information on how to register, Augino said.

“Using ERIC to improve the accuracy of our voter rolls and improve access to voter registration provides a balanced approach to bringing voter registration into the modern age,” Wyman said.

ERIC member states retain complete control over their data. ERIC is not a national registration database. Sensitive data is anonymized, or rendered unintelligible to humans before it leaves the state. Data is sent in a secure manner and the ERIC system is not accessible through internet. Privacy and security were built in from the beginning, Hamlin said.

Wyman and Hamlin were part of a 42-person work group Pew launched in 2009 to recommend improvements to voter registration that eventually designed and founded ERIC. Though Pew provided the seed funding, ERIC is now completely funded and governed by member states. More information about the organization can be found on its [website](#).

###