

# ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS



**Bernadette Matthews**

**Executive Director**

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**To: Chair Linnabary, Vice Chair Watson, Members of the Board**

**Re: Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) Overview**

**Date: February 10, 2022**

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The Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) is a public non-profit membership organization created with the purpose of assisting states in improving the accuracy of voter rolls and increasing access to voter registration for all eligible citizens. Most states, including Illinois, are required by the federal National Voter Registration Act to conduct a program to maintain accurate voter rolls, which includes the removal of the names of ineligible voters from the rolls. States not subject to this federal law have state "list maintenance" laws similarly aimed at keeping voter rolls current. Maintaining accurate voter rolls is an important duty of election administration as it builds confidence in the election process and election outcomes, while reducing the opportunity for illegal voting. ERIC is currently the only interstate voter data sharing program available to chief election officials.

## **Membership**

State election officials from seven states (Colorado, Delaware, Maryland, Nevada, Utah, Virginia, and Washington) formed ERIC in 2012. Pursuant to Public Act 98-1171, which was effective June 1, 2015, Illinois was mandated to join ERIC beginning in 2016. Currently thirty-one states and the District of Columbia are ERIC members. Membership is divided almost evenly between states with Republican chief election officials and states with Democrat chief election officials, not including states like Illinois with nonpartisan chief election officials.

## **Governance**

ERIC members are bound by the ERIC Bylaws and Membership Agreement and ERIC is governed by the member states. Each chief election official from each member state designates a Member Representative to serve as the voting member of the Board. The Executive Director of the Illinois State Board of Elections (SBE) has traditionally served as Illinois' Member Representative, holding voting power for the state.

## **Funding**

ERIC is funded entirely by its member states. New members pay a one-time membership fee of \$25,000 to assist with payment for expenses related to the necessary technology upgrades required to support the maintenance and growth of the project. Member states pay annual dues to cover continued operating costs. These annual dues are based, in part, on the citizen voting age population in each state; therefore, large states generally pay more in annual dues. Members approve ERIC's dues structure and budget at an annual membership meeting. Illinois' FY22 membership dues totaled \$49,302.

## **Responsibilities**

As an ERIC member, Illinois is required to complete certain activities pursuant to the Membership Agreement. To assist member states with voter data comparison and list maintenance, at least every 60 days, Illinois submits voter registration data and motor vehicle licensing data to ERIC. ERIC's technical staff uses software to compare our data against data from all the other member states and Social Security death data known as the Limited Access Death Master File. Following the data comparison, ERIC creates reports that identify voters who appear to have moved within the state, voters who appear to have moved from one ERIC state to another, voters who appear to have died, and voters who appear to have duplicate registrations in the same state. Members must request at least one of these reports at a minimum of once a year; accordingly, Illinois requests ERIC in-state update reports, potential duplicate registration reports, and potential deceased reports every 60 days and the cross-state movers reports requested once a year. Members may also request, and Illinois does request twice a year, National Change of Address (NCOA) reports using official data from the US Postal Service. Additionally, after each federal general election, members may, and Illinois does, request reports identifying voters who may have cast ballots in more than one state or more than one ballot in the same state. Since Illinois utilizes a bottom-up system, data from these ERIC reports are processed by SBE staff within the Division of Voting and Registration Systems, separated by jurisdiction, and transmitted to the individual election authorities for their use in maintaining the rolls. Both the ERIC in-state update reports and the NCOA reports have each resulted in over 1 million automatic registration updates since joining ERIC. The cross-state movers reports have identified over 700,000 registrations where the individual may have moved to another state. The duplicate record reports have identified over 127,000 potential duplicate registrations and the deceased reports have identified over 33,000 potentially deceased voters.

As a result of matching voter data against motor vehicle licensing data, ERIC is able to identify individuals who appear to be eligible to register but who are not yet registered. At least once every two years, members are required to send voter registration information to these potentially eligible individuals who are not registered to vote. These mailings must be conducted by October 1 or 15 days before the state's voter registration deadline, whichever is earlier. In total, nearly 4.68 million individuals have been identified as being potentially eligible but not having a registration record on the rolls. Throughout the years, the agency has partnered with the Secretary of State's office and the Department of Human Services to provide these individuals with information by mail on how they may become registered.

## **Data Privacy and Security**

Regarding data privacy and security, ERIC's Bylaws and Membership Agreement include numerous provisions designed to protect the data states transmitted to ERIC and the data reports created for the states. ERIC and the member states are prohibited from sharing various ERIC data with outside parties due to data protections in federal law, including the Driver's Privacy Protection Act and the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013. Additionally, the ERIC Bylaws and Membership Agreement include provisions that ensure compliance with these laws and prohibit disclosure of data reports. ERIC follows security policies and procedures approved by the Board of Directors in an Information Security Management Plan and ERIC's infrastructure has recently passed third-party security reviews and assessments.