

DIRECTIVE 2025-25

April 2, 2025

To: All County Board of Elections
Board Members, Directors, and Deputy Directors

Re: Voter Registration Data Integrity

BACKGROUND

This directive expands the data integrity work under the registration audit dashboard in [Directive 2024-11](#), which assists county boards of elections in identifying and correcting voter registration discrepancies.

EXPLANATION

The process of registering voters in Ohio has evolved over the years, including the addition of online voter registration, the creation of a Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD), and the codification of standard definitions of election data terms.¹

For decades, Ohio's voter registration system relied entirely on hand-written paper records processed by 88 different county boards of elections. This disparate method of administration lacked consistent guidelines for documenting key fields such as birthdates and registration dates. When the Ohio General Assembly directed the secretary of state to create a Statewide Voter Registration Database, these data points became a statutory requirement. To populate these data fields for registrations created prior to the centralized database, boards sometimes used a placeholder date, such as January 1, 1800, especially where handwritten records were illegible or incomplete. The General Assembly recognized this in 2014, including an amendment in election-related legislation that ensured voters were not denied a provisional ballot based only on a placeholder birthdate if they could otherwise prove their identity. Further, the administrative process of transferring handwritten voter registration forms to electronic data fields occasionally resulted in transcription errors, such as a mistyped character in a name. This resulted in the development of Data Entry Standards outlined in [Chapter 4 of the Election Official Manual](#) (EOM), which requires each county board of elections to

¹ [https://www.registerofohio.state.oh.us/pdfs/111/3/11/111\\$3-11-01_PH_RV_N_RU_20240405_1406.pdf](https://www.registerofohio.state.oh.us/pdfs/111/3/11/111$3-11-01_PH_RV_N_RU_20240405_1406.pdf)

“review its existing records in the SWVRD and make any and all changes necessary to comply with the data entry standards outlined in this Section.”

These data entry discrepancies are not commonly indicative of fraud or irregularities, but they must be resolved to comply with our shared statutory responsibility to “maintain the accuracy of the statewide voter registration database.”² This action is especially critical as we continue implementing the DATA Act, a new law enacted in 2023 requiring the Secretary of State’s Office of Data Analytics and Archives to retain registration and election records. The DATA Act required the creation of additional standard definitions that must be utilized by all 88 county boards of elections in processing, retaining, and reporting election-related records to the Secretary of State.

The Office of Data Analytics and Archives began this important work under [Directive 2024-11](#). My office provided boards with county-specific digital dashboards to help election officials more efficiently identify voter registration discrepancies that require additional review and possible correction. These dashboards show the number of registration records flagged for further review, such as illegal characters in name fields, placeholder birthdates, unreasonably high ages, and improper birth/registration date combinations. The dashboards also display data unique to each county and allow boards of elections to correct inaccurate data quickly and easily.

After successfully implementing [Directive 2024-11](#), my office is expanding this program to address discrepancies with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) information and to identify potential deceased voters.

BMV MISMATCH

[Chapter 4, pages 109-115, of the EOM](#) describes the BMV/Social Security Administration Voter Records Information Verification Program. The date of birth, the last four digits of a Social Security number, and the driver license number are key data points used to verify voters' identity and eligibility.

The new dashboard tool contains voter records and their corresponding BMV customer records. All the record pairs have a mismatch in at least one of the key identification fields, which almost certainly stem from data entry errors. For each record pair, board

² [R.C. 3503.151](#).

staff must first review the information provided to verify that the records are accurately matched.

- If the records do not appear to refer to the same person, there is likely a data entry error in the voter record's driver license number.
- If the records appear to refer to the same person, board staff must review the mismatching date of birth or last four digits of the Social Security number information to determine if there was a data entry error in one of those fields.

Research will be necessary to determine the correct data, including reviewing voter registration forms and directly contacting voters by email, phone, or another method convenient to the voter.

Any identified data entry errors must be corrected, and an updated packet must be sent to the Secretary of State's office. If the board determines that the potential match is a false positive, it must use the "Report Issue" function.

DECEASED VOTERS CHECK

[Chapter 4, pages 128-131, of the EOM](#) requires boards of elections to download monthly files from the BOE Portal containing records of deceased individuals that are potential matches to registered voters in Ohio. Board staff must carefully examine each pair of matched records to determine whether a voter has died, and if so, the board must cancel that voter's registration.

The new dashboard tool features a table that contains potential matches between individuals who appear on a past State and Territorial Exchange of Vital Events (STEVE) file and an active voter record. All potential matches share the exact date of birth and last four digits of the Social Security number and match at least partially on a name. It is possible that these potential matches are false positives and do not indicate that a voter has died. It is also possible that these voters were missed, or their identity could not be verified whenever the STEVE file was originally processed.

For each record appearing on the list, the county board of elections' staff must compare the STEVE data to the voter record and other available information to determine whether a voter has died. If so, the board must cancel that voter's registration under the process outlined in [Chapter 4, pages 128-131, of the EOM](#) for canceling STEVE records.

If the board determines that the potential match is a false positive, the board must use the "Report Issue" function.

FALSE POSITIVE REPORTING TOOL

If a county board of elections confirms that the data within the flagged voting record is correct, the board must report via the false positive reporting tool to ensure it is no longer flagged.

REQUIREMENTS

Boards of elections must regularly access the registration audit dashboard at least once per week and take action to correct any flagged voter records that appear. Boards of elections have an obligation to promptly correct data entry errors. ([Chapter 4, page 136, of the EOM](#)).

By April 22, 2025, boards of elections must maintain their voter registration databases to ensure that the percentage of flagged voter records does not exceed 0.1% of the total number of voter records in Active and Active-Confirmation status. If the percentage of flagged voter records exceeds 0.1%, the board of elections shall submit a plan to the Secretary of State's office to reduce the percentage of flagged voter records to the stated threshold.

I have a duty under the law to maintain accurate voter rolls in partnership with Ohio's 88 county boards of elections. We appreciate your commitment and diligence in this work, and our Elections and Data Analytics teams stand ready to assist you. If you have any questions concerning this directive, please contact the Secretary of State's elections counsel at 614-728-8789.

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose

Ohio Secretary of State