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DIRECTIVE 2014-15

May 21, 2014

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

Re: Preparation for the Statewide Mailing of Absentee Ballot Applications for the
November 4, 2014 General Election

SUMMARY

This Directive requires each board of elections to update its voter registration database and resolve duplicate records in preparation for the Secretary of State's statewide mailing of absentee ballot applications for the November 4, 2014 General Election.

BACKGROUND

In 2012, for the first time since Ohio adopted no-fault absentee voting, the Secretary of State's Office distributed absentee ballot request forms to registered voters with a current address in all 88 counties. Prior to that, only certain counties were able to offer this service to voters. The statewide absentee ballot application mailing ensured not only that all voters in Ohio were treated the same, but that voters who chose this option could cast their ballots over the course of more than a month without ever having to leave home. With one in three voters choosing to cast their ballots prior to Election Day in 2012, the statewide mailing was a major factor in ensuring Ohio voters did not experience the lines that other states did.

In light of this success, Secretary Husted will conduct another statewide mailing for the 2014 General Election, following the same procedure. Once again, your diligence in ensuring the voter rolls are accurate and up-to-date will make for a smooth mailing process and benefit all voters in your counties.

INSTRUCTIONS

I. THE STATEWIDE MAILING OF ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS

To ensure fairness and uniformity across counties and to reduce lines at polling places in the November 4, 2014 General Election, the Secretary of State's Office will mail absentee ballot

applications, pursuant to state law,¹ by non-forwardable mail, to 1) every registered voter in Ohio in “active” status² as of August 1, 2014 and 2) every registered voter in Ohio who voted in the 2010 General Election or the 2012 Presidential Election as reflected in the Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD), regardless of voter status as described herein.

The absentee ballot application will be pre-populated with the voter’s name and current address, and the local voter ID number, represented numerically and as a barcode. The applications will be mailed to the voter’s residential address unless the board of elections has provided an alternate mailing address to the SWVRD associated with the voter’s record. The voter must complete the application by providing the voter’s date of birth, identification, and signature before sealing the application in the reply envelope provided and submitting it to the voter’s county board of elections in person or by mail, with the voter affixing a first class stamp.³

The mailing will also notify voters that:

- The deadline for returning a complete absentee ballot application to the board of elections by mail is noon on Saturday, November 1, 2014;⁴
- The earliest day on which a board of elections may mail absentee ballots to voters who have submitted a complete absentee ballot application is October 7, 2014;⁵ and
- If a voter completes and returns an absentee ballot application, but instead chooses to vote in person at the voter’s assigned precinct polling location on Election Day, Ohio law requires the voter to cast a provisional ballot.⁶

Delivery of the applications by USPS is expected during the first two weeks of September, 2014.

II. DATA PREPARATION BY COUNTY BOARDS OF ELECTIONS

To facilitate this mailing, each county board of elections must:

- Enter into its county voter registration database all new voter registrations and changes of address/name received through August 1, 2014.

¹ Section 3, Sub. S.B. 205 (130th General Assembly), effective June 1, 2014.

² A registered voter has an “inactive” status (also known as “active-confirmation”) if the voter was sent, but did not respond to a confirmation card mailed to the voter by a county board of elections. A confirmation card is sent under any of four circumstances: a) general voter records list maintenance program, NCOA process (see [Directive 2014-14](#) and [2013-10](#)), b) general voter records list maintenance program, supplemental process (see [Directive 2014-14](#) and [2013-10](#)), c) the voter’s acknowledgement notice was returned as undeliverable (see RC 3503.19(C)(3)), or d) the voter’s record does not match BMV/SSA records (see [Directive 2012-16](#)).

³ R.C. 3509.03, Sub. S.B. 205 (130th General Assembly), effective June 1, 2014.

⁴ R.C. 3509.03.

⁵ R.C. 3509.01, Sub. S.B. 238 (130th General Assembly), effective June 1, 2014.

⁶ R.C. 3509.09.

- Resolve all in-county and cross-county duplicate records that exist as of July 30, 2014 no later than August 1, 2014. Remember, it is *never* an acceptable practice for any county board of elections to simply “keep” a voter registration record to avoid resolving duplicate records.
- Update the Statewide Voter Registration Database weekly by the following dates:
 - July 11, 2014
 - July 18, 2014
 - July 25, 2014
 - August 1, 2014

The Secretary of State’s Office will be monitoring this activity and following up with those counties that fail to send the information.

- No later than July 31, 2014 each board of elections must review all alternate mailing addresses in the SWVRD (e.g., P.O. Boxes) for that county to ensure that all alternate mailing addresses associated with the voter’s record in the SWVRD are current and relevant to the elector’s voter registration rather than some other election administration purpose (i.e., if the Board has populated the elector’s alternate mailing address with the address for a previous election’s absent voter ballot and that alternate mailing address was sent to the SWVRD as the elector’s alternate mailing address, that address should be removed since it is associated with absentee balloting rather than voter registration).
- On August 1, 2014, transmit to the SWVRD all new registrations and changes of address/name received by that date. The Secretary of State’s Office will contact any county that fails to send information on August 1, 2014.

III. SUPPLEMENTAL MAILING

In early October, the Secretary of State’s Office will supplement the first mailing by sending absentee applications to individuals who have registered or changed their address/name between August 1, 2014 and September 30, 2014.

To facilitate this mailing, each board of elections must:

- Enter into its county voter registration database all new voter registrations and changes of address/name it receives through September 26, 2014.
- Resolve all in county and cross-county duplicate records that exist as of September 24, 2014 no later than September 26, 2014.

- Update the Statewide Voter Registration Database weekly by the following dates:
 - September 5, 2014
 - September 12, 2014
 - September 19, 2014
 - September 26, 2014

The Secretary of State's Office will be monitoring this activity and following up with those counties that fail to send the information.

- On September 26, 2014 counties must transmit to the SWVRD all new registrations and changes of address/name received by that date. The Secretary of State's Office will contact any county that fails to send information on September 26, 2014.

IV. MANDATORY POSTING AT VOTING LOCATIONS ON ELECTION DAY

All county boards of elections must post a copy of the statewide absentee application mailing at each voting location on Election Day as a reference for voters who are marked in the signature poll book as having to cast a provisional ballot on the account of having requested an absentee ballot. A prescribed posting will be provided to you under separate cover at a later date.

If you have any questions about this Directive, please contact the Secretary of State's election counsel assigned to your county at (614) 466-2585.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Husted". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

Jon Husted