

## Chapter 4: VOTER REGISTRATION

Directive 2022-08

### Section 4.01 Definitions

#### VOTER STATUS CODES

Election officials apply uniformly defined data codes to assist the board of elections in maintaining its voter registration records. The two primary codes are “Active” (or, “active-active”) and “Inactive” (or, “active-confirmation”).

1. **Active**

The “active” status code is assigned to any voter not assigned an “inactive” or “cancelled” voter status code. Because the voter is not in “active-confirmation” status, the “active” status is also known as “active-active” status; it is represented by the capital letter “A” when appearing as a single alphanumeric digit in an electronic database.

2. **Inactive or “Active-Confirmation”**

The “inactive” or “active-confirmation” voter status code is assigned to a voter whenever the board has issued a confirmation notice to that voter, and the voter has not responded to the board of elections either to confirm the information on file with the board or to provide to the board of elections with updated information. Like a voter with an “active” status code, a voter with an “inactive” or “active-confirmation” voter status code is a fully qualified elector and eligible to engage in the activities of a registered voter (i.e., sign a petition, request an absentee ballot, etc.) and appears in the pollbook on Election Day. The “inactive” or “active-confirmation” status is represented by the capital letter “I” when appearing as a single alphanumeric digit in an electronic database.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT NOTICE

Whenever a board of elections receives a new voter registration or updated voter registration (e.g., change of name or address) and the information is entered into the county’s voter registration system, the board of elections must issue an Acknowledgement Notice to that voter.<sup>1</sup> All Acknowledgement Notices must be sent by

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<sup>1</sup> [R.C. 3503.16\(E\)](#); [R.C. 3503.19\(C\)](#).



non-forwardable mail using the United States Postal Service. The Notice must advise the voter that 1) they have been registered to vote, 2) the voter's assigned precinct and polling location, and 3) the voter identification requirements for voting on Election Day.<sup>2</sup> The form of the Acknowledgment Notice is prescribed by the Secretary of State<sup>3</sup> ([Form 10-J](#)) and satisfies these requirements.

Whenever an Acknowledgement Notice is returned to the board as undeliverable, the board must investigate and, if the notice was sent to an incorrect address, it must send the notice to the correct address. If the board is unable to verify the voter's correct address, it must change the assigned voter status for that voter from "Active" to "Inactive" (or "Active-Confirmation") and issue a confirmation notice by forwardable mail.<sup>4</sup>

Whenever a board of elections changes a voter's precinct or otherwise makes a change to a voter's polling location, the board must provide that voter with written notice of the change.

A board of elections may not issue an Acknowledgement Notice to a voter upon request to be used as proof of identity for purpose of obtaining an Ohio driver license or state identification card.

## CONFIRMATION NOTICE

A confirmation notice is issued under any of the following four circumstances:

1. The National Change Of Address ("NCOA") process of the state's general voter records list maintenance program;
2. The supplemental process of the state's general voter records list maintenance program;
3. The voter's acknowledgement notice was returned as undeliverable;<sup>5</sup> or
4. Certain information in the voter's record does not match BMV/SSA records ([see Section 4.07 of this Chapter for additional information on the BMV/SSA matching process](#)).

The confirmation notice must be sent by forwardable mail using the United States Postal Service on a form prescribed by the Secretary of State. Secretary of State [Form 10-S-1](#) is the confirmation notice prescribed by the Secretary of State.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [R.C. 3503.19\(C\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> [R.C. 3501.01\(V\)](#).

<sup>4</sup> [R.C. 3503.19\(C\)](#).

<sup>5</sup> [R.C. 3503.19\(C\)](#).

<sup>6</sup> [R.C. 3503.19\(C\)](#); [R.C. 3501.01\(W\)](#).



## IN-PERSON REGISTRATION

Whenever a person registers to vote in person, the voter must provide their current and valid driver license number as identification on the registration card. If the voter does not have, or does not know, their current and valid driver license number, the voter must provide the last four digits of the voter's Social Security number as identification on the registration card.<sup>7</sup> If the voter does not have either a driver license number or Social Security number, the voter must write "None" on the line provided for identification on the voter registration card.

## BY-MAIL REGISTRATION

"By-mail registration" is a term of art used in the Help America Vote Act ("HAVA"). Whenever a person registers to vote by mail, the person must provide the voter's current and valid driver license number or the last four digits of the voter's Social Security number as identification on the registration card, or the voter must enclose with the registration card a copy of a current and valid photo identification, a copy of a military identification, or a current (within the last 12 months) utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check or government document (other than a notice of voter registration mailed by a board of elections) that shows the voter's name and current address.<sup>8</sup>

## VOTER-INITIATED ACTIVITY

Voter-initiated activity includes voting, submitting a valid absentee ballot application, registering to vote, updating or confirming an address with a board of elections or the BMV, or signing a candidate or issue petition that is verified by a board of elections.<sup>9</sup> To ensure all voters receive properly updated voter-initiated activity dates, boards must check and verify each signature on an otherwise valid part-petition even if it exceeds the minimum number of signatures required for ballot access. All voter-initiated activity must be entered and updated in a timely manner to ensure the voter's status remains accurate.

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<sup>7</sup> 52 U.S.C.A §21083(A)(5).

<sup>8</sup> [R.C. 3503.14](#).

<sup>9</sup> After verification of part-petitions. Only voters with a valid signature should be provided voter-initiated activity.



## Section 4.02 Eligibility

### QUALIFICATIONS

To be qualified to register as an elector, a person must:

1. Be a citizen of the United States;
2. Be at least 18 years of age on or before the day of the next general election;
3. Be a resident of Ohio for at least 30 days immediately before the election at which the person wants to vote;
4. Not be incarcerated (in jail or prison) for a felony conviction under the laws of Ohio, any other state, or the United States;
5. Not have been declared incompetent for voting purposes by a probate court; and
6. Not have been permanently disenfranchised for violations of election laws.

Once registered, a person does not have to register again unless the person's registration is cancelled.

However, if a person already registered to vote moves within Ohio and/or changes their name, the person must update their voter registration record with the appropriate county board of elections.<sup>10</sup>

### RESIDENCY

A person's voting residence is the location that person considers to be a permanent, not a temporary, residence. That person's voting residence is the place in which the voter's habitation is fixed and to which, whenever the voter is absent, the voter intends to return. If the voter does not have a fixed place of habitation, but is a consistent or regular inhabitant of a shelter or other location to which the voter intend to return, that voter may use that shelter or other location as the voter's residence for purposes of registering to vote.<sup>11</sup>

### DETERMINING VOTING RESIDENCY

Whether a person qualifies as a "resident" of Ohio for voting purposes is a decision made by the board of elections of the county where the person offers to register or vote. In making its determination, the board must apply the rules set forth in [R.C. 3503.02](#):

- That place shall be considered the residence of a person in which the person's habitation is fixed and to which, whenever the person is absent, the person has

<sup>10</sup> [Ohio Const. Art. V §1](#); [R.C. 3503.01](#); [R.C. 3503.02](#); [R.C. 3503.07](#); [R.C. 3503.011](#); [R.C. 3503.18](#); [R.C. 3503.21](#).

<sup>11</sup> [R.C. 3503.02\(l\)](#).



the intention of returning.

- A person shall not be considered to have lost the person's residence who leaves the person's home and goes into another state or county of this state, for temporary purposes only, with the intention of returning.
- A person shall not be considered to have gained a residence in any county of this state into which the person comes for temporary purposes only, without the intention of making such county the permanent place of abode.
- The place where the family of a married man or woman resides shall be considered to be their place of residence; except that when the husband and wife have separated and live apart, the place where they resides the length of time required to entitle a person to vote shall be considered to be their place of residence.
- If a person removes from this state to engage in the services of the United States government, the person shall not be considered to have lost the person's residence in this state during the period of such service, and likewise, should the person enter the employment of the state, the place where such person resided at the time of the person's removal shall be considered to be the person's place of residence.
- If a person does not have a fixed place of habitation, but has a shelter or other location at which the person has been a consistent or regular inhabitant and to which the person has the intention of returning, that shelter or other location shall be deemed the person's residence for the purpose of registering to vote.

### **HOMELESS PERSON**

If a person is homeless, their residence is that place in which their habitation is fixed and to which, whenever the person is absent, the person has the intention of returning. A residence does not have to be a house or apartment. If a person does not have a fixed place of habitation, but has a shelter or other location at which the person has been a consistent or regular inhabitant and to which the person has the intention of returning, that shelter or other location shall be deemed the person's residence for the purpose of registering to vote.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> [R.C. 3503.02\(l\)](#).



## **LOSS OF RESIDENCY FOR VOTING PURPOSES**

[R.C. 3503.02](#) also addresses situations in which an Ohio elector is considered to have lost their residency for voting purposes:

- If a person moves to another state with the intention of making that state the person's residence, the person shall be considered to have lost the person's residence in Ohio.
- Generally, if a person leaves Ohio and continuously resides outside Ohio for a period of four years or more, the person shall be considered to have lost the person's residence in Ohio, notwithstanding the fact that the person may entertain an intention to return at some future period. However, this rule does not apply to persons who reside outside of Ohio because of federal or state employment, including military service.
- If a person goes into another state, and, while there exercises the right of a citizen by voting, the person shall be considered to have lost the person's residence in Ohio.<sup>13</sup>

## **NO POST OFFICE BOX OR MAIL STORE AS VOTING RESIDENCE ADDRESS**

A person cannot list a post office box or a commercial mail store as their residence for voting purposes. A voter can provide the board of elections with an additional address that is a post office box for mailing purposes.

Each board must regularly review the eligibility of any elector whose voter registration address is an address at which the individual rents a postal box to obtain mail, such as an address for a branch of the United States Postal Service (USPS) or a commercial entity such as Mail Boxes Etc® or the UPS Store®. Additionally, each board must program its county voter registration system to flag the usage of any such address by an elector in the future or regularly examine its county voter file to determine the eligibility of any individual registering to vote using such an address, prospectively. To accomplish these tasks, each board must compile a list of the addresses for all USPS and commercial mailbox entities in its county at which patrons may rent postal boxes and compare the resulting list to the county's voter registration system to determine if any voters are registered at these addresses. The board of elections then must determine the residence qualifications of these voters<sup>14</sup> using the guidelines established by Ohio law.

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<sup>13</sup> [Ohio Const. Art. V §1](#); [R.C. 3501.11\(O\)](#); [R.C. 3503.01](#); [R.C. 3503.011](#); [R.C. 3503.02](#); [R.C. 3503.07](#); [R.C. 3503.18](#).

<sup>14</sup> [R.C. 3501.11\(Q\)](#).



## **SHIELDING RESIDENCE ADDRESSES OF DESIGNATED PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS**

Occasionally, a designated public service worker (defined below) will provide a business address as their voting residence address. Ohio law does not allow for a designated public service worker to register to vote from their business address; however, it does allow a designated public service worker's voting residence address to be shielded from disclosure upon request from the worker. Accordingly, a board of elections may receive a request from a designated public service worker to redact that worker's address from the voter registration records appearing on the board's website.

Under Ohio law, "a peace officer, parole officer, probation officer, bailiff, prosecuting attorney, assistant prosecuting attorney, correctional employee, county or multicounty corrections officer, community-based correctional facility employee, youth services employee, firefighter, EMT, medical director or member of a cooperating physician advisory board of an emergency medical service organization, state board of pharmacy employee, investigator of the bureau of criminal identification and investigation, judge, magistrate, or federal law enforcement officer" may request that a public office redact their address from any record made available to the public on the internet.<sup>15</sup> This request must be made on the "Request to Redact Address" form that is prescribed by the Ohio Attorney General. The Secretary of State's Office makes this form – and instructions for completing it – [available on its website](#).<sup>16</sup>

If a board receives a completed "Request to Redact Address" form, it is required to act on it within 5 business days and either make the requested redaction or explain to the requester why the redaction is impracticable.<sup>17</sup> Any questions about processing a completed form or verifying a requester's employment or eligibility should be directed to the board's legal counsel, the county prosecuting attorney.

Once a board has received a "Request to Redact Address" form and has determined that the redaction needs to be made, election officials must 1) flag the voter's address in the county's VRS as "private" and 2) send an update via the bridge to the voter's record in the SWVRD to show as private. This prevents the address from appearing on the board's website or on the Secretary of State's website.

The requester's address still appears in voter query, but shows the following statement: "THIS VOTER'S ADDRESS HAS BEEN FLAGGED AS PRIVATE." This allows election officials to access the voter's address as necessary, but alerts all election officials to the fact that the address is private. Any questions regarding how to flag a voter's file as "private" should be directed to the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office.

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<sup>15</sup> R.C. 149.45(D)(1).

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ohiosos.gov/secretary-office/office-initiatives/shielding-our-protectors/>.

<sup>17</sup> R.C. 149.45(D)(2).



## **SOLDIERS' HOME**

Infirm or disabled soldiers who are inmates of a national home for such soldiers, who are citizens of the United States and have resided in this state 30 days immediately preceding any election, and who are otherwise qualified as to age and residence within the county and township shall have their lawful residence in the county and township in which such home is located.<sup>18</sup>

## **PUBLIC OR PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS**

Persons who are inmates of a public or private institution who are citizens of the United States and have resided in this state 30 days immediately preceding the election, and who are otherwise qualified as to age and residence within the county shall have their lawful residence in the county, city, village and township in which said institution is located.<sup>19</sup> The lawful residence of a qualified elector who is an inmate in such an institution for temporary treatment only shall be the residence from which he entered such institution.<sup>20</sup>

Persons who are 18 years of age or older and residents of a facility operated by the Ohio Department of Youth Services ("DYS") may use the address of the facility for voter registration purposes. A person may be in the custody of, and therefore a resident of, a DYS facility until they reach the age of 21. A board that receives a voter registration form that lists the address of a DYS facility as the applicant's residence address should review the applicant's qualifications, and, if the board determines that the applicant is qualified to vote in the county, it should register the applicant.

## **SAFE AT HOME PARTICIPANTS**

Safe at Home is an address confidentiality program established by Ohio law. It assists victims of domestic violence, stalking, human trafficking, rape, or sexual battery by shielding their personal information from public record and provides them with a safe and secure way to register and vote. In order to register to vote and protect the confidentiality of their personal information, a participant in the Safe at Home program must contact the Safe at Home Office to obtain a voter registration form designed specifically for Safe at Home participants. A Safe at Home participant must not complete and submit a regular voter registration form, as doing so compromises the confidentiality of the participant's address.

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<sup>18</sup> [R.C. 3503.03](#).

<sup>19</sup> [R.C. 3503.04](#).

<sup>20</sup> [R.C. 3503.04](#).





## Section 4.03 Forms for Voter Registration

### FORMS

Two types of voter registration forms may be used by anyone registering to vote in Ohio: the state form prescribed by the Secretary of State, and the form prescribed by the United States Election Assistance Commission ("EAC") at [www.eac.gov](http://www.eac.gov).

A third application is the Federal Postcard Application ("FPCA"), another federal form that may be used by military personnel and civilians living outside the United States to register to vote and to request the appropriate Ohio absentee ballots. An applicant using the FPCA may use either the cardstock version or the online form that can be accessed on the website of the Federal Voting Assistance Program ("FVAP"):  
[www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

In addition, the declaration accompanying a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot ("FWAB") may be used to register the person to vote for an election if it is received no later than 30 days before the election.

### STATE FORM

The Secretary of State is required to prescribe the form and content of the registration, change of residence, and change of name forms used in Ohio. The form must meet the requirements of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 and include spaces for all of the following:

- The voter's name;
- The voter's address;
- The current date;
- The voter's date of birth;
- The voter to provide one or more of the following:
  - The voter's driver license number, if any;
  - The last four digits of the voter's Social Security number, if any;
  - A copy of a current and valid photo identification, a copy of a military identification, or a copy of a current (within the last 12 months) utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document, other than a notice of an election mailed by a board of elections under [R.C. 3503.19](#) or a notice of voter registration mailed by a board of elections under [R.C. 3503.19](#), that shows the voter's name and address.
- The voter's signature; and



- A statement that applicant is a U.S. citizen and will be 18 years or older by the date of the general election.<sup>21</sup>

## **FEDERAL FORMS**

The federal voter registration form, also called the National Mail Voter Registration Form, is prescribed by the EAC. The form is designed to be used in each state for voter registration and change of name and address purposes. The form and state-specific instructions for completing the form are available on the EAC's website.

**Please note** that the federal form contains fields that are not required to be completed by a person registering to vote in Ohio. For example, an individual registering to vote in Ohio using the federal form does not need to complete the "Choice of Party" and "Race or Ethnic Group" boxes on the form. An individual registering to vote in Ohio using the federal form must complete only those fields that are required to register an individual to vote in Ohio.

A UOCAVA voter is eligible to use an FPCA to register to vote in Ohio. An applicant using the FPCA may use either the cardstock version or the online form that can be accessed on the website of the Federal Voting Assistance Program at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

In addition, the declaration accompanying a FWAB may be used to register the person to vote for an election if it is received no later than 30 days before the election. If the FWAB is received by the board of elections after the registration deadline, the declaration on the FWAB will serve to register the individual to vote in future elections.<sup>22</sup>

For additional information on who is eligible to use the FPCA and FWAB and what information is required on each form, [see the Chapter 7 on Absentee Voting in this Manual](#).

## **WHERE TO OBTAIN AND RETURN FORMS**

Any person qualified to register to vote in Ohio may request – in person, by telephone, by mail, by internet or through another person – a voter registration form from the Secretary of State or a county board of elections. A registration form also may be obtained in person from a designated agency (see below), a public high school or vocational school, a public library, a county treasurer's office, or a Bureau of Motor Vehicles office. Completed registration forms may be returned in person to the Secretary of State, the county boards of elections, a designated agency (see below), a public high school or vocational school, a public library, a county treasurer's office, or a Bureau of Motor Vehicles office. Additionally, completed forms may be returned by mail or through another person to the Secretary of State or a county board of elections.

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<sup>21</sup> [R.C. 3503.14](#).

<sup>22</sup> [R.C. 3511.14\(B\)](#).



If a person returns a completed voter registration form on behalf of another, the form must be returned within a specified period of time. Ohio law requires that a third party return any completed voter registration form to the Ohio Secretary of State's Office or the appropriate county board of elections within 10 days. This requirement is set forth in [R.C. 3599.11\(B\)\(2\)\(a\)](#), which states as follows:

[n]o person who helps another person register outside an official voter registration place shall knowingly fail to return any registration form entrusted to that person to any board of elections or the office of the Secretary of State within ten days after that registration form is completed, or on or before the thirtieth day before the election, whichever day is earlier, unless the registration form is received by the person within twenty-four hours of the thirtieth day before the election, in which case the person shall return the registration form to any board of elections or the office of the Secretary of State within ten days of its receipt.

Failure to comply with this requirement may constitute a felony or misdemeanor, depending upon the circumstances and the number of completed voter registrations that have been returned untimely. If a third party returns to a board of elections completed voter registration forms outside of the timeframe mandated by statute, the board might want to consult with its county prosecuting attorney on the matter.

## **DESIGNATED AGENCIES AND OTHER ENTITIES PROVIDING VOTER REGISTRATION SERVICES**

Ohio law requires that every designated agency, public high school and vocational school, public library, and office of a county treasurer provide "in each of its offices or locations voter registration applications and assistance in the registration of persons qualified to register to vote."<sup>23</sup> Additionally, each registrar and deputy registrar of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles must offer each individual who applies for or renews a driver license the opportunity to register to vote or update their voter registration address.<sup>24</sup> These requirements stem from the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 ("NVRA").

Designated agencies include the following state or local public offices that provide public assistance or state-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities:

- Department of Job and Family Services;
- Department of Health;
- Department of Human Services;

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<sup>23</sup> [R.C. 3503.10\(B\)](#).

<sup>24</sup> [R.C. 3503.11](#).



- Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services;
- Department of Developmental Disabilities;
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities; and
- Ohio's four-year state-supported colleges and universities.<sup>25</sup>

As with third parties who return a completed voter registration form on behalf of another, a designated agency or other entity charged with providing voter registration services must return a completed voter registration form to the board of elections within a specified time period. Ohio law requires a designated agency or other entity to return a completed voter registration form to the appropriate county board of elections within five days. [R.C. 3503.19\(A\)](#) states as follows:

\* \* \*[a]ny state or local office of a designated agency, the office of the registrar or any deputy registrar of motor vehicles, a public high school or vocational school, a public library, or the office of a county treasurer shall transmit any voter registration application or change of registration form that it receives to the board of elections of the county in which the state or local office is located, within five days after receiving the voter registration application or change of registration form. \* \* \*

## REQUESTS FOR VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS

Each board must provide voter registration forms as are necessary to carry out voter registration.<sup>26</sup> Upon request, the board must supply registration forms to any person who resides in the county and is qualified to vote.

If any person requests three or more registrations at one time, the board shall provide a copy of the Secretary of State's Voter Registration Instructions brochure to that person.<sup>27</sup>

## Section 4.04 Processing Voter Registration Forms

### GENERALLY

Each completed registration form must be checked carefully. If any person is found to have submitted more than one registration form, the additional registration forms should not be processed by the board.

A voter registration form does not need to be completed in ink in order to be valid. There is no statutory requirement that the form be completed or signed in ink.

Additional markings on the form (i.e., markings outside of the required fields or

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<sup>25</sup> [R.C. 3501.01\(X\)](#).

<sup>26</sup> [R.C. 3503.08](#).

<sup>27</sup> 52 U.S.C.A §21083(b).



information added by the person completing or returning the form) do not invalidate the form.

There is no limitation on the number of completed voter registration forms that an individual or entity can submit at one time. It is not unusual for an interest group or political party to conduct a voter registration drive whereby the group or party collects and returns a large number of completed voter registration forms.

## REQUIRED INFORMATION

An applicant must provide several pieces of information in order for the voter registration form to be considered valid and a board to register the applicant as an elector.

### 1. **Question 1 in Box**

The first question in the box asks the applicant to affirm that they are a U.S. citizen. This question is specifically required by Federal law via the Help America Vote Act.<sup>28</sup> If the applicant checks “No,” then that voter registration form cannot be processed as valid, even if the applicant has signed the registration form, because of the contradiction of eligibility inherent in the fact that the applicant has indicated that they are not eligible. The voter must check “Yes” in order for the registration form to be considered complete in this respect.

### 2. **Question 2 in Box**

The second question in the box also is specifically required by Federal law via the Help America Vote Act.<sup>29</sup> It requires the applicant to affirm that they will “be at least 18 years of age on or before the next general election.” If the applicant checks “No,” then that voter registration form cannot be processed as valid, even if the applicant has signed the registration form, because of the contradiction of eligibility inherent in the fact that the applicant has indicated they are not eligible. The voter must check “Yes” in order for the registration form to be considered complete in this respect.

### 3. **Identification**

The identification requirement for a voter registration application is as follows:

#### a. **In-Person Registration**

The applicant must provide their current and valid Ohio driver license number, or if the applicant does not have or cannot remember their Ohio driver license number, the application must provide the last four digits of

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<sup>28</sup> 52 U.S.C.A. §21083(b).

<sup>29</sup> 52 U.S.C.A. §21083(b).



their Social Security number.<sup>30</sup> If the voter does not have a Social Security number, the voter must write “None.”

**b. Mail Registration:**

The applicant must provide their current and valid Ohio driver license number or the last four digits of their Social Security number. If the applicant does not include one of those numbers on the application, they must enclose a copy of one of the following: the applicant’s current and valid photo identification, military identification, or a current (within the last 12 months) utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check or government document (other than a notice of voter registration mailed by a board of elections) that shows the applicant’s name and current address.<sup>31</sup>

If the applicant does not provide identification or writes “None” in the driver license or Social Security number box, the board must register the applicant and provide the applicant with a number which serves to identify the applicant for voter registration purposes.<sup>32</sup>

**4. Residence Address**

An applicant must provide their voting residence address in order for the board to register the applicant and place them within a precinct. [Guidance on what constitutes a voter’s residence address is provided in Section 1.02 of this Chapter.](#)

**5. Date of Birth**

An applicant must provide their date of birth on the application.

**6. Signature**

The applicant must provide their signature or legal mark on the voter registration form. Ohio law defines a signature or legal mark as a “person’s written, cursive-style legal mark written in that person’s own hand” or a person’s “other legal mark that the person uses during the course of that person’s regular business and legal affairs that is written in the person’s own hand.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> 52 U.S.C.A. §21083(a)(5); [R.C. 3503.14.](#)

<sup>31</sup> 52 U.S.C.A. §21083(a)(5); [R.C. 3503.14.](#)

<sup>32</sup> 52 U.S.C.A. §21083(a)(5).

<sup>33</sup> [R.C. 3501.011.](#)



If an applicant physically is unable to sign a voter registration application, the applicant can make an “X” in the signature box of the form. The individual assisting the applicant with completing the form must sign their name below the applicant’s “X.”<sup>34</sup>

If an applicant is unable to make an “X,” the applicant must indicate in some manner that they desire to register to vote or to change the applicant’s name or residence. The individual assisting the applicant must sign the form and attest that the applicant indicated that they desired to register to vote or to change the applicant’s name or residence.<sup>35</sup>

## ADDITIONAL FIELDS

### 1. **Mailing Address**

An applicant may provide a different address at which the applicant receives mail. This address can be a post office box or commercial mail facility.

### 2. **Phone Number**

An applicant may provide a phone number that the board can use to contact the applicant.

### 3. **Previous Address and Former Legal Name**

If the applicant is updating their voting residence address or legal name, the applicant should provide their former address and/or legal name.

### 4. **Date**

The applicant may provide the date on which they completed and signed the application. This date is not required. In entering a registration date into the voter registration system, a person is not considered to be registered until the valid voter registration form has been received, which may or may not be the same as the date the applicant completed or signed the form.

## INCOMPLETE, INVALID, OR INELIGIBLE REGISTRATIONS

### INCOMPLETE FORM

If a board of elections receives a voter registration application that is incomplete because it does not contain the required information (listed above) or it does not contain sufficient information to determine whether the applicant is eligible to register to vote in the county, the board must contact the applicant and request that the applicant submit a new voter registration application.

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<sup>34</sup> [R.C. 3503.14\(C\)](#).

<sup>35</sup> [R.C. 3503.14\(C\)](#).



The board may send a letter to the applicant at the address listed on the voter registration form or use the Secretary of State's Acknowledgement Form ([Form 10-J](#)). The board must explain the reason that the application was incomplete. The board may provide a copy of the voter registration application that was submitted by the applicant with the missing information highlighted. However, the board may not return the original, incomplete voter registration application to the applicant because the original application is a public record and must be kept at the board of elections. The board should include a blank voter registration application for the applicant to complete and submit.

### **INVALID FORM**

If an applicant submits a voter registration form (whether complete or incomplete) that is invalid because the form does not meet the requirements of Ohio and federal law (listed above), the board must contact the applicant and request that the applicant submit a new voter registration form. The board may send the applicant a letter explaining that the form was invalid and provide a new voter registration application for the applicant to complete, sign, and return to the board of elections. A board may not return an original, invalid voter registration form to an applicant, because the original application is a public record and must be kept at the board of elections.

### **APPLICANT IS INELIGIBLE**

If a board of elections receives a voter registration form for an applicant who appears from the information submitted to be ineligible to register to vote in Ohio, then the board must contact the applicant to explain that their voter registration application was rejected and the reason why the application was determined to be invalid.

Examples of ineligible applicants include persons who will not be 18 years old on or before the date of the general election, persons who do not appear to be Ohio residents, and persons who are not U.S. citizens.

In some instances, the board of elections may choose to hold a hearing in the matter to provide the applicant with due process of law.

Again, a board may not return an original, invalid voter registration form to an applicant because the original application is a public record and must be kept at the board of elections.

### **VOTER REGISTRATION FORM PROVIDED TO THE INCORRECT COUNTY**

If the board of elections receives a voter registration form intended for another county, the board must transfer the original voter registration to the correct county within five days of receipt. The registration form(s) must be accompanied by a transmittal form cover page. The transmittal form must contain the name and contact information of the board, the transmission date, and the number of registrations transferred. The board





may also include a list of applicants whose forms are included in the transmittal packet. Additionally, the board must retain a copy, in either paper or electronic format, of the original voter registration form as well as the transmittal form.

## **SUSPICIOUS APPLICATIONS**

A board of elections may receive a voter registration application that appears suspicious on the face of the application.

In these instances, the board of elections has a duty to investigate irregularities and the qualifications of applicants under [R.C. 3501.11 \(J\) & \(Q\)](#). When a board of elections conducts an investigation, it should consult with its legal counsel, the county prosecuting attorney.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT CARD FOR VALID REGISTRATION**

Within 20 business days after receiving a properly completed voter registration application or a change of name or address form, unless the application is received during the 30 days immediately preceding an election, the county board of elections must register the applicant to vote.

[The board then must promptly mail the applicant an acknowledgment notice, as defined and described in Section 4.01 of this Chapter.](#)

Whenever an Acknowledgement Notice is returned to the board as undeliverable, the board must investigate and, if the notice was sent to an incorrect address, it must send the notice to the correct address. If the board is unable to verify the voter's correct address, it must change the assigned voter status for that voter from "Active" to "Inactive" (or "Active-Confirmation") and issue a confirmation notice by forwardable mail.<sup>36</sup>

At the first election at which a voter whose name has been so marked appears to vote, the voter shall be required to provide identification to the election officials and to vote by provisional ballot under [R.C. 3505.181](#). If the provisional ballot is counted pursuant to section [R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)](#), the board shall correct that voter's registration, if needed; remove the indication that the voter's notification was returned from that voter's name on the official registration list and on the poll list or pollbook; and change the voter's status from "Inactive" (or "Active-Confirmation") to "Active." If the provisional ballot is not counted pursuant to [R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(4\)\(a\)\(i\), \(v\), or \(vi\)](#), the voter's registration must be cancelled. The board must notify the voter of the cancellation via U.S. Mail.

If the person fails to respond to the confirmation notice, engage in any voter-initiated activity, or vote by provisional ballot as provided in the paragraph above in any election during the period of two federal elections subsequent to the mailing of the confirmation

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<sup>36</sup> [R.C. 3503.19\(C\)](#).



notice, the person's registration shall be cancelled after four years from the date of the confirmation notice mailing. One month before cancelling any record, the board must mail [Form 255-A-3](#) to the address on file for the record. If the voter responds to the notice and confirms their address, the board must change the voter's status to an active-active status and mail the voter an acknowledgment notice.

## Section 4.05 Deadline for Receipt of Voter Registration and Change of Name and/or Address Forms

### BOARDS MUST PUBLISH NOTICE OF DEADLINE

Six weeks before the day of an election, each board of elections must publish notice in one or more newspapers of general circulation of the places, dates, times, methods, and voter qualifications for registration.<sup>37</sup>

### REGISTRATION DEADLINE

Registration to vote may be made at any time. However, to be eligible to vote in an election, an individual must be registered to vote in Ohio for the 30 days immediately prior to the election.<sup>38</sup>

Note that the 30th day before an election always is a Sunday. Consequently, the voter registration deadline carries over to the next business day, Monday, which is the 29th day before the election. If that Monday is a legal holiday (e.g., Columbus Day), the deadline carries over to Tuesday, which is the 28th day before the election.<sup>39</sup>

A properly completed and signed registration form that is mailed to a county board of elections or the Secretary of State's Office is valid for the upcoming election if it is postmarked no later than the 30th day before the election, or, if the postmark is illegible or missing, if the registration is received by a board or the Secretary of State not later than the 25th day before the election.<sup>40</sup> Otherwise, a properly completed and signed form is valid for the upcoming election if it is received by the Secretary of State, any county board of elections, public library, public high school or vocational school, county treasurer's office, or designated agency not later than the voter registration deadline.<sup>41</sup>

Any voter registration made after the voter registration deadline is not valid for that election, but is valid for any subsequent election for which the registrant qualifies as an elector.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> [R.C. 3503.12.](#)

<sup>38</sup> [R.C. 3503.19; Article 5, §1 of the Ohio Constitution.](#)

<sup>39</sup> [R.C. 1.14.](#)

<sup>40</sup> [R.C. 3503.19\(A\).](#)

<sup>41</sup> [R.C. 3503.19\(A\).](#)

<sup>42</sup> [R.C. 3503.19\(A\).](#)



## OFFICE HOURS ON VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE

The board of elections in each county must keep its office open for the performance of its duties until 9 p.m. on the last day of voter registration before a general or primary election.<sup>43</sup>

### Section 4.06 Entering Registrations into the Statewide Voter Registration Database

#### ENTERING INCOMPLETE VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION AS PENDING FILE

To assist in the processing of notices to registrants who have submitted an incomplete or invalid voter registration application, a board may enter the applicant's preliminary information into the county's voter registration system. In such instances, the county's voter registration system must assign a locally defined "PENDING" voter status code to that applicant's record. A prospective applicant record with a locally defined "PENDING" voter status code MUST NOT be included in any data packet sent by the county's voter registration system to the Statewide Voter Registration Database ("SWVRD"), which would have the effect of assigning a valid voter status code and state voter number. Once the board receives a completed and valid registration record from the prospective applicant, the board may complete the applicant's profile in the county's voter registration system and initiate the packet exchange with the SWVRD.

An incomplete voter registration form must be retained for four years. However, a board may choose to delete any electronic voter record from the county's voter registration system to which it has assigned a locally defined "PENDING" voter status as long as the record is kept at least through the 30th day after the date of election that followed receipt by the board of elections of the voter registration record. If the board chooses to enter any such incomplete voter registration records into its county voter registration system under a locally defined "PENDING" voter status and subsequently deletes those electronic records, it must do so consistent with an established records retention schedule and following proper notice.

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<sup>43</sup> [R.C. 3501.10\(B\)](#).



## TRACKING THE SOURCE OF REGISTRATION FORMS

Boards of elections must code each registration or change of name or address, so the source of the registration or change can be identified for tracking and reporting purposes. The survey issued by the Election Assistance Commission (or the “EAC Survey”) requires that each board provide the exact number of voter registrations or changes of address/name requests received by the following entities:

- Bureau of motor vehicles,
- Public assistance offices mandated by the NVRA,
- State funded agencies primarily serving persons with disabilities,
- Armed forces recruitment offices,
- Other agencies not mandated by the NVRA but by Ohio law to offer voter registration services (e.g., public high schools, vocational schools, and public libraries), and
- Voter registration drives from advocacy groups or political parties.

If a board has questions regarding coding, it should consult with its voter registration system vendor and/or the Elections Division of the Secretary of State’s Office.

## DATA ENTRY STANDARDS

County boards of elections must adhere to the data entry standards contained in this Section when entering information into the Statewide Voter Registration Database. Additionally, each board of elections must 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. By having data in a standardized format, boards will be able to identify additional duplicate records and obtain more accurate results when searching for a voter’s information in the SWVRD.

## ENTERING A VOTER’S NAME

General guidelines for entering a voter’s name:

- Accuracy is more important than speed – compare the spelling of the voter’s name on the voter registration form to what has been entered into the database.
- All data in the name fields must be in UPPERCASE letters.
- A title or prefix (e.g., Mr., Mrs., Dr., Ph. D, Rev.) must never be entered into any name field.



- The following characters must never be entered into any name field:

Accent Symbol: `	Colon: :	Parenthesis: ( )	Question Mark: ?
Apostrophe: ’	Comma: ,	Percent Sign: %	Quote Marks: ”
Asterisk: *	Ellipsis: ...	Period: .	Semicolon: ;
Bracket: [ ]	Hyphen/Dash: -	Pound Sign: #	Slash: / \

Please note that the only exception to this rule is when an individual does not have a first name. If an individual does not have a first name, enter a period (.) in the field for the voter’s first name.

### 1. **First Name Field**

**If a voter does not have a first name, enter a period (.) to satisfy the required field entry.** This is the only time a period may be entered into a name field.

If a voter has a double first name (e.g., MARY ANN, BOBBIE JO), enter both names in the first name field with a space between the two names.

If a voter has a single character as their first name that is followed by a middle name, enter the single character in the first name field and enter the middle name in the middle name field.

If a voter has a single character as their first name that is followed by a longer first name (e.g., J ROBERT), enter the single character and the longer name in the first name field with a space between them.

If a voter has a multi-syllable first name with a space or spaces between the syllables, enter the name and omit the space(s) between syllables. For example, the names: LA DONNA, D’LINDA, and LA KEYSHA should be entered into the first name field as: LADONNA, DLINDA, and LAKEYSHA.

### 2. **Middle Name Field**

Enter the voter’s middle name or middle initial, if one is provided. A voter is not required to provide a middle name. If no middle name has been provided, leave the field blank.

If a voter has two middle names, enter both of the names in the middle name field with a space between the two names. For example, the names: EVA-MARIE, JOHN-PAUL, and C.M., should be entered into the middle name field as: EVA MARIE, JOHN PAUL, and C M.



### 3. Last Name Field

If a voter has a multi-syllable last name with a space or spaces between the syllables, enter the name and omit the space(s) between syllables. For example, the names: MC DONALD, DE LA ROSA, and VAN HUSEN should be entered into the last name field as: MCDONALD, DELAROSA, and VANHUSEN.

If a voter has a hyphen in their last name, do not enter the name using a hyphen into the last name field. Instead, use a space to separate two last names.

A suffix (e.g., Jr, Sr, II, VI) must never be entered into the last name field. Instead, enter a suffix into the suffix field, in the manner explained below.

### 4. Suffix Field

Below is a list of valid suffixes. You should enter only the abbreviation for the suffix. When entering: 'The Second', 'The Third', etc., you should use a capital "I" and not the number "1".

<b>Suffixes</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>
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Junior	Jr
Senior	Sr
The Second	II
The Third	III
The Fourth	IV
The Fifth	V
The Sixth	VI

Do not enter professional designations, such as "Esq." or PhD," in the suffix field.

## ENTERING A VOTER'S ADDRESS USING A STANDARDIZED ADDRESS

A standardized address is one that is fully spelled out, abbreviated by using only the United States Postal Service ("USPS") standard abbreviations, or as shown in the current Postal Service ZIP+4 file. USPS standards require that an address block contain, as a minimum, the recipient's name, delivery address, and a last line (see the following example). The delivery address should always contain a street number and a street name. Addresses simply listing a building name, or building name and room number, are usually improper.



JOHN SMITH (recipient line)  
180 E BROAD ST (delivery address line)  
COLUMBUS OH 43215-1234 (last line)

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR FORMAT**

- All lines of the address must be formatted with a uniform left margin.
- All data in the address field must be in UPPERCASE letters.
- The name of a city must be spelled out completely or abbreviated using USPS approved abbreviations.
- The following characters must never be entered into an address field:

Accent Symbol: `	Colon: :	Parenthesis: ( )	Question Mark: ?
Apostrophe: ’	Comma: ,	Percent Sign: %	Quote Marks: ”
Asterisk: *	Ellipsis: ...	Period: .	Semicolon: ;
Bracket: [ ]	Hyphen/Dash: -	Pound Sign: #	* Slash: / \

Please note that the only exception to this rule is the use of a hyphen/dash between the ZIP code and the plus 4 code or a house number that has a hyphenated number (see “House Number”).

### **1. House Number Field**

Enter the voter’s house number in the HOUSE\_NUMBER field. Some house numbers may consist of a whole number and a fraction. If the voter’s house number contains a fraction, put a space between the whole number and the fraction (e.g., 105 ½ MAIN ST). If the voter’s house number has a hyphenated number, enter the hyphen (e.g., 289-01 HIGH ST).

### **2. Pre Street Direction Field**

Enter the pre-street direction of the voter’s address, if one is provided, in the PRE\_STREET\_DIRECTION field. If the voter has not provided a pre-street direction, leave the field blank.

Acceptable pre-street directions are: N, S, E, W, NE, NW, SE, and SW.

### **3. Street Name Field**

Enter the voter’s street name in the STREET\_NAME field. Typically, the street name is not abbreviated. If the voter has provided a street name with a hyphen, do not enter the hyphen in the field. Instead, replace the hyphen with a space.



#### 4. Numeric Street Field

Numeric street names, for example, 7TH ST or SEVENTH ST, must be entered exactly as they appear in the USPS ZIP+4 file. Spell out numeric street names only when there are duplicate street names within a postal delivery area and the only distinguishing factor is that the one you matched is spelled out.

#### 5. Street Description Field

Enter the voter's street description in the STREET\_DESCRIPTION field. See the following table for acceptable street description abbreviations:

Source USPS - [https://pe.usps.com/text/pub28/28apc\\_002.htm](https://pe.usps.com/text/pub28/28apc_002.htm)

<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>
ALLEY	ALY	COMMON	CMN	FLAT	FLT
ANNEX	ANX	COMMONS	CMNS	FLATS	FLTS
ARCADE	ARC	CORNER	COR	FORD	FRD
AVENUE	AVE	CORNERS	CORS	FORDS	FRDS
BAYOU	BYU	COURSE	CRSE	FOREST	FRST
BEACH	BCH	COURT	CT	FORGE	FRG
BEND	BND	COURTS	CTS	FORGES	FRGS
BLUFF	BLF	COVE	CV	FORK	FRK
BLUFFS	BLFS	COVES	CVS	FORKS	FRKS
BOTTOM	BTM	CREEK	CRK	FORT	FT
BOULEVARD	BLVD	CRESCENT	CRES	FREEWAY	FWY
BRANCH	BR	CREST	CRST	GARDEN	GDN
BRIDGE	BRG	CROSSING	XING	GARDENS	GDNS
BROOK	BRK	CROSSROAD	XRD	GATEWAY	GTWY
BROOKS	BRKS	CURVE	CURV	GLEN	DLN
BURG	BG	DALE	DL	GLENS	GLNS
BURGS	BGS	DAM	DM	GREEN	GRN
BYPASS	BYP	DIVIDE	DV	GREENS	GRNS
CAMP	CP	DRIVE	DR	GROVE	GRV
CANYON	CYN	DRIVES	DRS	GROVES	GRVS
CAPE	CPE	ESTATE	EST	HARBOR	HBR
CAUSEWAY	CSWY	EXPRESSWAY	EXPY	HARBORS	HBRS
CENTER	CTR	EXTENSION	EXT	HAVEN	HVN





<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>
CENTERS	CTRS	EXTENSIONS	EXTS	HEIGHTS	HTS
CIRCLE	CIR	FALL	FALL	HIGHWAY	HWY
CIRCLES	CIRS	FALLS	FLS	HILL	HL
CLIFF	CLF	FERRY	FRY	HILLS	HLS
CLIFFS	CLFS	FIELD	FLD	HOLLOW	HOLW
CLUB	CLB	FIELDS	FLDS	INLET	INLT
ISLAND	IS	PARK	PARK	SPRINGS	SPGS
ISLANDS	ISS	PARKWAY(S)	PKWY	SPUR(S)	SPUR
ISLE	ISLE	PASS	PASS	SQUARE	SQ
JUNCTION	JCT	PASSAGE	PSGE	SQUARES	SQS
JUNCTIONS	JCTS	PATH	PATH	STATION	STA
KEY	KEY	PIKE	PIKE	STAVENUE	STRA
KEYS	KYS	PINE	PNE	STREAM	STRM
KNOLL	KNL	PINES	PNES	STREET	ST
KNOLLS	KNLS	PLACE	PL	STREETS	STS
LAKE	LK	PLAIN	OLN	SUMMIT	SMT
LAKES	LKS	PLAINS	PLNS	TERRACE	TER
LAND	LAND	PLAZA	PLZ	THROUGHWAY	TRWY
LANDING	LNDG	POINT	PT	TRACE	TRCE
LANE	LN	POINTS	PTS	TRACK	TRAK
LIGHT	LGT	PORT	PRT	TRAFFICWAY	TRFY
LIGHTS	LGTS	PORTS	PRTS	TRAIL	TRL
LOAF	LF	PRAIRE	PR	TRAILER	TRLR
LOCK	LCK	RADIAL	RADL	TUNNEL	TUNL
LOCKS	LCKS	RAMP	RAMP	TURNPIKE	TPKE
LODGE	LDG	RANCH	RNCH	UNDERPASS	UPAS
LOOP	LOOP	RAPID	RPD	UNION	UN
MALL	MALL	RAPIDS	RPDS	UNIONS	UNS
MANOR	MNR	REST	RST	VALLEY	VLV
MANORS	MNRS	RIDGE	RDG	VALLEYS	VLVS
MEADOW	MDW	RIDGES	RDGS	VIADUCT	VIA
MEADOWS	MDWS	RIVER	RIV	VIEW	VW



<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>
MEWS	MEWS	ROAD	RD	VIEWS	VWS
MILL	ML	ROADS	RDS	VILLAGE	VLG
MILLS	MLS	ROUTE	RTE	VILLAGES	VLGS
MISSION	MSN	ROW	TOW	VILLE	VL
MOTORWAY	MTWY	RUE	RUE	VISTA	VIS
MOUNT	MT	RUN	RUN	WALK(S)	WALK
MOUNTAIN	MTN	SHOAL	SHL	WALL	WALL
MOUNTAINS	MTNS	SHOALS	SHLS	WAY	WAY
NECK	NCK	SHORE	SHR	WAYS	WAYS
ORCHARD	ORCH	SHORES	SHRS	WELL	WL
OVAL	OVAL	SKYWAY	SKWY	WELLS	WLS
OVERPASS	OPAS	SPRING	SPG		

#### 6. Post Street Direction Field

Enter the voter's post-street direction, if the voter provided one, in the POST\_STREET\_DIRECTION field. If the voter did not provide one, leave the field blank.

Acceptable post-street directions are: N, S, E, W, NE, NW, SE, and SW.

#### 7. Secondary Indicators Field

Enter the voter's secondary indicator, if the voter has provided one, in the SECONDARY\_INDICATOR field. USPS approved secondary indicators are:

<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>APPROVED</u>
APARTMENT	APT	LOBBY	LBBY *	SIDE	SIDE *
BASEMENT	BSMT *	LOT	LOT	SLIP	SLIP
BUILDING	BLDG	LOWER	LOWR *	SPACE	SPC
DEPARTMENT	DEPT	OFFICE	OFC *	STOP	STOP
FLOOR	FL	PENTHOUSE	PH *	SUITE	STE
FRONT	FRNT *	PIER	PIER	TRAILER	TRLR
HANGER	HNGR	REAR	REAR *	UNIT	UNIT
KEY	KEY	ROOM	RM	UPPER	UPPR*

\* Does not require a Secondary Address RANGE to follow



### 8. **Secondary Address Range Field**

If the voter’s address is part of a multiple-unit apartment or building, enter the room, suite, or apartment number in the SECONDARY\_ADDRESS\_RANGE field.

### 9. **City Field**

Enter the voter’s city in the CITY field. You must spell out city names in their entirety. When abbreviations must be used due to labeling constraints, use only the approved 13-character abbreviations provided in the Postal Service’s “City State” file.

### 10. **State Field**

Enter the two-character state abbreviation in the STATE field (i.e., OH).

### 11. **ZIP Code Field**

Enter the voter’s five-digit zip code in the ZIP\_CODE field. If you have the plus four digits of the voter’s zip code, enter the four digits in the ZIP\_CODE4 field. For example, 43123, with the plus four, is 43123-4567.

### 12. **Entering Street Addresses and Post Office Boxes**

If the voter has a mailing address that is a post office box, always abbreviate post office box as “PO BOX.” Please change any reference to “Caller,” “Lockbox,” and “Drawer” in a voter’s file in the SWVRD to “PO BOX.”

### 13. **Entering County, State, and Local Highways**

The following are examples of county, state, and local highway primary names, and the recommended standardized format. You must use the standardized format when entering information into the SWVRD.

<u>EXAMPLES IN USE</u>	<u>STANDARD</u>	<u>EXAMPLES IN USE</u>	<u>STANDARD</u>
COUNTY HIGHWAY 32	COUNTY HIGHWAY 32	HIGHWAY 101	HIGHWAY 101
COUNTY HWY 32	COUNTY HIGHWAY 32	HWY 101	HIGHWAY 101
CO HWY 32	COUNTY HIGHWAY 32	HIWAY 101	HIGHWAY 101
COUNTY ROAD 62	COUNTY ROAD 62	INTERSTATE 271	INTERSTATE 271
CO RD 62	COUNTY ROAD 62	I 271	INTERSTATE 271
CR 62	COUNTY ROAD 62	INTERSTATE HWY 271	INTERSTATE 271
ROAD 22	ROAD 22	ROUTE 31	ROUTE 31
RD 22	ROAD 22	RT 31 / RTE 31	ROUTE 31
STATE HIGHWAY 303	STATE HIGHWAY 303	STATE ROUTE 45	STATE ROUTE 45
ST HIGHWAY 303	STATE HIGHWAY 303	ST RT 45 / SR45	STATE ROUTE 45



<u>EXAMPLES IN USE</u>	<u>STANDARD</u>	<u>EXAMPLES IN USE</u>	<u>STANDARD</u>
TOWNSHIP ROAD 56	TOWNSHIP ROAD 56	US HIGHWAY 44	US HIGHWAY 44
TSR 56	TOWNSHIP ROAD 56	US HWY 44 / US 44	US HIGHWAY 44
OHIO STATE ROUTE 752	OH STATE ROUTE 752	US ROUTE 224	US ROUTE 224
OH ST RT 752	OH STATE ROUTE 752		
OHIO 752	OH STATE ROUTE 752		

#### 14. Using Rural Route Addresses

You must enter and print rural route addresses as: "RR N BOX NN." For example, "RR 2 BOX 15A." Please do not enter the words "RURAL," "NUMBER," "NO.," or the pound (#) sign.

A leading zero before the rural route number is not necessary and should not be used. For example, "RR03 BOX 98D" should be entered as "RR3 BOX 98D."

You should use a hyphen as part of the box number only when the hyphen is part of the address in the ZIP+4 file (e.g., RR 4 BOX 19-1A).

There should be no additional designations, such as town or street names, on the Delivery Address Line of rural route addresses. However, if secondary name information is used, place it above the Delivery Address Line.

### SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR MILITARY ADDRESSES

#### 1. Overseas Locations

Overseas military addresses must contain an APO or FPO designation along with a two-character "state" abbreviation of AE, AP, or AA and the ZIP Code or ZIP+4 Code (e.g., APO AE 09001-5275). AE is used for armed forces in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Canada; AP is for the Pacific; and AA is the Americas, excluding Canada.

#### 2. Domestic Locations

You can use only the approved city name as listed in the "City State file," along with the two-character state abbreviation and the ZIP Code or ZIP+4 Code (e.g., MINTO AFB ND 58705-1253).

### PREPRINTED DELIVERY POINT BARCODES

The preprinted Delivery Point barcode must be correct for the delivery address, city, state, and ZIP+4 Code that appear on the mail piece. Please refer to the [USPS Domestic Mail Manual \(DMM\)](#) for the barcode requirements that must be met to qualify for automation rates.



## Section 4.07 Bureau of Motor Vehicles Voter Registration Transactions

### OVERVIEW

Pursuant to the Help America Vote Act (“HAVA”), the National Voter Registration Act (“NVRA”), and the Ohio Revised Code, all boards of elections must mail confirmation notices to certain electors as part of a uniform and nondiscriminatory voter records information verification program prescribed by the Secretary of State.<sup>44</sup>

To assist boards of elections with the Bureau of Motor Vehicle and Social Security Administration (“BMV/SSA”) Voter Records Information Verification Program, the Ohio Secretary of State’s Office will regularly send each board a BMV/SSA Voter Record Information Verification Packet. This electronic packet will notify the board if any of the following information in a new registration needs clarification or updating:

1. Driver’s License Number (DLN) could not be verified,
2. Last Name (LN) could not be verified,
3. First Name (FN) could not be verified,
4. Date of Birth (DOB) could not be verified,
5. Last Four Digits of Social Security number (SSN4) could not be verified, and/or
6. Whether the elector has been identified as deceased.

Boards of elections must use the information contained in the electronic packet to mail a Confirmation Notice, along with Confirmation Return Notice form, to any elector identified in the packet unless, upon review of the board’s records, the information could not be matched as a result of a data entry error by the board of elections. The Notice and accompanying Return Notice must be sent within 10 days of the receipt of the packet or other notification that further clarification or updating is needed for a particular voter registrant.

Voter Information Confirmation Notices and Return Notices issued under the ongoing verification program must be on forms prescribed by the Secretary of State ([Form 10-C](#) or [Form 10-D](#)).

**Note:** A county board of elections is not required to issue a confirmation notice if the nonmatch is the result of a different data entry formatting convention (e.g., “O’Brien” compared to “OBRIEN”) or a data entry error by the board of elections.

Boards may not remove the names of voters from their official list of voters solely because relevant information in a county’s voter registration system does not match

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<sup>44</sup> 52 U.S.C.A. §21083(a)(5); [R.C. 3503.15](#).



identification information maintained by the BMV or SSA. Boards may remove the names of ineligible voters from their official list of voters as authorized in this Section.

## PROGRAM PROCESSING DETAILS

The information provided by any new voter registrant is compared with the BMV or SSA to identify whether the relevant information supplied by the registrant may be verified, and who may need to clarify or update their voter registration information.<sup>45</sup> A new voter registrant is an individual not previously registered to vote in Ohio or an individual who was previously registered to vote in Ohio but lost their registration due to cancellation or by moving out of state.

If a new voter registration record contains information that cannot be verified by the BMV or SSA, the board must do the following: (a) mark or flag the record in the county voter registration system, (b) mail a Voter Information Confirmation Notice that includes a separate or detachable Voter Information Confirmation Return Notice to the address in the county's voter registration records, (c) note the date on which a Voter Information Confirmation Notice is mailed to the voter registrant in the county's voter registration records,<sup>46</sup> and (d) note the date on which the board receives a completed Voter Information Confirmation Return Notice in response to that mailing.

### **MAILING THE VOTER INFORMATION CONFIRMATION "NOTICE" AND "RETURN NOTICE:"**

The new voter registrants identified as having relevant information that needs to be clarified or updated must be sent a Voter Information Confirmation Notice ([Form 10-C](#) or [Form 10-D](#)) to the voter registrant's current address as recorded in the county voter registration system by forwardable mail. This mailing must include a separate or detachable postage pre-paid, pre-addressed Voter Information Confirmation Return Notice upon which the voter registrant may clarify or update their relevant information that could not be verified by the BMV or SSA.

#### **What to Do When Board Receives a Completed "Return Notice" of Voter Information Confirmation that CONFIRMS the Voter Registrant's Information as Contained in the Board's Records:**

If a completed Return Notice confirms the voter registrant's information as already contained in the board's records, the board of elections must remove the mark or "flag" on the voter's record and retain the completed return notice for a period of at least four years, in accordance with the Secretary of State's retention chart.

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<sup>45</sup> Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Sec. 303(a)(5)(B)(i); 52 U.S.C.A. §21083(a)(5).

<sup>46</sup> This notation is essential for establishing the four-year anniversary date for when each Voter Information Confirmation Notice, along with the Voter Information Confirmation Return Notice, was mailed.



## What to Do When Board Receives a Completed “Return Notice” of Voter Information Confirmation that INDICATES CHANGES ARE NEEDED to the Voter Registrant’s Information as Contained in the Board’s Records:

- If a completed Return Notice confirms the relevant information must be updated/changed, the board of elections should update the relevant information consistent with the information provided by the voter on the Voter Information Confirmation Return Notice. The board of elections must remove the mark or “flag” on the voter’s record and retain the completed Return Notice for a period of at least four years, in accordance with the Secretary of State’s Retention Chart.
- If a completed Return Notice indicates a new address within the county, the voter registrant’s registration record must be updated by the board of elections with the new address and the date the Voter Information Confirmation Return Notice was received by the board. The board of elections must remove the mark or “flag” on the voter’s record and retain the completed Return Notice for a period of at least four years, in accordance with the Secretary of State’s Retention Chart. The board must then send the voter registrant an Acknowledgement Notice ([Form 10-J](#)), informing the voter registrant of the registration update and the location of their new polling location.
- If a completed Return Notice indicates a new address outside the county but still in Ohio, the board of elections that mailed the Voter Information Confirmation Notice must keep a copy of the completed Return Notice from the elector and mail the original to the board of elections for the elector’s new county, so that the new board can enter the elector into its voter registration database as an active voter. After the board of elections for the new county enters the record into its county voter registration database, a duplicate record will be created in the statewide voter registration database that must be promptly resolved pursuant to the Secretary of State’s normal business procedures. The completed Return Notice must be retained for a period of at least four years, in accordance with the Secretary of State’s Retention Chart.
- If a completed Return Notice indicates a new address outside the State of Ohio, the board of elections that mailed the confirmation notice to the elector must cancel the elector’s registration in that county and make a notation on the elector’s registration record of the date the confirmation return notice was received and the date of cancellation.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> [R.C. 3503.02](#) and [3503.21](#).



The completed Return Notice must be retained for a period of at least four years, in accordance with the Secretary of State's Retention Chart.

### **What to Do When Board DOES NOT Receive a Completed "Return Notice" of Voter Information Confirmation:**

If the voter registrant fails to return the postage pre-paid Voter Information Confirmation Return Notice or otherwise fails to confirm the relevant information within the county's voter registration system, then the board of elections must leave the mark or flag on the voter's record.

Once a voter registrant's voter registration record is flagged for failure to return a completed Return Notice of Voter Information Confirmation, the board must maintain its records with the voter registrant's information flagged in the county voter registration database with a notation of the date the notice was mailed to the voter registrant. If the voter registrant fails for a period of four years (that includes two federal elections, occurring in November of even-numbered years) to update their registration or vote, then the board shall cancel the voter registrant's registration and make a notation of the date of cancellation.

If a Voter Information Confirmation Notice or Return Notice is sent to a voter registrant to whom the board already has sent such a notice under the NVRA, the original four-year period from the mailing of the prior notice is used to compute the retention period for the county voter database, even though a subsequent Notice under this Section is mailed and not returned.

### **What to Do When Board Receives Information in the Packet that the Voter May Be Deceased:**

If the BMV or SSA databases indicate that an elector is deceased, the board of elections must check with the chief health officer in the county and with the Ohio Department of Health to confirm a report of a deceased elector. County boards of elections should compare the information provided in the voter record (i.e., name, date of birth, etc.) with the same information provided in county and state health records to verify that the elector indicated in the BMV or SSA database as deceased is actually deceased. A voter registration record shall be cancelled by the board of elections upon performing such a comparison and making an affirmative finding that the voter is deceased. Boards may not cancel a voter registration record on the sole basis that the BMV or SSA databases indicate that the voter may be deceased. If the BMV or SSA databases indicate that an elector is deceased, but the board of elections is unable to confirm the report of the deceased elector by comparing information in its records regarding the elector





with the chief health officer in the county and the Ohio Department of Health, the board must send a letter addressed to the elector. The letter shall request that the elector confirm their voter registration information as a way to help the board of elections determine if the deceased status indicated in the BMV or SSA databases in error. The letter shall be accompanied by a postage prepaid return envelope. If there is no response to the letter or otherwise no confirmation that the elector is or is not deceased, then the board of elections should leave the mark or flag on the voter's record.

Once an elector's voter registration record is flagged for failure to respond to the letter seeking confirmation of the records of the BMV or SSA database or otherwise fails to confirm, whether or not through an executor, the elector is or is not deceased, the board must maintain its records with the elector's information flagged in the county voter registration database with a notation in its records of the date the notice was mailed to the elector so that if the elector fails for a period of four years (that includes two federal elections, occurring in November of even-numbered years) to update their registration or vote, then the board shall cancel the elector's registration and make a notation of the date of cancellation.

If a letter seeking confirmation of the records of the BMV of the death status of an elector is sent to an elector to whom the board already has sent such a notice under the NVRA, the original four-year period from the mailing of the prior notice is used to compute the retention period for the county voter database, even though a subsequent letter regarding death status is mailed and does not receive a response.

**State and federal laws prohibit election officials from canceling any voter registration solely because the voter registrant has not provided updated information, or solely because the voter provided information on their voter registration form that did not match the information on file with the BMV or SSA. This means that, unless a voter is deceased or there is a court order requiring removal, their name cannot be removed from the voter registration database without first being sent a notice as required by these procedures under the HAVA and/or the NVRA.**

### What to do with "No Forwarding Address" Returns for the BMV/SSA Voter Information Records Verification Program

All Voter Information Confirmation Notices must be:

- Postage prepaid,
- Sent according to forwardable mail standards of the U.S. Postal Service, and



- Sent with a Return Notice that may be on the reverse side of the Notice (or detachable from it) for the voter to complete and send back to the board of elections.

The Return Notice must be able to be sent by the voter in a manner such that the voter's private information on the Return Notice is not visible to persons who handle such Return Notices through the U.S. Mail.

Sometimes the United States Postal Service ("USPS") will return this type of mail to the board as non-deliverable, because the USPS does not have a forwarding address for the addressee (the elector or voter registrant). The board must record that fact in its records (e.g., in the comments section of that voter's file) and retain the undeliverable confirmation notice for four years. This will enable the board to document its compliance with these procedures as well as the general voter records maintenance program.

### **BMV/SSA Voter Record Information Verification Program is Prospective in Nature**

The BMV/SSA Voter Record Information Verification Program is prospective in nature. This means that each confirmation notice must provide information advising the elector or voter registrant that their registration may be cancelled four years after the postmark on that Voter Information Confirmation Notice (which period must include two federal general elections), unless the elector or voter registrant performs at least one of the following affirmative acts during the stated four-year period after the Voter Information Confirmation Notice is mailed:

- Returns the Voter Information Confirmation Return Notice card (originally sent with the Voter Information Confirmation Notice) confirming the accuracy of the previously outlined relevant information contained in their voter record at the board of elections;
- Clarifies or updates their voter registration and submits it to the board of elections via the Return Notice or otherwise; or
- Votes before that four-year period ends.

If an elector or voter registrant fails to both:

1. Respond to a Voter Information Confirmation Notice sent to them; and
2. Update their voter registration, or vote thereafter.

The board of elections shall not cancel their voter registration until after the four-year period (determined from the mailing of the Voter Information Confirmation Notice and computing within that four years the occurrence of two federal general elections). However, the elector's or voter registrant's record shall remain flagged in



the voter registration system until the record is cancelled or until appropriate action is taken by, or on behalf of, the elector or voter registrant to clarify or update their voter registration information in the board's records.

Please note that, if a Voter Information Confirmation Notice sent pursuant to the BMV/SSA Voter Record Information Confirmation Program, is sent to an elector to whom the board already has sent a confirmation notice, the mailing of this notice does not begin or "reset" the four year anniversary period for that elector.

### **Grounds for Cancellation of a Registration**

If an elector or voter registrant fails both to respond to a Voter Information Confirmation Notice and update their voter registration, engage in voter-initiated activity or vote by the appropriate four-year anniversary date (established under a mailing pursuant to the NVRA or pursuant to these procedures that includes two federal general elections), the registration of the elector shall be cancelled by one of the following dates, whichever is later:

- Not later than 120 days after the date of the second federal general election in which the elector fails to vote; or
- Not later than 120 days after the expiration of the four-year period in which the elector fails to vote or respond to a Voter Information Confirmation Notice/Voter Information Confirmation Return Notice.

Please note that state and federal laws prohibit election officials from canceling any voter registration solely because the elector has not voted or solely because the voter has not provided updated information, or solely because the voter provided information on their voter registration form that did not match the information on file with the BMV or SSA as provided by the information in the revised BMV/SSA Voter Record Information Verification Program.

One month before cancelling any record, the board must mail [Form 255-A-3](#) to the address on file for the record. If the voter responds to the notice and confirms their address, the board must change the voter's status to an active-active status and mail the voter an acknowledgment notice.

Any cancellation of an elector's or voter registrant's voting eligibility in the board's records must be marked on their voter registration information and must include the date of cancellation.



## Section 4.08 Secretary of State's Online Voter Registration System

### USING THE SYSTEM

The Secretary of State's Online Voter Registration System allows an applicant to submit a voter registration application online securely and efficiently to the Secretary of State's Office. It also allows a registered elector to confirm or update their voter registration address online.

To use the System, an applicant must enter their: first and last name, last four digits of Social Security number (SSN4), Ohio driver license number or Ohio identification card number, and date of birth. If all the information provided by the applicant matches the data in the SWVRD or is consistent with data on file with the BMV, then the applicant can proceed with using the online system to confirm or update their voter registration address or register to vote. If the information does not match, then the applicant will be prompted to complete, print, and sign a paper voter registration form to mail or deliver to the appropriate county board of elections.

After the applicant has confirmed and submitted their voter registration or change of address information, the System will provide the applicant with a tracking number. This tracking number will be associated with the packet that is sent from the Online Voter Registration System to the county's voter registration system ("VRS"). The packet will contain all of the required information entered by the applicant and the applicant's signature. Each county's VRS allows the board of elections to review the information contained in each packet and accept it into its VRS.

### USABILITY EXPECTATIONS AND SUPPORT

Based on the system requirements, the majority of Ohioans will be able to utilize the Online Voter Registration System to register to vote or update or confirm their residential voting address. However, there will be some situations when an individual will not be able to use the system.

In the event that an applicant is unable to utilize the system, they may call their board of elections or the Secretary of State's Office for assistance. Boards of elections should assist voters as needed. If unexpected errors are experienced, Boards must promptly report them to the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROCESSING ONLINE RECORDS

#### TOOLS

Packets containing voter registration update, or confirmation of address data will be sent from the Online Voter Registration System to the boards of elections on a regular



basis. The voter registration system vendors have developed, at the expense of the Secretary of State's Office, reporting capability to enable each board of elections to review the incoming voter records and to accept them into its voter registration system. If a board needs training on this process, the board needs to contact its voter registration system vendor.

### **TIMELINE**

Each board of elections must access its online voter registration report and process (i.e., accept or reject) all records into its voter registration system at least once every workday.

Beginning the 60th day before any election and through the close of registration for that election, each board of elections must access its online transactions and process (i.e., accept or reject) all records into its voter registration system at least twice every workday.

### **REJECTING RECORDS**

In the unusual circumstance that the processing of online records results in a rejection of the record from a board's voter registration system, you must:

- Document the reason for the rejection in the voter registration system, carefully following the instructions for documenting a rejection provided by your vendor;
- Contact the voter by first class U.S. mail, phone, or email if that information was provided and contained in the packet, and inform them of the need to provide complete information; and
- Contact the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office.

### **RECORDS BELONGING TO ANOTHER COUNTY**

Similar to a paper registration form, if an otherwise complete online voter registration application or update or confirmation of address is timely submitted to the wrong county (as a result of the voter entering the incorrect county), it is still a valid application and must be treated as such. A board of elections that rejects a record because the voter's address is not in the county must contact the Secretary of State's Office via email at ([SWVRD@OhioSOS.gov](mailto:SWVRD@OhioSOS.gov)) within 24 hours of the rejection, so the Secretary of State's Office can redirect the record to the correct county.

Additionally, submission by a voter of a valid, in-county street address that contains a street name not in the board's street/road table must not be rejected. Instead, it must be amended by the board of elections to conform to the county's street/road table.

**Example:** Submission of "1234 State Route 161" when the board's street table names that road "East Dublin-Granville Road" must not be rejected as invalid.



## **ELECTRONIC IMAGES OF SIGNATURES**

### **1. File Size and Content Requirements**

An individual voter's signature image file may not exceed 32 kilobytes (32K) of storage space. If the image file exceeds 32K, the Board must rescan the original image or reformat the existing file to conform to this requirement

An individual voter's signature image file may not contain any other image. It is not acceptable to substitute an image of the voter registration form or another document in place of the voter's signature image. If a signature image file contains any other image, the Board must rescan image files to conform to this requirement.

### **2. "Bad Signature" Acknowledgement**

If a board receives a signature acknowledgement '3000 Bad signature for voter OH00XXX' from the SWVRD, it must rescan or resize and then resend the voter's signature image file to the SWVRD. If a board needs training on this process, it needs to contact its voter registration system vendor.

A "bad signature" acknowledgement must be resolved within two business days.

### **3. Missing Signatures**

On Monday of every week, the Secretary of State's Office will post to the BOE Portal, under Data Quality, a list of all voter records, by county, without a signature file associated with the record. Boards of elections must download the list each week and upload a signature file to the SWVRD by the close of that week.

If the voter record has no signature image on file because the voter registered prior to the digitalization of voter signatures from original voter registration forms, the board of elections must contact the voter to obtain a signature to include with the voter's record. The Board should use [Form 260](#) or its local equivalent.

### **4. Scanning Signatures from Paper Registration Forms**

When a valid paper registration form is timely received by a board of elections, the board of elections must upload to the SWVRD the signature image associated with that voter's record from the paper registration form no later than 24 hours after the voter record is sent to the SWVRD.



## **ISSUING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT NOTICES**

All boards of elections must issue acknowledgement notices at least one time per week. This weekly batch of acknowledgement notices must include all online applications and traditional paper voter registration forms (for new registrations, changes of address, and changes of name) received during the week before the batch run and/or mail date.

## **WIDGET PLACEMENT**

Each board of elections must place on its website a widget developed by the Secretary of State's Office, so any voter accessing the county board of elections' website seeking to register to vote or change/confirm their address may be easily redirected to the online voter registration and change of address portal. Secretary of State widgets are online at: <https://www.ohiosos.gov/widgets/>.

## **REPORTING**

New registrations and address changes/confirmations submitted through the Secretary of State's Online Voter Registration System are considered "Internet" registrations and must be tracked for purposes of the EAC Survey. Boards of elections must track online voter registrations and address changes in a unique category.

## **Section 4.09 Bureau of Motor Vehicles Change of Address**

### **OVERVIEW**

A key component of federal National Voter Registration Act is that changes of address made by a licensed driver with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles ("BMV") must also initiate a change of address for that person on the voter rolls.

On at least a twice-weekly basis, boards of elections will be provided BMV changes of address via the existing online change of address process. Additionally, and on at least a twice-weekly basis, the files from the BOE portal will begin to include records labeled "BMV COA Review," which are BMV changes of address that require additional research before the board can update the voter's record. The files from the BOE portal will contain "pre-matched" records that require a mandatory completion of the voter's record and "possible-match" records that require research prior to completing the voter's record.

Boards of elections will process the bulk of these files immediately (i.e., pre-matched records requiring a mandatory completion from the BOE portal and BMV changes of address from the Online Voter Registration System) and then attend to the possible-match records and "BMV COA Review" records (i.e., those requiring research).



All BMV change of address records will contain the date of the transaction at the BMV and should be treated as any other registration (physical card or online change of address).<sup>48</sup>

## INSTRUCTIONS

### PRE-MATCHED PAIRS REQUIRING A MANDATORY COMPLETION

Under the three enumerated circumstances below, board of elections staff must complete the voter's record in the county voter registration system and the SWVRD with the information from the BMV record that is missing in the SWVRD record, i.e., BMV ID, SSN4, or Date of Birth (DOB).

Boards of elections must download and completely process all pre-matched pairs at least once every work week.

1. **BMV ID Is Blank in the SWVRD Record, and the Record Pairs Match Exactly on SSN4, DOB, and Last Name**

For every BMV-SWVRD pre-matched record in which the SWVRD BMV ID field is blank, and the two records match exactly on SSN4, DOB, and Last Name (regardless whether the records match on First Name), board staff must immediately complete the voter's record in the county voter registration system and the SWVRD with the BMV ID from the field labeled `BMV_LICENSE_NUMBER`.

2. **SSN4 Is Blank in the SWVRD Record, and the Record Pairs Match Exactly on BMV ID, DOB, and Last Name**

For every BMV-SWVRD pre-matched record in which the SWVRD SSN4 field is blank, and the two records match exactly on BMV ID, DOB, and Last Name (regardless whether the records match on First Name), board staff must immediately complete the voter's record in the county voter registration system and the SWVRD with the SSN4 from the field labeled `BMV_SSN4`.

3. **DOB Is Invalid in the SWVRD Record, and the Record Pairs Match Exactly on BMV ID, SSN4 and Last Name**

For every BMV-SWVRD matched record in which the SWVRD DOB field is "1/1/1800," and the two records match exactly on BMV ID, SSN4, and Last Name (regardless whether the records match on First Name), board staff must immediately complete the voter's record in the county voter registration system and the SWVRD with the DOB from the field labeled `BMV_DOB`.

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<sup>48</sup> Regardless of whether the registration is initiated using a physical voter registration card, the Online Voter Registration System, or comes from the BMV as a result of the NVRA change of address process, if the acknowledgement card issued to the voter by non-forwardable mail is returned as undeliverable, the board must place the voter in confirmation status and issue a confirmation notice. [R.C. 3503.19\(C\)\(3\)](#).





## **BMV CHANGE OF ADDRESS REQUIRING A MANDATORY UPDATE**

The vast majority of BMV change of address records will be sent to counties via the Online Voter Registration System. Boards of elections must download and completely process all BMV change of address records at least once every work week. These records will be flagged as “BMV” records for voter registration tracking purposes. Boards of elections must track these changes of address as “BMV Change of Address” transactions for EAC reporting purposes.

Boards of elections must continue to follow the instructions and timeline for all records provided through the Online Voter Registration System.

## **POSSIBLE-MATCH PAIRS AND BMV CHANGES OF ADDRESS THAT REQUIRE THE BOARD OF ELECTIONS TO RESEARCH AND RESOLVE**

Possible-match pairs and changes of address from the BMV that require review by the board of elections will be available in a single file. Changes of address from the BMV will be in this file for any of three reasons:

- The record is an unresolved duplicate in the SWVRD,
- The voter’s record in the SWVRD does not contain a voter signature on file, or
- The address provided by the user to the BMV is not compatible with the address file layout requirements of the Secretary of State’s Online Voter Registration System.

Boards of elections must download and completely process all possible match pairs and BMV changes of address labeled “BMV COA Review” at least once every work week.

### **BMV CHANGES OF ADDRESS LABELED “BMV COA REVIEW”**

Changes of address from the BMV that are either duplicates or the address must be parsed before being entered into the voter registration system will be in a file labeled “BMV COA Review.” This file will contain BMV changes of address that the SOS was unable to parse or process and therefore cannot be sent via the Online Voter Registration System. Boards of elections must review the “BMV COA Review” file and make a determination on the validity of the address provided. If the address is found to be valid by the board, then the board can enter the valid address into the county VR system and update the voter’s address. A board may conduct additional research into any or all of the “BMV COA Review” records in order to make a determination of the validity of the address change. Boards of elections must track these changes of address as “BMV Change of Address” transactions for EAC reporting purposes.



Additionally, boards of elections may correct any typos or data entry errors in the address in order to make the address valid and then update the voter's address. If the board is unable to determine the validity of the address, the board must treat the record as an incomplete registration and contact the voter to obtain a complete or precinctable address.

### **POSSIBLE MATCH-PAIRS**

Under the six enumerated circumstances below, boards are to carefully examine all of the available information in the record pairs and the voter's original registration form to determine whether the two records are, in fact, the same person and, if so, which record (BMV or SWVRD) contains the correct information. After researching and resolving the discrepancy, board staff must correct the voter's record in the county voter registration system and the SWVRD as required to fix any incorrect information contained in the voter's record. If the record does not match due to a BOE related data entry error, as evidenced by a review of the data compared to the record filed with the board by the voter, the record may be corrected without contacting the voter.

Boards of elections may contact the registered voter by mail to verify the accuracy of the information in the SWVRD if the board is unable to resolve a discrepancy identified between the voter's information in the SWVRD and the corresponding information in the BMV database.

1. **The Record Pairs Match Exactly on BMV ID, DOB, Last Name and First Name, but not SSN4**

For every BMV-SWVRD matched record in which the two records match exactly on BMV ID, DOB, Last Name and First Name, but not SSN4, board staff must review the voter's registration form to ascertain whether a data entry error explains the discrepancy. Boards must immediately correct their county voter registration system and the SWVRD as required to fix all data entry errors. Board staff may contact the registered voter by mail to verify the accuracy of the SSN4 information in the SWVRD if the board is unable to resolve the discrepancy between the SSN4 in the SWVRD record and the SSN4 in the BMV record. The discrepancy in the SSN4 information must be resolved by the board for all of the BMV-SWVRD matched pairs.

2. **The Record Pairs Match Exactly on BMV ID, SSN4, Last Name and First Name, but not DOB**

For every BMV-SWVRD matched record in which the two records match exactly on BMV ID, SSN4, Last Name and First Name, but not DOB, board staff must review the voter's registration form to ascertain whether a data entry error explains the discrepancy. Boards must immediately correct their county voter registration system and the SWVRD as required to fix all data entry errors.



Board staff may contact the registered voter by mail to verify the accuracy of the DOB information in the SWVRD if the board is unable to resolve the discrepancy between the DOB in the SWVRD record and the DOB in the BMV record. The discrepancy in the DOB information must be resolved by the board for all of the BMV-SWVRD matched pairs.

**3. The Record Pairs Match Exactly on SSN4, DOB, Last Name and First Name, but not BMV ID**

For every BMV-SWVRD matched record in which the two records match exactly on SSN4, DOB, Last Name and First Name, but not BMV ID, board staff must review the voter's registration form to ascertain whether a data entry error explains the discrepancy. Boards must immediately correct their county voter registration system and the SWVRD as required to fix all data entry errors. Board staff may contact the registered voter by mail to verify the accuracy of the BMV ID information in the SWVRD if the board is unable to resolve the discrepancy between the BMV ID in the SWVRD record and the BMV ID in the BMV record. The discrepancy in the BMV ID information must be resolved by the board for all of the BMV-SWVRD matched pairs.

**4. The Record Pairs Match Exactly on BMV ID, Last Name and First Name, but not SSN4 and DOB**

For every BMV-SWVRD matched record in which the two records match exactly on BMV ID, Last Name and First Name, but not SSN4 and DOB, board staff must review the voter's registration form to ascertain whether data entry errors explain the discrepancies. Boards must immediately correct their county voter registration system and the SWVRD as required to fix all data entry errors. Board staff may contact the registered voter by mail to verify the accuracy of the SSN4 and DOB information in the SWVRD if the board is unable to resolve the discrepancy between the SSN4 and DOB information in the SWVRD record and the SSN4 and DOB information in the BMV record. The discrepancies in the SSN4 and DOB information must be resolved by the board for all of the BMV-SWVRD matched pairs.

**5. The Record Pairs Match Exactly on BMV ID, SSN4 and Last Name, but not DOB and First Name**

For every BMV-SWVRD matched record in which the two records match exactly on BMV ID, SSN4 and Last Name, but not DOB and First Name, board staff must review the voter's registration form to ascertain whether data entry errors explain the discrepancies. Boards must immediately correct their county voter registration system and the SWVRD as required to fix all data entry errors. Board staff may contact the registered voter by mail to verify the accuracy of



the DOB and First Name information in the SWVRD if the board is unable to resolve the discrepancy between the DOB and First Name information in the SWVRD record and the DOB and First Name information in the BMV record. The discrepancies in the DOB and First Name information must be resolved by the board for all of the BMV-SWVRD matched pairs.

**6. The Record Pairs Match Exactly on BMV ID, DOB and Last Name, but not SSN4 and First Name**

For every BMV-SWVRD matched record in which the two records match exactly on BMV ID, DOB and Last Name, but not SSN4 and First Name, board staff must review the voter's registration form to ascertain whether data entry errors explain the discrepancies. Boards must immediately correct their county voter registration system and the SWVRD as required to fix all data entry errors. Board staff may contact the registered voter by mail to verify the accuracy of the SSN4 and First Name information in the SWVRD if the board is unable to resolve the discrepancy between the SSN4 and First Name information in the SWVRD record and the SSN4 and First Name information in the BMV record. The discrepancies in the SSN4 and First Name information must be resolved by the board for all of the BMV-SWVRD matched pairs.

## **Section 4.10 Automatic Confirmation of Address Safeguard**

As explained above, pursuant to the NVRA, a change of address submitted to the registrar of motor vehicles also serves as a change of address for voter registration purposes. This has the additional effect of changing that voter's status from "active-confirmation" to "active-active," and stopping the four-year clock toward cancellation if the voter previously received a confirmation notice. Though not addressed by the NVRA, if an elector's interaction with the BMV can serve to update automatically their voter registration address, it follows that an elector's interaction with the BMV also can serve to confirm automatically the elector's registration address.

The Automatic Confirmation of Address Safeguard seeks to exclude from Ohio's general program of voter list maintenance a voter who might have moved and needs to update their voter registration but whose interaction with the BMV confirms the voter's current voter registration address.

Pursuant to this safeguard, each county board of elections receives a monthly list of voters who have appeared at the BMV to apply for, update, or renew a driver license or state identification card and did not change their residential address with the BMV. The monthly list is posted on the BOE Portal on the right-hand side of the screen under "Confirmation Safeguard." Each month's list includes those voters (and their identifying information) who have appeared at the BMV during the previous month to apply for,



update, or renew a driver license or state identification card and did not change their residential address with the BMV. The board must log on to the BOE Portal, retrieve, and review its county's list each month. The board must compare and verify the information provided on the list for each voter with the information for that voter in the county voter registration system before making any updates to the voter's record.

If any voter appears on the Confirmation Safeguard list and is in "active-confirmation" status pursuant to any year's general voter records maintenance program, the board must compare and verify the information provided for that voter with the information for that voter in the county voter registration system. If the board determines that the information for the voter comports, the board must reset that voter to "active-active" status. The date of voter activity for the voter's record is the date that appears on the list with the voter's information under either "BMV\_PERSON\_RECORD\_CHANGE\_DATE" or "BMV\_DRIVER\_RECORD\_CHANGE\_DATE" – whichever date is later. The fact that the voter appeared at the BMV on this date and did not change their address serves as automatic confirmation that this voter still resides at the same address.

## Section 4.11 Timing and Impact of Changes of Address and/or Name

### NAME CHANGES

If a voter legally changes their name, the voter must update their voter registration to reflect the name change. The voter can use a voter registration form for this purpose. The voter must submit the voter registration form with their change of name no later than the deadline for voter registration prior to the next election at which the voter intends to vote.

A voter who changes their name and fails to update their registration may be eligible to cast a regular ballot if that voter presents one of the following to the election officials prior to Election Day or precinct election officials on Election Day and completes and signs Secretary of State [Form 10-L](#):

1. Court order;
2. Marriage license; or
3. Proof of legal name change that includes both the voter's former and current names.<sup>49</sup>

A voter who changes their name, fails to update their registration by the deadline, and does not provide proof of the name change must cast a provisional ballot.

Please note that a voter who changes their name, moves outside of their precinct, and

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<sup>49</sup> [R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).



fails to update their voter registration by the deadline must cast a provisional ballot at the voter's assigned polling location on Election Day or at the board office or other location designated for early in-person absentee voting prior to the election.<sup>50</sup>

## ADDRESS

### 1. Change of Address (Within the Precinct)

A voter who moves within their current precinct may update their voter registration at any time using a voter registration form or the Secretary of State's Online Voter Registration System. If an update is made after the deadline for voter registration before an election, the voter will vote a regular ballot by completing a voter registration form.<sup>51</sup>

### 2. Change of Address (Within the County and Outside of the Precinct)

A voter who moves from one precinct to another in the same county may update their voter registration at any time using a voter registration form or the Secretary of State's Online Voter Registration System. If an update is made after the deadline for voter registration before an election: the voter may appear at the board of elections office, update their voter registration, and vote a provisional ballot; or the voter may go to their new polling location on Election Day, the board of elections office, or another site designated by the board, update their registration and vote a provisional ballot.<sup>52</sup>

### 3. Change of Address (County-to-County)

A voter who moves from one Ohio county to another may update their voter registration at any time using a voter registration form. If an update is made after the deadline for voter registration before an election, the voter:

During the 28 days before Election Day, may appear at the board of elections office, update their voter registration and vote a provisional ballot; or

On Election Day, may go to the office of the board of elections in the voter's new county of residence, or another site designated by the board, update their registration and vote a provisional ballot.

## Section 4.12 Cancellation of Registration

### EFFECT OF PRIOR REGISTRATION

If an elector applying for registration is already registered in another state or in another county within this state, the elector shall declare this fact to the registration officer and

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<sup>50</sup> [R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(2\).](#)

<sup>51</sup> [R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(a\).](#)

<sup>52</sup> [R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(2\).](#)



shall sign an authorization to cancel the previous registration on a form prescribed by the Secretary of State. A properly completed voter registration form qualifies as adequate authorization.

The director of the board of elections shall mail all such authorizations to the board of elections or comparable agency of the proper state and county. Upon the receipt of this authorization from the forwarding county, the director of a board of elections in Ohio, upon a comparison of the elector's signature with the elector's signature as it appears on the registration files, shall remove the elector's registration from the files, and place it with the cancellation authorization in a separate file which shall be kept for a period of two calendar years. The board shall notify the elector at the present address as shown on the cancellation authorization that their registration has been cancelled.<sup>53</sup>

## UPON REQUEST

A currently registered voter may cancel their registration at any time by filing a written request on a form prescribed by the Secretary of State's Office ([Form 10-A](#)). Prior to cancelling the registration, the board of elections should verify that the signature on the request and the signature on the voter registration card match.<sup>54</sup>

## DEATH

### 1. Notice of Death of Registered Voter

A deceased person's spouse, parent, or child, or the administrator of the elector's estate, or executor of the elector's will may file a certified copy of the elector's death certificate with the county board of elections.<sup>55</sup> Upon receipt, the board must cancel the deceased elector's registration.

The board then must send a written notice, on a form prescribed by the Secretary of State, to the address at which the deceased elector was registered, informing the recipient that the deceased elector's registration has been cancelled due to death, and advising the person that, if the cancellation was made in error, the elector may contact the board of elections to correct the error. If the elector's registration is cancelled in error, it shall be restored and treated as though it were never cancelled.<sup>56</sup> To assist in fulfilling this requirement, the Secretary of State has prescribed [Form 255-C](#).

### 2. Records Provided by the Ohio Department of Health

The Ohio Department of Health must send a report to the Secretary of State each month. The report must contain the names, Social Security numbers, dates

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<sup>53</sup> [R.C. 3503.33](#).

<sup>54</sup> [R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(1\)](#).

<sup>55</sup> [R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(3\)](#).

<sup>56</sup> [R.C. 3503.21\(F\)](#).



of birth and death, and residential addresses of all persons over 18 years of age who have died within Ohio or another state during the preceding month. If the Department is notified of a death after sending its report, it must supplement the report not later than one month after learning of the death. Upon receipt and confirmation of the information from the Department of Health that an elector has died, the board of elections must cancel the deceased elector's registration.<sup>57</sup>

The board then must send a written notice, on a form prescribed by the Secretary of State ([Form 255-C](#)), to the address at which the deceased elector was registered, informing the recipient that the deceased elector's registration has been cancelled due to death, and informing the elector that, if the cancellation was made in error, the elector may contact the board of elections to correct the error. If the elector's registration is cancelled in error, it shall be restored and treated as though it were never cancelled.<sup>58</sup>

To assist in fulfilling this requirement, the Secretary of State has prescribed [Form 255-C](#).

### 3. **State and Territorial Exchange of Vital Events (STEVE) Database**

#### a. **Overview**

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993<sup>59</sup> ("NVRA") requires states to "conduct a general program that makes a reasonable effort to remove the names of ineligible voters from the official lists of eligible voters by reason of the death of the registrant."<sup>60</sup>

The Ohio Department of Health is a partner jurisdiction in the State and Territorial Exchange of Vital Events ("STEVE") database. Use of STEVE provides boards of elections with timely and accurate information on Ohio electors who have died in Ohio or in a jurisdiction participating in STEVE.

On a monthly basis, boards of elections must download a file from the BOE portal. The file will contain information on decedents obtained from STEVE that are potential matches to electors in the SWVRD.

Use of STEVE provides a number of benefits, including 1) the number of jurisdictions providing decedent identifying information for Ohio residents who died out of state will increase, and 2) automatically, and on a monthly basis, decedent identifying information will be compared to the county

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<sup>57</sup> [R.C. 3503.18](#).

<sup>58</sup> [R.C. 3503.21\(F\)](#).

<sup>59</sup> 107 Stat. 77, 52 U.S.C.A. §20507.

<sup>60</sup> Section 8 of the NVRA; 52 U.S.C.A. §20507(A)(4)(a).





records in the SWVRD and only records that are potential matches will be displayed for board staff to research and resolve.

Matching criteria are as follows (i.e., any of the below will result in a matched pair of records in the download file for the county):

<u>SSN4</u>	<u>DOB</u>	<u>LAST NAME</u>	<u>FIRST NAME</u>
Y	Y	Y	Y
Blank in SWVRD	Y	Y	Y
N	Y	Y	Y
	N or Blank in SWVRD (i.e., 1/1/1800)	Y	Y

Then, only if the STEVE record indicates the decedent is female:

<u>SSN4</u>	<u>DOB</u>	<u>LAST NAME</u>	<u>FIRST NAME</u>
Y	Y	N	Y

**b. Decedent Identifying Information Matched With Voter Identifying Information in County Download File**

Following are the fields (in order of appearance) that will be contained within the county download file for STEVE-SWVRD matched records:

<u>STEVE (DECEDENT IDENTIFYING INFORMATION):</u>	<u>SWVRD (VOTER IDENTIFYING INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE COUNTY BOE TO THE SWVRD):</u>
Last Name	Unique State Voter ID Number assigned by the SWVRD
First Name	Unique County Voter ID Number assigned by the county VRS
Middle Name	SWVRD Status
Suffix	Last Name
Last four digits of SSN	First Name
Birth date	Middle Name or Initial
Date of Death	Suffix
Male or Female (if supplied)	Last four digits of SSN
Residence City	Birth Date
Residence House Number and Street (including pre- and post- street direction, description and	Date of Match



<u>STEVE (DECEDENT IDENTIFYING INFORMATION):</u>	<u>SWVRD (VOTER IDENTIFYING INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE COUNTY BOE TO THE SWVRD):</u>
unit number)	
Residence Zip Code	Criteria Used to Identify Possible Match
Residence County	
Residence State	

c. **When and How BOEs Must Download SWVRD Records that Have Been Matched with STEVE Records.**

No less frequently than once per month, boards of elections must download their file of decedent identifying information matched to county records in the SWVRD and promptly process every record in the file. The board has been assigned a username and password to log into the BOE Portal.

Once the board has logged into the BOE Portal, a link to the board's file will display. The board should download the file by clicking on the link, and naming and saving the file in an appropriate directory and folder on its computer. Also displayed for the board is a list entitled "Processed." After a board has downloaded its file of decedent identifying information, the file will automatically move into the "Processed" list where the board can re-access files that it has already downloaded.

d. **How to Process the SWVRD Records that Have Been Matched with STEVE Data and Mandatory Updates to the Voter Registration Database (within 10 days of receipt)**

Within **10 days** of downloading its STEVE-SWVRD matched records, a county board of elections must use the information provided from STEVE to confirm whether a voter in its county is deceased except that any board conducting an election must not process STEVE files received **after** the close of registration until the election is certified. If the board receives this data after the close of registration, the STEVE files must be processed as soon as the voter registration system is updated (following the official canvass). Additionally, the board must check voter history for the registrations listed in STEVE files received after the close of registrations, to ensure no ballot was cast or returned after the deceased voter's date of death.

**It is important to keep in mind that a match between a record from STEVE and a record from the SWVRD does not guarantee that the records are for the same person.** Board staff must carefully examine each



pair of matched records and compare other identifying information from each source, STEVE and the SWVRD, such as middle name or initial, suffix, and address. If board staff can confirm that the voter is deceased using the information supplied, the board shall cancel the voter's registration.

e. **Notice**

When a board cancels an elector's registration as a result of data received through STEVE, the board must send a written notice, on a form prescribed by the Secretary of State ([Form 255-C](#)), to the address at which the deceased elector was registered, informing the recipient that the deceased elector's registration has been cancelled due to death, and informing the elector that, if the cancellation was made in error, the elector may contact the board of elections to correct the error. If the elector's registration was cancelled in error, it must be restored and treated as though it were never cancelled.<sup>61</sup>

## INCARCERATION ON FELONY CONVICTION

An elector who has been convicted of a felony and incarcerated is not qualified to be an Ohio elector during their period of incarceration.<sup>62</sup> At least once each month, the clerk of the court of common pleas of each county must file with the board of elections the names and residence addresses of all persons who have been convicted during the previous month of crimes that would disfranchise such persons under existing laws of the state.<sup>63</sup> Accordingly, the list should include only those names of persons who both have been convicted and incarcerated.

Reports of conviction of crimes under the laws of the United States that disfranchise an elector and that are provided to the Secretary of State's Office by any United States attorney. The Secretary of State's Office forwards the information to the appropriate board of elections for cancellation.

Upon receiving notice that an elector has been convicted of a felony and incarcerated as a result of conviction, the board must cancel the elector's registration and send a notice, by forwardable mail, on a form prescribed by the Secretary of State informing the elector of the date and reason for the cancellation. If the board of elections finds that the elector was cancelled in error, the board of elections shall restore the elector's registration as if it had not been cancelled.<sup>64</sup> The elector may be eligible to re-register to vote after their period of incarceration has expired.

If a felony report from the clerk of courts contains a residence address of an elector in a

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<sup>61</sup> [R.C. 3503.21\(F\)](#).

<sup>62</sup> [R.C. 2961.01](#).

<sup>63</sup> [R.C. 3503.18\(C\)](#).

<sup>64</sup> [R.C. 3503.18\(D\)](#).



different county, the board of elections that received the report must promptly send a copy to the appropriate board of elections.<sup>65</sup>

Any questions regarding the list provided by the clerk of courts should be directed to the clerk of courts. Questions regarding specific offenses or what constitutes “incarceration” should be directed to the Board’s legal counsel, the prosecuting attorney. If the board receives a report with inadequate sentencing information, please contact the clerk of courts and the board’s prosecuting attorney. For questions regarding the federal felony reports, the board or prosecuting attorney may contact the U.S. Attorney’s Office that generated the report.

## DETERMINATION OF INCOMPETENCY BY PROBATE COURT

At least once each month, each probate judge must file with the board of elections the names and residence addresses of all persons over 18 years of age who have been adjudicated incompetent for the purpose of voting, as provided in [R.C. 5122.301](#).<sup>66</sup> If the report from the probate judge contains a residence address of an elector in a different county, the board of elections that received the report must promptly send a copy to the appropriate board of elections.<sup>67</sup>

The determination of a physician or other medical professional, caretaker, or family member or the delegation or assignment of certain duties under a power of attorney is insufficient basis alone for a board of elections to cancel a voter’s registration for incompetency. A probate court must adjudicate or judge a person incompetent specifically for the purposes of voting in order for a board to cancel a voter’s registration for this reason.

The board must begin a process to cancel the voter registration of electors that the probate judge filed as adjudicated incompetent.<sup>68</sup> Prior to cancelling the voter’s registration, the board of elections must send written notice on a form prescribed by the Secretary of State, by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the voter at the address on file with the board of elections. The notice must advise the voter that their name appears on the list provided by the probate judge, and, if the voter appears on that list in error, the voter must contact the probate court to resolve the issue. Secretary of State [Form 255-F](#) has been prescribed for this purpose.

Please note that a voter’s registration may be cancelled as a result of the voter’s appearance on the list from the probate judge within 30 days prior to any election.

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<sup>65</sup> [R.C. 3503.18\(D\)](#).

<sup>66</sup> [R.C. 3503.18\(B\)](#).

<sup>67</sup> [R.C. 3503.18\(D\)](#).

<sup>68</sup> [R.C. 3503.18\(D\)](#).



# UNIFORM AND NONDISCRIMINATORY VOTER RECORDS MAINTENANCE

## GENERALLY

The voter records maintenance program, generally, is a requirement of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993,<sup>69</sup> commonly referred to as the “motor voter law.” The purposes of the NVRA are to increase the number of voter registrations for eligible citizens, to enhance the participation of eligible citizens in the voter process, to protect the integrity of the electoral process, and to ensure that accurate and current voter registration rolls are maintained.<sup>70</sup> State law requires local election officials to conduct the state’s general voter records maintenance program every year.<sup>71</sup> County boards of elections also are required to conduct the supplemental process every year.

## TWO PARTS

There are two parts of the general voter records maintenance program of Ohio’s implementation of the NVRA:

1. The National Change of Address Process (“NCOA”), which is triggered when a voter record appears in the United States Postal Service (“USPS”) NCOA database indicating that the voter associated with that record likely has moved since the records were last compared, and thus may need to update their voter registration to the current voting residence address. Under state law, the Secretary of State matches voter records in the Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD) against the NCOA database to compile the data for the NCOA process.<sup>72</sup>
2. The Supplemental Process, which is triggered by a voter’s inactivity during a fixed period of time, generally two years (with inactivity determined by the absence of a voter-initiated activity as defined in section 1.01 of this Chapter). This second component is designated the “supplemental process,” because it seeks to identify electors whose lack of voter-initiated activity indicates they may have moved, even though their names did not appear as a part of the NCOA process. Under state law, county boards of elections use data points (e.g., voting history) in their local VRS to compile the data for the supplemental process. Boards of Elections must ensure that voter-initiated activity is entered and updated prior to completing the supplemental process.

This uniform and nondiscriminatory program has been designed to help ensure that accurate and current voter registration rolls are maintained, that voters who likely have moved are proactively contacted and given the opportunity to update their voter

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<sup>69</sup> 52 U.S.C.A. §20507.

<sup>70</sup> 52 U.S.C.A. §20507(b).

<sup>71</sup> [R.C. 3503.21\(D\)](#).

<sup>72</sup> [R.C. 3503.21](#).



registration with their proper county board of elections, and to accurately identify and cancel the voter registrations of individuals who are no longer qualified electors under the law after applicable notice.

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONDUCTING ISSUED ANNUALLY**

Each year, following the primary election, the Secretary of State's Office will issue detailed instructions to boards of elections on conducting the NCOA and supplemental process. The instructions will outline what must be contained within the confirmation notice and how to process returned confirmation notices.

Each board is required to conduct the process within a specified timeframe and certify that it has completed the process.

### **COMPLETION OF MAINTENANCE**

Before the date on which a voter's registration is scheduled to be cancelled pursuant to the voter records maintenance program (i.e., the NCOA and supplemental processes), the board of elections shall send a notice, by forwardable mail, on a form prescribed by the Secretary of State. The notice will inform the voter of the date on which the voter's registration is scheduled to be cancelled and the reason for the cancellation (i.e., failure to respond to a confirmation notice and the date on which the confirmation notice was mailed). If the voter replies to the notice updating or confirming the voter's address before the date of cancellation, the voter's registration shall not be cancelled.

It is important for each board to complete the voter records maintenance program. Because a voter's registration cannot be cancelled within 90 days of a federal election (pursuant either to the NCOA or supplemental process), there is a finite window of time that records may be cancelled.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, it is vital that each board track and calendar when its voter records must be cancelled.

A board should never complete the maintenance program and cancel an elector's registration within 30 days of an election.

[Please see section 4.16 on public records for list maintenance.](#)

## **Section 4.13 Publication of Voter Lists**

### **GENERALLY**

Each board of elections must update the information contained on its official voter registration lists on a regular, routine basis. Depending on the volume of new registration forms, updates to current registrations, and cancellations received, daily data entry may be required to maintain an accurate and up-to-date list.

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<sup>73</sup> 52 U.S.C.A. §20507(C)(2)(A).



## PRIOR TO AN ELECTION

14 days before an election, the board of elections must prepare from the statewide voter registration database established under [R.C. 3503.15](#) a complete and official registration list for each precinct. The list must contain the names, addresses, and political party whose ballot the elector voted in the most recent primary election within the current year and the immediately preceding two calendar years, of all qualified registered voters in the precinct. All the names, insofar as practicable, must be arranged in alphabetical order. The lists may be prepared either in sheet form on one side of the paper or in electronic form, at the discretion of the board. Each precinct list shall be headed "Register of Voters," and under the heading must be indicated the district or ward and precinct.

The names of the members of the board and the name of the director shall be attached to the precinct lists. A sufficient number of such lists must be provided for distribution to the candidates, political parties, or organized groups that apply for them. The board shall have each precinct list available at the board for viewing by the public during normal business hours. The board must ensure that, by the opening of the polls on the day of a general or primary election, each precinct has a paper copy of the registration list of voters in that precinct.<sup>74</sup>

## DAY OF ELECTION

On the day of a general or primary election, precinct election officials must do both of the following:

1. By the time the polls open, conspicuously post and display at the polling location one copy of the registration list of voters in that precinct in an area of the polling location that is easily accessible;
2. At 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., place a mark, on the official registration list posted at the polling location, before the name of those registered voters who have voted.<sup>75</sup>

## CORRECTION OF REGISTRATION LIST

### IDENTIFIED BY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

From time to time, a board of elections may discover that it has made an error that affects a voter registration record (e.g., in the data entry process, the board misspells the voter's name, enters an incorrect date of birth, or transposes the voter's residential address, etc.).

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<sup>74</sup> [R.C. 3503.23\(A\)](#).

<sup>75</sup> [R.C. 3503.23\(B\)](#).



In such instances, it is incumbent upon the board of elections to promptly correct the error.

### **IDENTIFIED BY IMPACTED ELECTOR**

The board may correct all errors occurring in the registration of electors when it finds that the errors subject to corrections were not of fraudulent intent. Specifically, when by mistake, a qualified elector has caused them to be registered in a precinct which was not that their place of residence, the board of elections, on full and satisfactory proof that such error was committed by mistake, may, on the voter's personal application and proof of the voter's true residence, correct that voter's registration form.<sup>76</sup>

### **IDENTIFIED BY ANOTHER ELECTOR**

A qualified elector of the county may file an application for correction or challenge of another elector's voter registration at the office of the board of elections. [Additional information on the challenge process and deadlines is contained in Section 4.15.](#)

## **Section 4.14 Statewide Voter Registration System**

### **DUPLICATE RESOLUTION**

All county boards of elections must keep their duplicate levels to .030 percent on a rolling monthly basis.

Additionally, when a board of elections prints its Election Day precinct lists,<sup>77</sup> it is vitally important to have local and statewide voter registration lists as accurate as possible. The Secretary of State expects all counties to have their duplicate numbers at zero percent by the 14th day prior to an election.

This level of duplicate management will allow for a more accurate voter file for Election Day.

### **VOTER HISTORY**

All boards must upload voter history for all state elections to the Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD) no later than 30 days after the completion of the county's official canvass and recounts. Counties with more than 100,000 registered voters must contact the Elections Division to schedule their upload during that time frame. For purposes of assigning voter history, a voter record should be marked as having voted only if any of the following are true:

- The voter signed the pollbook on Election Day;

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<sup>76</sup> [R.C. 3503.30.](#)

<sup>77</sup> [R.C. 3503.23.](#)





- The voter timely returned the identification envelope purporting to contain the voter's marked absentee ballot (including UOCAVA and FWAB), regardless of whether the ballot is eligible to be counted;
- The voter was issued an absentee ballot in-person during the period for early in-person absentee voting; or
- The voter is an eligible elector of the state of Ohio and cast a provisional ballot, regardless of whether the ballot is eligible to be counted. If a provisional ballot affirmation is used to register an individual to vote, the newly registered voter must be assigned voter history for casting a provisional ballot.

## PARTY AFFILIATION

Under Ohio law, an elector affiliates with a political party by voting in that party's primary election. An elector is considered to be a member of a political party if they voted in that party's primary election within the preceding two calendar years, or if they did not vote in any other party's primary election within the preceding two calendar years.<sup>78</sup>

For purposes of re-calculating a voter's party affiliation in the county voter registration system, each board of elections must program its county voter registration system to reflect party affiliation using the examples that follow.<sup>79</sup>

- Voted D in 2018 primary  
Voted issues only (or non-partisan primary) in 2017 primary  
Voted D or R in 2016 primary  
*Elector's affiliation is D*
- Voted R in 2018 primary  
Voted D or R in 2017 partisan primary  
*Elector's affiliation is R*
- Voted D in 2018 primary  
No primary held in 2017  
Voted D or R in 2016 primary  
*Elector's affiliation is D*
- Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2018 primary  
Voted issues-only (or non-partisan primary) in 2017 primary  
Voted D in 2016 primary  
*Elector's affiliation is D*

<sup>78</sup> [R.C. 3513.05\\_17](#).

<sup>79</sup> **Please note that the use of specific political parties and years in these examples is for demonstration purposes only.** Any major political party (Democratic and Republican) or recognized minor political party appearing in any of these examples can be interchanged with any other political party based on the ballot selected by the voter. Likewise, the years appearing in these examples are for explanatory purposes only. Questions regarding the determination of an elector's party affiliation may be directed to the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office.



- Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2018 primary  
Voted R in 2017 partisan primary  
*Elector's affiliation is R*
- Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2018 primary  
No primary held in 2017  
Voted D in 2016 primary  
*Elector's affiliation is D*
- Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2018 primary  
No primary held in 2017  
Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2016 primary  
*Elector is unaffiliated*
- Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2018 primary  
Voted issues-only (or non-partisan primary) in 2017 primary  
Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2016 primary  
*Elector is unaffiliated*

## Section 4.15 Challenge of Right to Vote

### CHALLENGES FILED PURSUANT TO R.C. 3503.24

A qualified elector may file an application for correction or challenge in person or by mail with the office of the board of elections.<sup>80</sup> A challenger must 1) use Secretary of State [Form 257](#), 2) file the application or challenge no later than 30 days before an election, 3) state the reasons for the application or challenge, and 4) sign under the penalty of election falsification.<sup>81</sup>

#### DETERMINE WHETHER A HEARING IS WARRANTED

The director and deputy director<sup>82</sup> must complete an initial review to determine that a facially sufficient application or challenge has been filed by initially addressing the following questions:

- Was the application or challenge filed under penalty of election falsification using Secretary of State Form 257?** If the person did not file the challenge under penalty of election falsification using [Form 257](#), the challenge is invalid and cannot proceed.
- Is the person who filed the application for challenge a qualified elector of the county?** The director and deputy director must review the board's records to determine whether the person who has filed is a qualified elector of the county. If

<sup>80</sup> [R.C. 3503.24\(A\)](#).

<sup>81</sup> [R.C. 3503.03,24\(A\)](#).

<sup>82</sup> Where the board only has a Director, the Director and the Chairperson will follow these steps.



the director and deputy director determine that the person submitting the application or challenge is not a qualified elector of the county, the challenge is invalid and cannot proceed. Any disagreement between the director and deputy director must be resolved by a vote of the Board.

**❑ Does the challenge state sufficient reasons for the application for challenge?**

The director and deputy director must complete an initial review of the reasons for the application or challenge as filed on [Form 257](#) by considering whether the party filing the challenge has alleged sufficient information to sustain a successful challenge. As a part of this administrative process, the director and deputy director will review the face of the document as filed. If the director and deputy director determine that, even if proven to be true, the reasons alleged would not be sufficient to grant the challenge, the challenge is insufficient and cannot proceed. Any disagreement between the director and deputy director must be resolved by a vote of the Board.

**Note:** The determination that a challenge is facially valid and sufficient does not have any bearing on the ultimate merits of the challenge hearing.

## **SCHEDULE A HEARING**

If a filing has not been found insufficient as described in above, then the director must promptly set a time and date for a hearing before the board. The hearing must be held not later than 10 days after the board receives the application or challenge.<sup>83</sup>

## **NOTICE FOR A HEARING**

The board must provide notice to the person challenged that a hearing has been scheduled. The notice must inform the person challenged of the date and time for the hearing, of the person's right to appear and testify, call witnesses and be represented by counsel.

The person filing the challenge must also be provided with notice as to the date and time of the hearing.

All notices must be sent by first class mail no later than 6 days prior to the scheduled hearing.

## **CHALLENGE PROCESS, HEARING, AND DECISION**

In preparation for the hearing, the board must issue subpoenas to witnesses to appear and testify before the board at the hearing at the request of either party or any member of the board.<sup>84</sup> All witnesses must testify under oath.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> [R.C. 3503.24\(B\)](#).

<sup>84</sup> [R.C. 3503.24\(B\)](#).

<sup>85</sup> [R.C. 3503.24\(B\)](#).



The board must reach a decision on all applications and challenges immediately following the hearing.<sup>86</sup> If the board decides that a person's name should not be on the registration list, the person's name must be removed from the list.<sup>87</sup> If the notice sent by the board is not returned undeliverable and the person challenged did not appear for the hearing, the board must provide notice to the person cancelled via mail.

**If the board decides that a person's name should appear on the registration list, the person's name must be added to or remain on the list.<sup>88</sup>**

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

### RETURN MAIL OR CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The return of mail, sent by an elections official or any other individual, as undeliverable, unable to forward, or change of address on file (NCOA) alone is insufficient to grant a challenge under [R.C. 3503.24](#).

### FORECLOSURE

Evidence of a foreclosure action alone is insufficient to grant a challenge under [R.C. 3503.24](#) of the Revised Code.

### CONFIRMATION STATUS

The fact that a voter's status is recorded in the Statewide Voter Registration Database as "active-confirmation" or "inactive" alone is insufficient ground to grant a challenge under [R.C. 3503.24](#). An "active-confirmation" or "inactive" voter is treated the same as an "active" voter for voting purposes.

## Section 4.16 Public Records

### REGISTRATION FORMS AND LISTS

Except as otherwise provided by state or federal law, the registration records must be open to public inspection at all times when the office of the board is open for business, under such regulations as the board adopts, provided that no person must be permitted to inspect such records except in the presence of an employee of the board.<sup>89</sup>

All registration forms and lists, when not in official use by the registrars or judges of elections, must be in the possession of the board of elections. Names and addresses of electors may be copied from the registration lists only in the office of the board when it is open for business; but no such copying shall be permitted during the period of time commencing 21 days before an election and ending on the 11th day after an election if

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<sup>86</sup> [R.C. 3503.24\(B\)](#).

<sup>87</sup> [R.C. 3503.24\(C\)](#).

<sup>88</sup> [R.C. 3503.24\(C\)](#).

<sup>89</sup> [R.C. 3503.13](#).



such copying will, in the opinion of the board, interfere with the necessary work of the board. The board must keep in convenient form and available for public inspection a correct set of the registration lists of all precincts in the county.<sup>90</sup>

## VOTER REGISTRATION LIST MAINTENANCE (NCOA AND SUPPLEMENTAL PROCESS) RECORDS

The board of elections must maintain and make available for public inspection and copying at a reasonable cost all records concerning the implementation of programs and activities conducted for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy and currency of voter registration lists, including the names and addresses of all registered electors sent confirmation notices and whether or not the elector responded to the confirmation notice.

The board must maintain all records described in this paragraph for a period of five years.<sup>91</sup>

## RECORDS RETENTION CHART

The retention chart prescribed by Secretary of State's Office specifies the length of time that a board of elections must retain records related to voter registration (i.e., forms, lists of electors, etc.). Questions regarding the retention chart should be directed to the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office.

Questions regarding a request for public records or how to retain public records should be directed to the board's legal counsel, the county prosecuting attorney.

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<sup>90</sup> [R.C. 3503.26\(A\)](#).

<sup>91</sup> 52 U.S.C.A. §20507(i); [R.C. 3503.26\(B\)](#); CBE-45A & CBE-46, [Secretary of State Retention Schedule](#).