



*Via Electronic Mail*

March 6, 2023

Mr. Shane Hamlin  
Executive Director, Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC)  
1201 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 600  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Re: Reforms to ERIC Bylaws & Membership Agreement

Dear Mr. Hamlin and ERIC Board Members:

Ohio joined ERIC in 2016, prior to the start of my administration. Since then, I've found this collaborative partnership between member states to be the only advanced election integrity resource of its kind. Ohio's participation in ERIC has helped to identify hundreds of cases of apparent voter fraud that have been referred for investigation and potential prosecution. Each of these cases of wrongdoing, if accurate, represent the potential to alter or spoil local, state, and even federal elections impacting thousands of Ohioans, particularly in close contests. The value that our ERIC membership provides in fulfilling my duty to investigate, as state law requires, "the administration of election laws, frauds, and irregularities" has been tangible.

That's not to say ERIC is without its flaws. From its inception, the organization has maintained questionable ties to ex-officio board members with highly partisan reputations. While most member states tolerated this association, the ongoing presence and influence of these polarizing figures has become a distraction, if not a deterrent, to long-overdue reforms to ERIC's governing documents. As a result, several member states have already left the organization, and others are considering that step pending the outcome of another vote on the proposed reforms at ERIC's March 17, 2023 meeting.

Eight months ago, Ohio convened a bipartisan working group of ERIC board members to address legitimate concerns expressed by dues-paying members, including membership requirements, operational and financial integrity, and bipartisan oversight. Unfortunately, the working group's previously unanimous recommendations were stifled at the February 19, 2023 meeting by an ex-officio board member's aggressive lobbying campaign. ERIC board members participating in that meeting have since expressed dismay that the rushed and chaotic vote taken at the conclusion of the meeting did not comply with the rules of order and may therefore be illegitimate. Sadly, this outcome only reinforces the concerns dues-paying members have raised and exacerbates the rapidly degrading public view of the organization. The working group's proposals would have addressed and sought to remedy these alarms.

I have been a hopeful advocate for the value of ERIC and a champion for the reforms I and others believe could save it, but the organization's obstinance may be its demise. As I write this letter, at least six of my colleagues are considering a withdrawal from ERIC. The immediate action of the ERIC board at its March 17 meeting can potentially salvage their participation and ours, but ONLY if the proposed reforms win the approval the board. These include:

1. Amending the bylaws to explicitly state that ERIC's membership should only consist of member states, who answer to the voters and taxpayers they represent,
2. Removing ex-officio membership positions from ERIC's bylaws, and
3. Permitting member states to utilize ERIC's data-sharing services "a la carte," in the manner which they believe best serves their local interests. For example, members should not be forced to meet specific requirements, such as Eligible but Unregistered voter mailings or cross-state fraud analysis, if they do not deem those actions necessary or relevant to the needs of their respective states.

Other reforms are needed to improve ERIC's reputation and accountability, but these fundamental changes must take place at the March 17 meeting to prevent any further erosion of support. I want to emphatically state that Ohio remains in constant discussion with fellow member states about the future of ERIC, and I will not accept the status quo as an outcome of the next meeting. Anything short of the reforms mentioned above will result in action up to an including our withdrawal from membership. I implore you to do the right thing.

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose  
Ohio Secretary of State