NASS
National Association of Secretaries of State

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Public Voter Registration Information and Security of State Voter Registration Databases

1. What data is kept in a voter registration list?

State voter registration lists include the information collected through voter registration applications. This information varies by state with state law determining what qualifies as public information. States generally collect names, addresses, birthdates, and certain Personally Identifiable Information (PII) such as full or partial social security numbers, driver's license numbers, and/or state ID numbers. Some states also collect political party affiliation, phone number, email address, voting history (if a person voted, not their vote selections), and/or voting method (absentee, in-person, etc.).

Note: North Dakota does not have voter registration but maintains a central voter file.

2. How can voter registration data be obtained from the state?

In most states, voter registration data may be obtained from the state Chief Election Official or local election offices. Some states require a fee. The cost of purchasing the data varies across states, often depending on the amount and type of data requested (county, congressional district, etc.). In some states, voter registration data is always available to the public or for public inspection during specified times. Some states limit distribution of the data to specific entities such as political parties and campaigns.

States protect sensitive personal identifiers, such as social security numbers, driver's license numbers, and state identification numbers, from public disclosure in accordance with applicable law.

States may also provide additional confidentiality protections for certain voters, including participants in address confidentiality programs and other individuals protected under state law.

Additionally, some states limit how the data may be used. Common limitations include "for election or governmental purposes only" or "for non-commercial uses." Please note: access or attempted access to information exempt from public disclosure by any person or through the use of artificial intelligence (AI) systems, bots, automated tools, or other means, may be subject to criminal prosecution or civil liability under applicable law.

For another resource, visit the National Conference of State Legislatures page Access to and Use of Voter Registration Lists.

3. What are states doing to protect voter registration information?

Election officials work diligently to protect state voter registration databases by implementing security and resilience measures, such as multi-factor authentication, network and infrastructure protections, along with data encryption and backup processes. Election officials may have limited control over the subsequent dissemination or protection of voter registration information that has been provided to third parties. However, as noted in #2 above, states protect sensitive personal identifiers,

including social security numbers, driver's license numbers, and state ID numbers, from public disclosure in accordance with applicable law.

4. **Can bad actors change election results by breaching voter registration systems?**

   No. Voter registration systems are segmented from vote casting and vote tabulation systems. While voter registration systems are important to election processes, a breach of a voter registration system would not, by itself, result in access to vote tallies or official election results. Additionally, election officials implement safeguards to protect voter registration systems from attempted breaches and to build resilience in election processes. Voter registration lists are backed up, often daily, and are closely monitored by election officials in the run-up to an election.

   Technical problems with voter registration systems could result in longer lines at polling places or cause some voters to cast a provisional ballot, but voter registration systems are resilient. Election officials also have procedures for verifying your voter registration status post-election so provisional ballots can be properly processed and, when eligible, counted.

5. **What should voters do if they are concerned about their voter registration information?**

   First, be sure to check your voter registration information before your state's voter registration deadlines to ensure your information is accurate. Your trusted sources for any election-related information are your state and local election officials. Contact them directly with any questions you have about your voter registration information.

   To learn more about your state's specific tools, deadlines, and requirements for registering and ultimately voting or to verify your voter registration status, visit canivote.org—a helpful nonpartisan website created by state election officials to provide eligible Americans with accurate election information.

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