Maintaining the Voter Registry List: Interstate Moves by Registered Voters

By: Kristin Sullivan, Chief Analyst
September 23, 2020 | 2020-R-0234

Issue

Summarize how Connecticut election officials (1) obtain the names of former state residents who register to vote in out-of-state jurisdictions and (2) notify election officials in out-of-state jurisdictions when former residents of those jurisdictions register in Connecticut.

Summary

Registrars of voters in each Connecticut municipality maintain a voter registry list. They must remove a name from the list when, among other things, they have written confirmation that a former Connecticut resident moved out of their municipality and registered to vote in another state or in a U.S. district or territory (hereafter, "out-of-state jurisdiction") (CGS §§ 9-21 and 9-35(b)). Generally, registrars obtain this information through notifications forwarded by the secretary of the state. According to her office, the secretary receives this information (1) through the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), an interstate voter information data sharing initiative (see BACKGROUND), or (2) directly from state election officials in out-of-state jurisdictions.

Similarly, admitting officials (e.g., registrars of voters and town clerks) must notify election officials in out-of-state jurisdictions when people who were previously registered in the other jurisdiction register to vote in their municipality. To facilitate this requirement, state law requires people who apply for admission as an elector to declare, under penalty of perjury, if they were previously registered in another jurisdiction (CGS § 9-21). By law, perjury is a class D felony punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine of up to $5,000, or both (CGS § 53a-156).

www.cga.ct.gov/olr   **Connecticut General Assembly**   (860) 240-8400
OLRequest@cga.ct.gov   Office of Legislative Research   Room 5300
                    Stephanie A. D'Ambrose, Director   Legislative Office Building

Within 48 hours after receiving such a declaration, a registrar or town clerk must send a Notice of Cancellation of Previous Registration to the appropriate election official in the other jurisdiction. The cancellation notice indicates that the person has registered to vote in Connecticut, thus enabling the election official to remove the name from their registry list. According to the Office of the Secretary of the State, Connecticut admitting officials communicate this information (1) through ERIC, for other member states, or (2) directly to state or county election officials, for states that are not ERIC members.

Federal law does not mandate that states share voter registration data, and generally, each sets its own voter address confirmation procedures. However, the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 does require that state voter registration maintenance activities remove duplicate names from the registry list (52 USC § 21083(a)(2)(B)).

Toward this end, 30 states and Washington D.C. belong to ERIC, which is the largest such data-sharing initiative, according to the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS). Additionally, at least 15 states (including some ERIC members) require election officials to (1) notify officials in out-of-state jurisdictions when a voter registration applicant indicates previous registration in another state or (2) cancel a voter's registration upon receiving notice from another state that the former resident registered there. Connecticut requires both (CGS §§ 9-21 and 9-35(b)). (This 2017 NASS report has more information on cross-state notification procedures.)

(Registrars of voters confirm the addresses of registered voters who move within the state using specified procedures. For more information on these procedures and the reasons for which registrars remove a name from the voter registry list, see OLR Report 2016-R-0079.)

Background

ERIC

ERIC is a non-profit corporation established in 2012 and composed of member states. Its mission is to help states improve their voter rolls' accuracy and increase access to voter registration for eligible citizens. To date, 30 states and Washington D.C. belong to ERIC. (Connecticut joined in 2014.)

At a minimum, member states provide ERIC with their voter registration and motor vehicle licensee data, including names, addresses, birthdates, and the last four digits of the Social Security number. Private data (e.g., date of birth and the last four digits of the Social Security number) is protected before transmission.

Member states receive reports identifying the following:

1. voters who have moved within their state,
2. voters who have moved out of state,
3. voters who have died,
4. duplicate registrations in the same state, and
5. individuals who are potentially eligible to vote but are not yet registered.

KS:kc