



Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) Frequently Asked Questions

A. ERIC Basics: Origins, Mission, Governance, and Funding

1. What is ERIC?

ERIC is a public charity non-profit membership organization comprised of 32 states and the District of Columbia. ERIC’s mission is to assist states in improving the accuracy of America’s voter rolls and increasing access to voter registration for all eligible citizens.

2. Who created ERIC?

A bipartisan group of chief election officials from seven states formed ERIC in 2012, with assistance from The Pew Charitable Trusts. These seven states were Colorado, Delaware, Maryland, Nevada, Utah, Virginia, and Washington.

3. Which states are members of ERIC?

Thirty-one states and the District of Columbia are members of ERIC. A full membership list is available on the “About ERIC” page at www.ericstates.org.

4. Who controls ERIC?

The members. The chief election official from each member jurisdiction designates a Member Representative to the ERIC Board of Directors. Each Member Representative serves as a voting member of the board. Refer to the Bylaws and Membership Agreement on the “About ERIC” page at www.ericstates.org. Want to learn more about what a “chief election official” is?

5. How is ERIC Funded?

Members fund ERIC. New members pay a one-time membership fee of \$25,000, which is reserved for technology upgrades and other unanticipated expenses. Members also pay annual dues. Annual dues cover operating costs and are based, in part, on the citizen voting age population in each state. Thus, large jurisdictions pay more in annual dues than smaller ones. Members approve their dues and the annual budget. Dues for the 2022-23 fiscal year range from about \$26,000 to about \$116,000. ERIC’s 2022-23 operating budget is about \$1,538,000. ERIC conducts annual independent audits of its financial statements.

6. Where are the ERIC offices located?

ERIC's Washington, D.C. address is a mailing address only. Like other organizations, employees work remotely. ERIC members are aware of this arrangement. It reduces operating costs without sacrificing security or our ability to serve our member's needs. ERIC's servers are housed in a managed, secure data center located in the U.S. Secure remote access to the data center is limited to only employees who need it to perform their duties.

7. Why did election officials create ERIC?

Keeping voter rolls up to date is a challenge because, every day, voters move or die. Voters don't always remember to update their registration. ERIC was created to address these challenges. [Inaccurate, Costly, and Inefficient](#), published in 2012, found that approximately 1 out of 8 voter registrations in the U.S. were no longer valid or significantly inaccurate, more than 1.8 million deceased individuals were listed as voters, and approximately 2.75 million people had registrations in more than one state. Additionally, the report estimated there were at least 51 million eligible U.S. citizens who were not registered - about 24 percent of the eligible population. The seven states that founded ERIC believed using state-of-the-art data matching technology, a robust data sharing program built on widely accepted information security standards, and an unprecedented commitment to cooperation would vastly improve their ability to maintain accurate voter rolls. It would also have the added benefit of allowing them to reach out to unregistered, but likely eligible, individuals more efficiently than anyone else.

8. Why are accurate voter rolls so important?

As the official record of all eligible voters in a state, a state's voter registration rolls are the foundation of free, fair, and accurate elections. Most states are required by the federal National Voter Registration Act to "conduct a general program that makes a reasonable effort to remove the names of ineligible voters" from the rolls. States not subject to this federal law have state "list maintenance" laws aimed at keeping voter records up to date. Illegal voting is exceedingly rare but maintaining accurate voter rolls reduces the opportunity for such behavior and it helps build confidence in election outcomes.

B. How Members Use ERIC

1. What do ERIC and its members do?

At least every 60 days, each member submits their voter registration data and licensing and identification data from motor vehicle departments (MVD) to ERIC. ERIC refers to these data as Member Data. ERIC's technical staff uses sophisticated data matching software to compare Member Data from all member states, sometimes with data from other sources, to create the following four "list maintenance" reports.

- a. Cross-State Movers Report: Identifies voters who appear to have moved from one ERIC member to another using voter registration data and MVD data.
- b. In-State Updates Report: Identifies voters who appear to have moved within the jurisdiction, or who recently updated their contact information, using voter registration and MVD data.
- c. Duplicate Report: Identifies voters with duplicate registrations in the same state using voter registration data and MVD data.
- d. Deceased Report: Identifies voters who have died using voter registration data and Social Security death data known as the Limited Access Death Master File and MVD data.

In addition, ERIC offers three other reports:

- a) Eligible but Unregistered Report: Identifies individuals who appear to be eligible but who are not yet registered by matching voter registration data against MVD data.
- b) National Change of Address (NCOA) Report: Identifies voters who have moved using official data ERIC licenses from the US Postal Service.
- c) Voter Participation Report: For each federal general election, members can request reports identifying voters who appear to have voted more than once in the member jurisdiction in the same election, in more than one member jurisdiction in the same election, or on behalf of a deceased voter within the member jurisdiction.

Address validation is important and there are other tools available to help election officials identify addresses that may not be valid for the purposes of voter registration. Currently, ERIC does not investigate the validity of an address in a member's voter registration record. Simply put, ERIC compares a member's voter records to other members' voter records, MVD records, and to federal deceased data and national change of address data, for the purposes of flagging differences that indicate a member's voter record may be out of date or inaccurate. This is different from analyzing an address in a voter record to determine if the address is valid.

Refer to the "How Does It Work" page or access the Bylaws and Membership Agreement on the "About ERIC" page at www.ericstates.org for more information on the reports.

2. What are members required to do with the list maintenance reports ERIC provides?

ERIC's four list maintenance reports identify voters who have moved within the jurisdiction or who recently updated their contact information (In-State Updates Report), voters who have moved from one member to another (Cross-State Movers Report), voters who have died (Deceased Report), and voters with duplicate registrations in the member jurisdiction (Duplicate Report). These list maintenance reports help members improve the accuracy of their voter lists.

Members must request at least one of these reports at a minimum of once a year, though the ERIC Membership Agreement strongly encourages members to establish a regular schedule for requesting these reports. The ERIC Membership Agreement requires members to act on these reports in a manner consistent with applicable state and federal law, including taking action to remove ineligible voters.

Pursuant to Section 4(b) of the Membership Agreement, when a member receives an ERIC list maintenance report "indicating that information in an existing voter's record is deemed to be inaccurate or out-of-date, the Member shall, at a minimum, initiate contact with that voter in order to correct the inaccuracy or obtain information sufficient to inactivate or update the voter's record. Members have 90 days from when they receive this information from ERIC "to initiate contact with at least 95% of the voters on whom data indicating a record was inaccurate or out-of-date...was provided."

3. What are members required to do with the Eligible but Unregistered report ERIC provides?

The Eligible but Unregistered Report identifies individuals who may be eligible to vote, but who are not yet registered. This report helps increase access to voter registration for all eligible citizens. This report is generated by comparing MVD data to voter data and includes only individuals who have a driver's license or state ID card issued by the member jurisdiction's MVD. These reports do not include political party affiliation, age, or racial data. No other entity or vendor is involved in generating these reports.

At least once every two years members send voter registration information to individuals identified in the Eligible but Unregistered Report. Information must be mailed by October 1 or 15 days before the state's voter registration deadline, whichever is earlier. In preparing the mailing, members use other state data sources to filter out individuals they believe are not eligible to vote. For example, they remove ineligible felons, persons deemed mentally incompetent to vote, and known noncitizens. These mailings clearly identify the state's voter eligibility requirements, as determined by law, including that the applicant must be a U.S. Citizen to register.

C. Use of Data; Data and Privacy Protections

1. Why does ERIC need driver's licensing data?

Keeping voter rolls up to date is a challenge because voters move or die. Voters rarely remember to update their voter registration when they move, but they do update their license or ID with the motor vehicle licensing agency. While not perfect, driver's licensing data is official government data, and it is a reliable data source for identifying people who have moved or changed their name. It just makes sense to compare these data to voter data to spot out-of-date voter registrations. These data are also highly useful for comparing against Social Security death data to identify deceased voters more accurately, even if these data are not included in the Deceased Report.

Refer to the "Technology and Security" page at www.ericstates.org to learn more about how ERIC compares data.

2. Do members submit data from other state agencies, such as social service or health care departments?

No. Members submit only voter registration and MVD data. In addition to these two data sets, ERIC is certified to use the Limited Access Death Master File from the Social Security Administration and is a certified subscriber of National Change of Address data from the U.S. Postal Service. These are the only four data sets ERIC uses to provide services to its members.

3. Why does ERIC require members to submit sensitive data?

Members submit dates of birth, driver's license/ID card numbers, and Social Security numbers to ERIC after applying a cryptographic one-way hash to these data points. Hashed data is not human readable. ERIC only accepts voter registration and driver's license data files if these sensitive data points have been hashed.

These hashed data are included in the comparison and matching process because they are essential to accurately identifying voters who are no longer eligible to vote, have moved, are deceased, who may have voted illegally, or to identify potentially eligible but unregistered individuals. Because all states use the same cryptographic one-way hashing tool, these hashed data can still be compared against each other. Responsible, secure, and legally compliant use of these data ensure ERIC reports are more effective than reports prepared without using these data.

Refer to the "Technology and Security" page at www.ericstates.org to learn more about the cryptographic one-way hash and how members and ERIC protect the data we utilize.

4. What steps does ERIC take to keep data secure?

Data privacy and security is the top priority for ERIC and its members. ERIC's Bylaws and Membership Agreement include numerous provisions addressing the protection of the data ERIC utilizes and the reports ERIC creates for its members. ERIC also follows an Information Security Management Plan and extensive set of security policies and procedures approved by the Board of Directors annually. In 2017 and 2020, ERIC successfully completed a third-party review of how it handles protected data in the Social Security Limited Access Death Master File. In 2020, another independent cybersecurity assessment confirmed that ERIC complies with security standards.

Refer to the Bylaws and Membership Agreement on the "About ERIC" page and the review the "Technology and Security" page on our website at www.ericstates.org for more details about our approach to data security and these assessments.

5. Is the ERIC organization or its members permitted to share ERIC's List Maintenance and Eligible but Unregistered Reports with outside parties?

It depends on the report and applicable federal law. Because ERIC's List Maintenance reports (Cross-State Movers, In-State Updates, Duplicate, and Deceased reports) and Eligible but Unregistered Report are all generated using licensing and identification data from motor vehicle departments (MVD) and because ERIC additionally relies on Limited Access Death Master File ("LADMF") data to create the Deceased Report, the two federal laws of central concern to ERIC are the Driver's Privacy Protection Act ("DPPA") and Section 203 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 and associated regulations administered by the National Technical Information Service ("LADMF Regulations"). MVD data is generally protected against release under the DPPA. LADMF data is generally protected from release during the three-calendar year period starting from the date of death. The ERIC Bylaws and Membership Agreement include provisions intended to ensure compliance with these federal laws. What follows explains ERIC's position on how these laws apply to each of ERIC's List Maintenance reports and its Eligible but Unregistered Report. This same information is summarized in the attached chart.

In-State Updates, Cross-State Movers, and Eligible but Unregistered Reports and the DPPA:

These reports are created by comparing voter registration data with MVD data, and the reports themselves contain MVD data from motor vehicle records. Under the DPPA, these reports cannot be released unless a statutory exception applies.

In-State Duplicate and Deceased Reports and the DPPA:

MVD data plays an important role in creating these two ERIC list maintenance reports. Specifically, MVD data is used in the background to help strengthen the matches identified in these two reports, but such data does not actually appear in the reports. ERIC's position is that these two reports do not fall within the scope of the DPPA. This means members may, if they deem it appropriate, disclose data from the In-State Duplicate Reports and Deceased Reports (after the LADMF protection expires).

Deceased Report and the LADMF Regulations:

The National Technical Information Service has certified ERIC to receive LADMF data for the purpose of preparing Deceased Reports for member states. The LADMF Regulations define LADMF data as death master file data for individuals who died within the three-calendar period beginning on the date of death. By way of example, this means that if an individual died on March 3, 2022, their data is

protected until March 3, 2025. Once that period expires, the LADMF data becomes what the regulations call Open Access DMF data and is no longer protected. Therefore, under the LADMF regulations, neither ERIC nor its member are permitted to disclose data in the Deceased Reports within the three-year period of protection. Once that period expires, however, ERIC members may disclose unprotected data contained in Deceased Reports.

6. Has ERIC shared data with third parties for partisan purposes?

No. As a 501(c)(3), ERIC is prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office. ERIC complies with applicable IRS regulations and federal data handling laws.

In compliance with federal data handling laws, there has been independent research and evaluation of the effectiveness of the eligible but unregistered mailings and list maintenance reports. Independent evaluation is important to ensuring the organization is accomplishing its mission.

In 2018 and 2020 individual members voluntarily participated in third-party research projects to evaluate the effectiveness of the members' eligible but unregistered mailings. All members were invited to participate in these voluntary research projects, which were conducted in compliance with applicable federal data handling laws and IRS regulations governing 501(c)(3) organizations. ERIC acted as a secure pass-through for the data used in these projects, facilitating the secure transit of members' data at the members' request.

7. Is ERIC connected to state voter registration systems?

No. ERIC is never connected to any state's voter registration system. Members retain complete control over their voter rolls. Refer to the "Technology and Security" page on our website at www.ericstates.org to learn more about how members securely transmit data to ERIC and how members receive reports from ERIC in a secure manner.