

ERIC, Inc
Electronic Registration Information Center
1155 F Street NW Suite 1050
Washington DC 20004
www.ericstates.org



**Statement of
John W. Lindback
Executive Director
Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC)**

**Before the U.S. Senate
Committee on Rules and Administration**

**Hearing on
Election Administration:
Making Voter Rolls More Complete and More Accurate
April 9, 2014**

ERIC, Inc
Electronic Registration Information Center
1155 F Street NW Suite 1050
Washington DC 20004
www.ericstates.org



Executive Summary

Statement of John W. Lindback, Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC)
Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration
Hearing on Election Administration: Making Voter Rolls More Complete and More Accurate
April 9, 2014

The Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) is a non-profit consortium of state election agencies that launched operations in 2012. Nine states and the District of Columbia are currently members. The organization is self-supporting and self-governing. Each member state appoints a representative to the ERIC Board of Directors.

The mission of the organization is to improve the accuracy of voter registration records and improve access to voter registration for all US citizens. Research shows that one in eight voter registration records are inaccurate or out of date, usually because the voter has moved and failed to update his voter registration. Out-of-date and inaccurate records result in voters showing up at the wrong polling place, the necessity of using provisional ballots for some of those voters, and longer lines at the polls.

ERIC seeks to rectify these issues through the use of a sophisticated data-matching tool that compares voter registration records with a state's driver's license data base, Social Security death records, and change-of-address data from the U.S. Postal Service. ERIC is the only organization in the country providing comprehensive data matching for continuous and sustained maintenance of voter registration rolls. Privacy protocols govern the system, with all sensitive data anonymized to protect individual records.

On behalf of the seven states who were members in 2013, ERIC sent reports that identified about 1.6 million voters had moved from their address on file or had died or who had a duplicate registration within the same state. The states were able to contact the voters who had moved to encourage them to update their registrations.

ERIC was initially created and financed with contributions from the Pew Charitable Trusts. Its funding now consists only of member dues and the initial fee each state pays to join. The current annual budget is approximately \$500,000.

ERIC, Inc
Electronic Registration Information Center
1155 F Street NW Suite 1050
Washington DC 20004
www.ericstates.org



Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC). I am the Executive Director of ERIC, which was incorporated in May, 2012, as a non-profit consortium of elections agencies from seven states – Colorado, Delaware, Maryland, Nevada, Utah, Virginia, and Washington. The District of Columbia and Oregon joined ERIC at the beginning of 2014. Connecticut signed the membership agreement last week.

ERIC was formed with generous technical, financial, and organizational support from the Pew Charitable Trusts. It now stands as an independent, self-governing, and self-supporting organization. ERIC is governed by a board of directors with members representing each participating state. ERIC's bylaws and membership agreement are available on its website: www.ericstates.org

What does ERIC do?

It uses a sophisticated, data-matching tool that helps participating states identify voter registration records that are out-of-date or otherwise inaccurate. It also identifies individuals residing in a state who are not yet registered to vote, which enables elections officials to contact them with information on how to register.

States were moved to form ERIC when evidence continued to mount that one in eight voter registration records are inaccurate or out of date and that one in four Americans are not registered to vote. The most common reason that a voter registration becomes out of date is that the voter moves and fails to update his/her registration.

Inaccurate records contribute to bad experiences on election day: longer lines at the polls, voters showing up in the wrong polling place, provisional ballots, dissatisfied voters and frustrated elections officials. Pioneering leaders from seven states formed ERIC to clean up their records, improve access to voter registration, and improve the election-day experience.

The Presidential Commission on Election Administration recently endorsed state participation in ERIC to “ensure that voters are correctly registered at one location, that registration lists are more accurate and not a source of polling place congestion, and that these more accurate lists can assist in identifying individuals who are eligible to vote, but are not registered.” The commission stressed that an accurate voter registration list provides the foundation for any well-run election.

ERIC, Inc
Electronic Registration Information Center
1155 F Street NW Suite 1050
Washington DC 20004
www.ericstates.org



ERIC’s Data Matching Process

ERIC uses sophisticated data-matching technology to match records from each participating state’s voter registration and driver licensing databases. It also matches the data against Social Security Administration death records and has checked data using National Change of Address information from the U.S. Postal Service. The technology is able to catch simple transpositions of numbers and name variations between different data bases, such as a person who uses the name “Robert” in one database and “Bob” in another.

Sensitive data are anonymized before leaving a participating state’s control, thus protecting the privacy of citizens.

ERIC’s Reports to the States

ERIC matches all the data submitted and sends reports back to the states that identify individuals who have moved within a state, individuals who have moved across state lines, duplicate registrations within a state, deceased individuals still on the voter rolls, and individuals who are potentially eligible to vote but not yet registered. State officials then contact those who have moved and encourage them to update their registrations (in-state movers) or permit cancellation of their registrations in their previous state. When deceased voters are identified, states can begin the process of removal from the rolls. All the states are required, of course, to follow voter inactivation and record cancellation procedures as mandated by the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA).

The numbers so far are both encouraging and impressive. The following chart shows the total number of inaccurate or out-of-date voter registration records identified to the seven original participating states, as of February, 2014:

List maintenance report type	Records sent to states
In-state movers (More recent activity in DMV record)	1,295,405
Cross-state movers (More recent registration or license in other state)	227,596
Deceased (Appears on Social Security Death Index records)	47,263
Duplicates (Duplicate voter records in the same state)	28,986
Total	1,599,250

In addition, ERIC has identified for participating states the names and addresses of 6.1 million individuals who were not registered to vote. That list is derived from matching each state’s voter registration list against its DMV list and reporting back the names and addresses of individuals who have a driver’s license or state-issued ID but are not on the voter registration list. Participating states contacted these individuals with information on how to register.

ERIC, Inc
Electronic Registration Information Center
1155 F Street NW Suite 1050
Washington DC 20004
www.ericstates.org



ERIC's costs and cost-savings:

Each participating state pays a one-time, \$25,000, initiation fee to join and annual dues to support a budget of approximately \$500,000. The annual dues formula, adopted by the Board of Directors, currently includes as factors the size of each state's voting-eligible population, and the number of ERIC members (10). Thus, large states pay a bit more than small states.

ERIC states enjoy cost savings that help offset the dues. ERIC, for example, purchases Social Security Death Index data and NCOA data on behalf of all its members while non-ERIC states pay for it individually. Also, more accurate voter registration lists result in less wasted postage on returned mail, less waste when sending out sample ballots or other voting information, fewer provisional ballots, and other election-day savings that help reduce costs.

Success stories

ERIC states are required by the membership agreement to help document results of ERIC's work. Early results reveal significant progress. Judd Choate, the Director of Elections from Colorado, is here today to talk about his state. Lori Augino, the Director of Elections in Washington, reported to her fellow ERIC states last week that her staff has successfully updated 53,000 voter registration records since they first received ERIC list maintenance reports last year. Previous to joining ERIC the Washington Secretary of State's Office had been routinely matching its voter registration list against the Social Security Death Index. Because ERIC's matching software is more powerful and sophisticated in catching name variations and number variations, ERIC identified 834 deceased individuals on Washington voter rolls that the state's more rudimentary matching had missed.

Research Triangle Institute researchers studied the results of voter outreach mailings sent to individuals who were identified by ERIC in 2012 as not yet registered to vote. The study's findings included the following:

- Total voter registration: ERIC states showed a net improvement in voter registration of 1.23 percentage points over non-ERIC states.
- New voter registration: ERIC states showed a net improvement in new registration of 0.87 percentage points over non-ERIC states.
- Voter turnout: ERIC states showed a net increase in voter turnout of 2.36 percentage points over non-ERIC states.
- Voter file errors: State officials found that the data ERIC makes available enable them to make valuable corrections to birthdates and other fields in voter files.

The full results of the RTI study: <http://www.rti.org/publications/abstract.cfm?pubid=21769>

ERIC, Inc
Electronic Registration Information Center
1155 F Street NW Suite 1050
Washington DC 20004
www.ericstates.org



ERIC's next stages:

The ERIC states, with the assistance of the Pew Charitable Trusts and others who specialize in research, will continue to document results and cost savings that result from ERIC membership. We continue also to actively recruit more states to join. States such as North Carolina, South Carolina, Arizona and Ohio have all adopted legislation that enables them to share data and join ERIC. Other states are pursuing legislation now, including Louisiana, Minnesota, and Illinois. We field phone calls and emails regularly from states seeking information on requirements, benefits and costs of membership.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to talk to you today about our organization and the positive contribution it's making to better elections in America. I look forward to continuing to work with your committee on issues related to voter registration in the states. I am happy to answer questions about ERIC.

ERIC, Inc
Electronic Registration Information Center
1155 F Street NW Suite 1050
Washington DC 20004
www.ericstates.org



Bio

John Lindback
Executive Director

John Lindback is the Executive Director of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a consortium of states using state-of-the-art technology to improve the accuracy of their voter registration rolls and improve access to voter registration for US citizens. He is the first executive director of ERIC, which was formed in May, 2012 by seven pioneering states.

Much of his 20-history in the field of elections administration has been dedicated to making voter registration work better for both voters and elections officials.

Prior to joining ERIC, Lindback served as a senior officer for Election Initiatives at the Pew Charitable Trusts, providing key leadership on Pew's portfolio of work in election administration, including research and reform efforts to improve military and overseas voting; assess election performance through better data; use of technology to provide voters with information they need to cast a ballot; and upgrading voter registration systems. As a lead on Pew's work to upgrade voter registration, Lindback successfully encouraged state and local elections officials to join the Pew team and other stakeholders in identifying solutions to the problems of inaccuracy, inefficiency and high costs of voter registration in the states. He met with elections officials throughout the nation to provide results of key research, explain the solutions and urge state and local action.

Prior to joining Pew, Lindback worked for 14 years in state elections administration. He served for eight years as director of elections in Oregon, which made him the chief administrator for the conduct of all elections in Oregon, the state's campaign finance system and Oregon's ubiquitous and contentious initiative and referendum process. During his tenure with the Oregon Secretary of State he was elected president in 2008 of the National Association of State Elections Directors. He was also elected to serve on the executive board of the U.S. Elections Assistance Commission's Standards Advisory Board. Prior to his work in Oregon, John worked as chief of staff to the lieutenant governor of Alaska for six years, which included administrative oversight of the Alaska Division of Elections. In addition, he served on a National Academy of Sciences panel that studied state voter registration databases. Since 2006, John has volunteered as an advisor to Design for Democracy, an organization that assists elections officials with designing voter-friendly ballots and other elections materials.

Lindback holds a B.A. degree in journalism (1976) from the University of Arizona.