
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission



Special Report:
**Review of Selected Issues in the Virginia
Election and Registration Information System**

Commission Briefing

June 9, 2008



JLARC

Study Mandate

- In January 2008, the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee requested that JLARC staff review two concerns regarding the Virginia Election Registration and Information System (VERIS) raised by the Voter Registrars Association of Virginia

In This Presentation

- Registrars' Concern: Use of USPS Data to Validate Addresses Creates Errors
- Registrars' Concern: Duplication of Social Security Numbers Could Result in Improper Registrations
- Additional Registrars' Concern: VERIS Relies Too Heavily on Local Staff for Decision-Making



Registrars' Concern: Use of US Postal Service Data to Verify Voter Addresses Creates Errors

- The verification process automatically corrects the address information entered by the registrar

Original Address: Suite 101, 200 North 9th Street

Verified Address: 200 N 9TH ST STE 101

- After verifying the address, VERIS automatically assigns the precinct and district for that address
- However, if errors exist in USPS data, the automatic address corrections will be incorrect
 - This may require precinct & district information to be assigned manually

Address Errors May Lead to Human Errors in Assigning Precincts and Districts

- Because of human error, the VRAV is concerned that some voters may be disenfranchised
- If voter goes to the wrong polling place, SBE asserts that provisional ballot would be available
- However, statute does not indicate remedy if wrong polling place is assigned
 - Statute addresses questions of eligibility to vote, not questions of where to vote

Accuracy of US Postal System Data May Affect Many Other State Agencies

- USPS data are based on information provided by local governments
 - Road naming is local function under § 15.2-2019 of the *Code of Virginia*
 - Local governments are not required to follow USPS naming standards
- Address overrides result from USPS errors but also other causes
 - Confusion about official road names: is the Governor's Mansion on a **Square** called "Capitol" or on a **road** called "Capitol Square"?

Recommendations

- SBE should review § 24.2-653 of the *Code of Virginia* regarding provisional ballots and make any necessary recommendations to ensure voters are not disenfranchised because of erroneous precinct assignments
- Registrars should inform USPS of known errors in its database, and local governments should consider adopting USPS address standards
- SBE should implement a secondary address database (alias file) to reduce errors

Registrars' Concern: Lack of Unique SSNs Could Result in Improper Registrations

- Social Security number (SSN) is no longer used as a voter's unique registration number
- However, VERIS allows registrars to enter more than one person with the same SSN
 - Statewide, 0.03% of voter records have duplicate SSNs
 - VRAV is concerned that election fraud could result
- Several options could be used to reduce duplication:
 - Modification of VERIS
 - Use of software interface to verify each SSN
 - Use of existing tools available to registrars

Recommendations

- SBE should consider modifying VERIS to enforce the uniqueness of each SSN, or implement an interface with DMV to verify each SSN
- SBE should direct registrars to more quickly eliminate duplicate records. SBE should also work with local registrars and electoral boards to develop consistent statewide procedures to verify the validity of SSNs, and to resolve duplications where sufficient time may not exist to confirm validity prior to an election

Registrars' Concern: VERIS Relies Too Heavily on Local Staff for Decision-Making

- Differences in how VERIS processes information have reduced confidence among some registrars
- Decision to require registrars to make certain decisions reflects policy choice by SBE
- However, registrars believe this does not reflect reality of dependence upon temporary staff
- SBE should modify VERIS to aid decision-making, and provide training that is tailored to different skill levels

Recommendations

- SBE should consider modifying VERIS to automatically transfer or re-register a voter when there is a 100 percent match on Social Security number, date of birth, gender, and full name and the voter is not on a list of prohibited voters
- SBE should consider modifying VERIS to provide field-level security or provide training on the use of VERIS that is appropriately matched to more than one level of skill and experience

Key Findings

- Registrars' concerns regarding verification of street addresses will require State and local action
- Registrars' concerns about SSNs may require modification of VERIS and implementation of procedures to resolve duplication
- SBE should take steps to better accommodate the registrars' use of temporary staff by either modifying VERIS or providing more tailored training

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For More Information

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Copies of these slides are available on our website
and on the table by the door.

