February 1, 2024

The Honorable Craig Hickman, Senate Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

The Honorable Laura Supica**,** House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
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Dear Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and Members of the Committee,

Maine election law, Title 21-A section 195, requires the Secretary of State to report annually "on the administration of the central voter registration system and the automatic voter registration system". The law permits that the report "may include suggested legislation necessary to administer the central voter registration system and the automatic voter registration system". The following is the required report covering calendar year 2023.

Appendix A of this report provides a description of the Central Voter Registration (CVR) system and its benefits, as well as information and statistics on voter registration and a summary of CVR management and maintenance activities and statistics for 2023. This data provides valuable insight into a major tool of election administration – indeed the backbone – of Maine's voter registration, absentee voting and election results tracking and reporting system.

The CVR is a statewide system for maintaining voter registration and election information by state and local election officials. Implemented in 2007, in compliance with the Help America Vote Act of 2002 and state law, Maine's customized CVR is a highly secure uniform registration software application and database that allows for local control of data input, while providing central oversight and management of data accuracy. It is worthwhile to take note that the application and database have had an extremely low incidence of system downtime.

Data in the CVR is never static. The database is being accessed and updated on a daily basis by state and local election administrators in response to information received from voters and reliable data maintenance sources such as death records and notices of cancellation from election administrators in other jurisdictions.

However, as with any tool, the CVR must be maintained and used by humans. Accordingly, the effectiveness of the CVR is dependent upon the diligence of users to accurately enter, maintain and report on the voter registration data it contains, as well as the voters themselves to provide complete and accurate information on the voter registration application or change forms. As such, any deficiencies in the voter registration data are attributable to human clerical omissions and errors.

To help improve and maintain data integrity, the Elections Division personnel monitor CVR data; plan and execute periodic, system-wide, non-discriminatory data maintenance activities as required by the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA); and provide guidance and training to a constantly changing set of local election officials in more than 500 municipalities. As further described in Appendix A, the Secretary of State is a member of the Electronic Registration Information Center, Inc. (ERIC), which provides for the periodic sharing of voter information between the ERIC member states to enable list maintenance activities. 2023 ERIC-related data maintenance activities are detailed in Appendix A.

Although municipal and state users access CVR via the internet, no users have direct access to the application or database servers. All user access is strictly controlled via complex passwords and defined user roles and permissions. Users connect to the web server, which is accessible via a web link. The web server connects to the application server, which is located in the Secretary of State's Data Center and is protected by the state's firewall system. Only the application server can access the database via a private network with the database server located in the Secretary of State's Data Center.

Technology modernization is a vital consideration when it comes to protecting the integrity and security of voter registration information. It has been almost seventeen years since the CVR's implementation and the Department has taken steps towards replacing the existing system with a new, more modern software application and database. As a result of a Request for Proposals (RFP) issued in October of 2021, a vendor was selected and a contract fully executed on April 15, 2022. Since that time, staff from the Elections Division and the Information Services Division have been diligently working to develop the requirements for the new system and test functionality as it is developed. We anticipate deployment of the new system this year.

Data related to the successful administration of automatic voter registration at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles is provided in Appendix A. Automatic voter registration has been convenient not only to Maine citizens seeking to register or update their registration but also to clerks seeking to keep accurate, up-to-date voter information. Online voter registration is scheduled for deployment by February 1, 2024, and we will track data for online voter registrations in the coming year.

I look forward to working with you as our Department continues to uphold the integrity and security of Maine elections through faithful and diligent maintenance of a secure CVR system. Please feel free to contact me at (207) 626-8400 if I can provide you with any additional information or assistance.

Sincerely,

Shenna Bellows
Secretary of State

Description of the Central Voter Registration (CVR) System

The CVR is a statewide system for maintaining voter registration and election information by State and local election officials, which was implemented in 2007 in compliance with the Help America Vote Act of 2002 and state law. The CVR consists of a highly modified, proprietary software application (called *ElectioNet)*, developed and supported by a vendor, CIVIX (formerly PCC Technology, Inc.); and an Oracle database that is maintained by the Department of the Secretary of State in the Department's secure data center. The application is accessed by municipal clerks and registrars, as well as State elections staff, over the internet. Updates and changes are made in real time and are immediately visible to authorized staff, as well as available for reports pursuant to the law. However, CVR is not available to municipal election officials on Election Day except for inquiries, updating absentee information, and printing reports. New voter records or changes to existing voter records must not be done on Election Day. They must be done within 15 business days following the election. This is to ensure that a data entry error would not incorrectly remove a voter's record from the municipality of registration on Election Day.

Clerks and registrars in over 500 municipalities are primarily responsible for individual voter record maintenance, including: adding new voter records, updating records with address changes, party changes, or other changes; and entering voter participation history (i.e., the voters who voted at an election). The CVR is the electronic software application and database that enables these municipal clerks and registrars to maintain voter registration records and to administer key election management activities, such as issuing and tracking absentee ballots and printing the incoming voting lists for Election Day.

State election officials conduct system-wide data maintenance efforts and batch updates as allowed by law. Consequently, the success and accuracy of the CVR relies not only on the Department's performance of its system maintenance duties, but also on the accurate and timely use of the system by municipal clerks and registrars.

Benefits of the CVR

The Department and municipal election officials are able to realize the benefits of an integrated software application and database for maintaining voter registration data. Municipal election officials have a functional voter registration system that requires no local licensing or maintenance fees, and that facilitates voter registration and election activities.

The CVR allows clerks and registrars to share information through the use of electronic notices, so that when a voter registers in a new municipality, the voter's old record may be updated by the election official in the new municipality, and automatically removed from the municipality of prior registration, saving the election officials both time and mailing costs.

The CVR also allows the Department to more efficiently complete activities that were once left to municipalities to perform. These activities include biennial mandatory federal reporting of voter registration statistics and Election Day voting information; and the conduct of voter list maintenance functions required by the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA). The Department routinely works with municipalities to identify and remove records of deceased voters, voters who have moved, and duplicate voter records.

Voter Registration Statistics and Activities

As of January 17, 2024, Maine has 948,734 active status voters and 200,313 inactive status voters. Statewide. Active status registered voters comprise over 83% of Maine's Voting Age Population (VAP) of 1,137,442. The Voting Age Population figure is derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's July 1, 2022 population estimates.

In 2023, municipal election clerks and registrars across the State processed a total of 73,357 voter registration applications (which represents about 8% of the current Active voter registration records); resulting in 25,858 new voter registration records and 47,499 changes to existing voter registration records (including 18,536 moves to new municipalities and 28,963 changes of other information).

The CVR also was used to process over 112,000 absentee ballot requests for the November 7, 2023 General Election, including over 2,300 ballot requests processed by the Elections Division for the Uniformed Service and Overseas Voters (UOCAVA). UOCAVA voters were able to request ballots using mail, fax, email and the online Absentee Ballot Request (ABR) service; and to return their ballots via mail, fax, or as a scanned image attached to an email.

Routine Data Maintenance Statistics for 2023

State or municipal election officials performed individual and statewide, routine, periodic voter list maintenance activities that resulted in records of voters being designated as cancelled for the following reasons:
o   12,992 – voters deceased
o   1,322 – duplicate records
o   N/A – voters inactive for 2 federal general elections
o   25,208 – voters moved from the municipality of registration
o   2 – registrar hearing determined voters ineligible
o   241 – voter requested removal from list
    39,765 – Total records cancelled due to required voter list maintenance activities

Summary of Routine Data Maintenance Statistics from June 2007 to the Present

The following is a summary of the routine data maintenance statistics from June 2007 to the end of 2023, reflecting the total number of voter records cancelled from the database to date:
o   185,919 – voters deceased
o   48,982 – duplicate records
o   112,623 – voters inactive for 2 federal general elections
o   306,541 – voters moved from the municipality of registration
o   1,286 – registrar hearing determined voters ineligible
o   6,803– voter requested removal from list
    662,154 – Total records cancelled due to required voter list maintenance activities

The ERIC Program and Other Statewide Data Maintenance Activities in 2022

Pursuant to Public Laws of 2021, Chapter 398, Parts UUUU-1 and UUUU-6) the Secretary of State applied for membership to the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) in August of 2021 and was accepted and fully onboarded into the program in January of 2022.

In 2023, State staff processed 2 reports from the ERIC program – the federal death records report (Maine voters who died out of state) and the duplicate records report. The voters cancelled as a result of these efforts are included in the numbers of records processed in 2023 and reported on the previous page of this report.

Ongoing Obligations, Improvements and Enhancements

Help Desk

In addition to its election specific CVR activity, the Department has ongoing responsibilities to maintain the system and provide support to its municipal partners. The Department maintains and staffs a toll-free Help Desk line to assist municipal clerks and registrars and offers annual refresher training. In 2023, CVR staff logged 1,229 non-security related calls to the Help Desk. Of these calls, 721 calls (59%) related to voter registration, enrollment and absentee voting functions. There were another 347 calls (28%) related to scanning and reporting functions and maintaining municipal data (i.e., maintaining Street Libraries and Elections and managing CVR user accounts) and 161 calls (13%) related to requests for CVR data and processing Voter Participation History (VPH). Additionally, CVR staff and management handled 627 calls related to CVR security, most related to password assistance.

Administration of the Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) System

Background

Pursuant to Public Laws of 2019, Chapter 409, the Secretary of State implemented Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) on June 21, 2022.

The BMV offers AVR to each eligible, in-person applicant who applies for, renews or updates a driver's license or nondriver identification card in-person at the BMV and to each in-person applicant for other services who has a valid driver's license or nondriver identification card and also is eligible to vote. An applicant is eligible to vote if they provide or previously have provided proof of voter eligibility (i.e., age, citizenship and residency) to the BMV.

Overview of the AVR Process at the BMV

The applicant completes the BMV transaction, providing or updating the information needed for the BMV transaction, including proof of age, citizenship and residency (if not already provided). Before the BMV agent concludes the transaction, if the applicant is eligible, the applicant will be sent a message on the pin pad at the BMV service window and asked if they want to continue with AVR. If the applicant chooses not to continue, the applicant is directed to complete the BMV transaction and no AVR pending voter record is created. If the applicant chooses to continue to AVR, the pin pad will display, on successive screens, the information that is in the BMV record so that the applicant can confirm the

accuracy of the information. This includes the applicant's name and date of birth, the physical (residence) address, and the mailing address of the applicant.

Next, the applicant will be presented with screens to collect the additional information needed to complete the voter registration transaction, including:
- Whether the applicant has previously been registered to vote, and to provide the location of previous registration, if applicable;
- Whether the applicant wishes to make an enrollment choice (with an option to either choose a party or to choose unenrolled);
- Whether the applicant recently has had a change of name, and to provide the previous name, if applicable;
- Whether the applicant wishes to provide a telephone number (which is optional information that will only be used for election administration); and
- Requests the applicant to sign their name on the pin pad and click the submit button to save the AVR pending voter record.

At the end of each day, all AVR pending voter records submitted that day are put into a batch and saved in a shared file that is accessible to the CVR application.

Overview of the Process in the CVR System

The CVR has a nightly procedure that goes out to the shared file and picks up the batched AVR pending voter records from that day's BMV transactions and inserts the records into a holding table in the CVR database. The CVR then runs a search process to compare the municipality name from each AVR record and match it to the list of valid municipality names in CVR. If the name is matched, the AVR record is moved into that municipality's Reminder Screen (dashboard) for processing by the municipality. If the municipality does not match, the AVR record is routed to the State Queue (i.e., the Elections Division) for resolution. The mismatch may occur because the voter is from an unorganized township, or because the town name is misspelled, or because the applicant used the name of a Village within the municipality rather than the municipality name (e.g., Springvale instead of Sanford). The Elections Division will correct the errors in the record and route it back to the municipality's queue for processing. A separate process creates a PDF image of a voter registration application that is pre-filled with the voter information for each AVR record in the municipality's batch, so that there is a copy of each voter registration card image to print and place in the voter registration card file.

AVR Statistics for 2023

There were 18,366 completed AVR transactions at BMV that created pending voter records and transmitted them to CVR. These registration numbers already are included in the Voter Registration Statistics and Activities section on page 2 of this Appendix and comprise 25% of the total voter registration transactions for the year. There were 30,068 BMV applicants who opted out of continuing to the AVR transaction. However, this is not surprising considering the high percentage of Maine's eligible population who already are registered to vote at their place of current residence. Moreover, a large number of BMV transactions do not involve a change of name or address, thus, there would be no need for these applicants to update their voter registration through AVR. There also were 3,543 AVR transactions where the applicant cancelled during the transaction. Our current AVR hardware at BMV does not allow us to capture the reason why the transaction was cancelled or at what point in the

transaction it was cancelled or even whether the transaction was re-started and resulted in a completed AVR. A common reason a transaction may be cancelled is that the BMV data presented to the applicant might have an error. In this case, the BMV agent must cancel out of the AVR screens, correct the data in the BMV database, then route the applicant back to the AVR transaction. Certainly, in these instances, we want the applicant's name, date of birth, residence and mailing address information to be accurate both in the BMV database as well as in any subsequent AVR transaction.

Of the 18,366 completed AVR registration applications, 11,177 resulted in new voter registration records, while 5,137 represented changes to existing voter registration records (including 2,818 moves to new municipalities and 2,319 changes of other information); and 477 records designated as "no change" or "duplicate application". Additionally, there were 1,575 AVR records in the municipal queues (not yet processed as of December 31), but which already have been or will be processed in 2024.