

Oregon Secretary of State identifies nine potentially ineligible voters with improper registration records

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Following DMV review of all relevant records, Oregon Secretary of State identifies nine potentially ineligible voters with improper registration records

DMV implements fix to automatic voter registration system ahead of 2024 election

Salem, OR – Today, the Oregon Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division (DMV) and the Oregon Secretary of State (SoS) identified a total of nine potentially ineligible voters with voting histories who were improperly registered without proving citizenship due to a data processing error at Oregon DMV. Oregon DMV has concluded the review of the records affected. Of the individuals potentially registered to vote in error, 10 have a voting history; however, one of the 10 has been confirmed to be an eligible voter, therefore the total number of potentially ineligible voters as a result of the error is nine.

The SoS ordered the inactivation of another 953 voter registrations today, in addition to 306 inactivations on Sept. 13 as a result of the same error. The people in this group of 1,259 will not receive a ballot for the 2024 election but will be given the opportunity to re-register if eligible with adequate time to do so prior to the election.

“Because of this quick response, I can assure Oregonians that the 2024 General Election will not be affected by this error in any way,” said Secretary of State LaVonne Griffin-Valade. “Noncitizen voting remains exceedingly rare in Oregon and around the country. We can continue to be proud that automatic voter registration is just one of the ways we ensure eligible Oregonians have the opportunity to exercise their right to vote.”

“As a partner to Oregon’s Secretary of State, Oregon DMV is proud of the role it plays in helping U.S. citizens engage in our elections,” said Amy Joyce, DMV administrator. “We identified a rare but important anomaly that we have now corrected. We regret this situation occurred, but we are relieved that our swift action allowed DMV and the Secretary of State to correct the issue before the coming election. We are committed to strengthening the accessibility and reliability of our elections.”

The issue by the numbers:

- 766,756 people have registered to vote through Oregon Motor Voter.
- 1,259 people impacted by the data processing error (0.1% of the total number of OMV records transferred).
- 9 people potentially ineligible to vote with a voting history that were subject to the error.
- 1.4 million records reviewed to ensure the error was corrected.

Steps taken by DMV and SoS to address the error:

DMV reviewed a universe of 1.4 million records associated with the issuance, renewal or replacement of a standard credential after Jan. 1, 2021. This coding error only occurred after Jan. 1, 2021, because that is the operative date when the list of eligible identification documents expanded to include foreign passports and birth certificates.

REAL ID is an optional form of identification that meets federal requirements for air travel that will go into effect in May 2025. These credentials were also not included in the scope of review because the process does not allow use of foreign passports or birth certificates to prove identity, the source documents must be scanned into the system and images verified, and all U.S. passports for REAL ID are run through the U.S. Passport Verification System for validation.

The DMV identified and transmitted the records of all 1,259 individuals potentially registered to vote in error to the SoS Monday. Upon receiving the data, the SoS ordered the inactivation of all voters on the list and immediately communicated to those individuals with the opportunity to re-register if eligible with adequate time to do so prior to the election. The last day to register to vote is Oct. 15. No individual from this group of voters will receive a ballot if they are not eligible to vote.

The Oregon Secretary of State has analyzed the records provided by DMV that were identified as incorrectly eligible for automatic voter registration. The SoS has identified 10 individuals as having a voting history. Importantly, this does not mean those individuals were not U.S. citizens at the time they voted – just that they were incorrectly identified by DMV as eligible for voter registration. Of the 10 individuals identified as having a voting history, SoS has already confirmed that at least one was indeed an eligible U.S. citizen when they voted.

How the error occurred:

Oregon DMV issues driver's licenses, instructional permits and identification cards. Pursuant to Oregon’s Motor Voter Law (2016), DMV is required to transfer data of customers who show proof of citizenship to the SoS Elections Division. Upon receipt, they are considered complete voter registration cards.

DMV identified possible, though unlikely, causes for error. One example was DMV staff inadvertently selecting “U.S. passport” when the document was a foreign passport. The other example was inadvertently selecting “U.S. birth certificate” when the document was a foreign birth certificate. Because having a U.S. version of either of those documents means a person is a citizen, the system included them in the file DMV sent to the Elections Division.

The review was prompted when the Institute for Responsive Government called ODOT’s Information Systems branch asking how automatic voter registration was going generally and inquired whether they were experiencing any issues. Due to the critical importance of the issue, DMV exercised due diligence and looked into the automatic voter registration process ahead of the 2024 election.

Process changes to prevent future errors:

DMV has instituted corrective actions to address the technical issues that resulted in those errors. These fixes include:

1. Data entry procedure: The database drop-down menu that provides identity document options has been re-sorted alphabetically so U.S. passport is not the first, default document. This reduces the potential of selecting an incorrect document from the top of the menu as the default.
2. Require Entering State and County on U.S. Birth Certificates: DMV staff are now required to enter the state and county for all U.S. birth certificates. Adding this step decreases the likelihood that a foreign birth certificate will be misidentified as a U.S. birth certificate.
3. Confirmation prompt: DMV added a confirmation prompt after a U.S. passport document is keyed into the system, so DMV staff need to confirm the documentation type is accurate.
4. Added a third step to the verification process: DMV has added a third step to the identity document verification process. The two-step process that has been in place for years is the initial check of the staff and then a re-verification of document validity by someone else. As a third step, each day the manager also compares each transaction’s system code to its scanned document to verify the entry in the system matches the document shown. This will catch instances where one type of document—such as a foreign passport—is noted on the form but a different type of document—such as a U.S. passport—is keyed into the system.

For more information on the issue, please review these [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

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