



May 25, 2023

Frank LaRose
 Secretary of State of Ohio
 22 North Fourth Street
 Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: Open Letter: Secretary LaRose, Explain Next Steps Pertaining to ERIC

Dear Secretary LaRose:

Democracy works best when all voters trust the election process and participate. To achieve this, it is imperative that voters feel that the voter rolls are maintained with integrity and that their personal data is secure. Governmental officials at all levels must discourage and actively combat misinformation and disinformation that can diminish trust in institutions fundamental to our democracy.

The Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) has been an effective tool for removing people from the voter rolls who are ineligible while also ensuring that voters who are eligible but

not yet registered are added to the rolls. ERIC has earned the trust of many, because it can reliably ensure that voters are not removed in error, nor are they trying to game the system.¹

As leaders of organizations focused on ensuring that the election process works for all voters, we were alarmed by your March 17th announcement that Ohio is terminating its membership with ERIC.² Your statement contrasted greatly with comments you made just weeks before in an interview with NPR where you called ERIC "one of the best tools that we have for maintaining the accuracy of our voter files."³ Your stated rationale for the departure also left us with many questions.⁴

The notion that ERIC has partisan leanings is not substantiated by evidence. The system was founded in 2012 by a bipartisan group of seven election directors, four of whom were Republican, and it is still controlled by bipartisan state election officials. ERIC has a long history of being used in Republican and Democratic-controlled states and has been endorsed by organizations representing every shade of the ideological spectrum due to its unprecedented ability to help keep voter lists secure and accurate.⁵ Additionally, a representative of your office is the immediate past Chair of ERIC. The lack of any public statements regarding the alleged improprieties of ERIC, while your office was leading the organization, further undermines the legitimacy of your recent allegations against ERIC.

ERIC has very strong security measures in place: it follows specific and extensive security protocols detailed in its bylaws, and a board of cybersecurity experts evaluates and advises the program as part of its Privacy and Technology Advisory Board.⁶ Furthermore, there have been no credible documented instances of vulnerabilities or irregularities. ERIC does not email sensitive voter data or store the data on an unprotected server, as was the case with controversial efforts like the Kansas-based Crosscheck.⁷ These unsubstantiated claims appear to be part of an orchestrated smear campaign – rooted in conspiracy theories and election denialism – designed to undermine democratic institutions while convincing officials to leave ERIC.

There is currently no viable alternative to ERIC, and previous efforts to create an interstate matching program, such as Crosscheck, failed and resulted in thousands of voters being wrongly identified for removal from voter rolls. This led to election officials wasting hours wading through low-quality, unactionable data and millions of taxpayer dollars defending a failed

¹ [Shaker Heights man indicted for 2020 voter fraud; Ohio has since left system that caught him](#)

² [Ohio Secretary of State Week in Review for the Week Ending March 24, 2023](#)

³ [Ohio becomes latest Republican state to leave a key voting data partnership](#)

⁴ [Ohio Secretary of State Week in Review for the Week Ending March 24, 2023](#)

⁵ [The Heritage Foundation, R Street Institute, John Locke Foundation, the Council on State Governments, Bipartisan Policy Center, National Association of Secretaries of State, Issue One, Secure Democracy USA, Verified Voting, and the Brennan Center for Justice.](#)

⁶ [Security - Eric States](#)

⁷ [The Voter Fraud Commission Wants Your Data — But Experts Say They Can't Keep It Safe — ProPublica](#)

⁸ [Multistate voter database suspended in lawsuit settlement | AP News](#)

insecure system in the court of law.⁹ Developing a new system comparable to ERIC is going to be extremely expensive, and unnecessary. No other system that currently exists aggregates as much data from so many states and so many government agencies in one place. You confirmed that Shaker Heights' James Dalton Saunders was flagged for voting in both Ohio and Florida in the 2020 and 2022 general elections, through the ERIC program.

We sincerely want to know how are you planning to ensure that:

- 1) voters are not casting ballots in multiple states, and
- 2) voter rolls are kept clean and up to date without harming eligible voters.

Due to the concerns expressed in this letter, we request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to better understand the basis for your position, as well as how the state plans to handle functions formerly provided by ERIC relating to the maintenance of voter rolls moving forward. We believe that ERIC is currently the best system available to ensure the security and accuracy of our voter registration lists and we seek to ensure that any new processes set up to replace ERIC do not compromise voter privacy or lead to voters being improperly removed. Additionally, we would like to know what your outreach plans will be to eligible unregistered voters now that this outreach is no longer required through the ERIC membership agreement as well as whether you anticipate any issues with the legislature funding voter outreach and list matching efforts.

Free and fair elections are the hallmark of our democracy. It is critical that the state ensure voter rolls are maintained in a fair manner, using the best available technology to do so, and in full transparency. While we are frustrated by your decision to withdraw Ohio from ERIC, we remain eager to work with you and your team to ensure that elections are free, fair, and accessible for all Ohioians. Thank you and we look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,



Kayla Griffin, Esq.

Ohio State Director

All Voting is Local / All Voting is Local Action

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⁹ [This anti-voter-fraud program gets it wrong over 99 percent of the time. The GOP wants to take it nationwide. - The Washington Post](#)

Donna Plunkett	A New Vision for Ohio: A Model Democratic Republic
Anastasia Martinez	Ohio Women's Alliance
Amanda Kiger	River Valley Organizing
Laura Kuntz	National Council of Jewish Women/Cleveland
Chris Tavenor	The Ohio Environmental Council
Rebecca Slisher	Southeast Progressives of Franklin County
Dan Clark	Faith in Public Life
Emily Cole	Ohio Families Unite for Political Action and Change
Pastor Hank Osmundson	Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio
Ray Greene Jr	Freedom BLOC
Jaladah Aslam	Youngstown Warren Black Caucus
Rev. Dr. Susan K Smith	Crazy Faith Ministries
Cindy Demse	Cuyahoga Democratic Women's Caucus
Victoria Hickcox	CAIR-Ohio
Rex. Susan Ritchie	North Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr.	The Ohio Council of Churches
Sara Kilpatrick	Ohio Conference AAUP
C Stonebraker-Martinez	InterReligious Task Force on Central America
Louise Valentine	LEAD Ohio
Beverly Wright	Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District
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