

For Immediate Release
June 7, 2016

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The District of Columbia Voter File Needs Improvement

Washington D.C. – The District’s independent Board of Elections needs to do a better job of scrubbing the list of eligible voters, including removing duplicate and deceased voters, to improve election administration and comply with federal and local election law, according to a new report by the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor (ODCA).

“The new leadership at the Board of Elections has a pretty hefty to-do list, which they’ve acknowledged,” said DC Auditor Kathy Patterson, adding that executive branch agencies -- particularly the Department of Motor Vehicles – also must take action to comply with federal election law. The Auditor reviewed federal and District law and regulations, as well as best practices outlined by the Presidential Commission on Election Administration and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

“The Board has taken steps in the right direction,” Patterson noted, citing the 2014 decision to join the Election Registration Information Center, an interstate compact that allows states to share data and improve accuracy of registration lists, and a mailing earlier this year that enabled the Board to remove 6,000 names of individuals now living outside the District.

The report notes that the District has never fully complied with the 1993 National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), also known as “motor voter,” because forms used by the DMV and shared with the Board require duplicate sets of information such as address and birthdate. The report recommends that the Board work with the mayor and executive branch agencies so they can develop the capacity for real-time electronic transmission of voter registration information to the Board.

The Auditor found that the District has met these legal requirements or best practices:

- Adopted on-line voter registration
- Conducted a biennial voter canvass
- Removed incarcerated felons from the voter file

The Auditor found the Board has not fully complied with these statutory requirements:

- Correct inaccurate birth years
- Secure monthly reports of decedents and remove them from the voter file
- Remove duplicate voter registrations

Under the NVRA and District law, certain agencies that provide services to individual residents are required to assist with voter registration, and the report cites mixed results among the District agencies. The Department of Corrections and Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services have complied with voter registration requirements. Agencies that are not fully compliant or could not fully document their compliance include the Office on Aging, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Human Services' Economic Security Administration, the Department of Health's Women, Infants and Children program, and the Department of Disability Services.

The Board of Elections was given an opportunity to comment on the draft report, but asked to have until July 25 to respond, citing the upcoming June 14 election as a factor in the need for a longer response time. Patterson said ODCA will reissue the voter file report in July with the Board's written response, so that both the findings and recommendations, and the Board's response, will be available in one publication. The report includes June 6, 2016 correspondence from the new Board chair, D. Michael Bennett.

"We appreciate the importance of election preparations, and want the Board to provide as comprehensive a response as possible, while also understanding that the public has a high level of interest in these topics at the moment," Patterson said.

Read the complete report [here](#). For more information on the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, visit dcauditor.org or call 202- 727-3600.