



Copied: Mike Senyko
Tracy Ward

STATE OF MICHIGAN
RUTH JOHNSON, SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

July 15, 2011

Commissioner Michael J. Astrue
Social Security Administration
Windsor Park Building
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland 21235

Dear Commissioner Astrue:

As the Chief Election Officer for the State of Michigan, I am committed to preserving the integrity of our elections system. One vital component of election administration is the reliability of our data so that we may ensure that only those individuals who are eligible to vote appear on the voter rolls. Michigan's Qualified Voter File (QVF) contains identifying information about individuals who are registered to vote in our state. Verification of QVF data bolsters the public's confidence in the fairness of our elections.

The Michigan Department of State has an existing relationship with the Social Security Administration in that your data is already used to verify information for driver's license applications. We are aware that the Social Security Administration collects personal information from program applicants for use in determining eligibility for certain benefits, and that the information your agency possesses includes the name of an applicant and his or her address, Social Security number, date of birth and citizenship.

We believe there may be thousands of people on our voter rolls today who are not U.S. citizens because, prior to 2008, all driver's license applicants – regardless of their status – were offered an application to vote as part of the driver's license application process. An initial sampling of 112,000 (out of 7.2 million driver records) has identified more than 3,000 records with questionable citizenship information.

In May 2011 our office approached the Social Security Administration with a proposal to purchase your agency's citizenship data for comparison with the Michigan voter files. As you know, only United States citizens over the age of 18 years may register to vote. Regrettably, your agency denied our request on the basis that, "[t]he purpose for the data (voter's registration) is not in compliance with SSA's program purposes nor does it meet the health and income maintenance provisions."

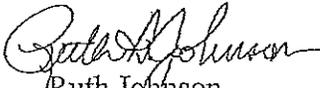
Commissioner Michael J. Astrue
July 15, 2011
Page Two

I note that your staff did not conclude that the release of citizenship information was explicitly prohibited by law, and in fact, the proposed disclosure fits within your agency's general purpose of verifying an applicant's eligibility for government benefits -- in this instance, whether the applicant is qualified to register to vote.

I respectfully ask that you reconsider and grant my request for this limited use of the Social Security Administration's citizenship data as your agency represents the only avenue we have to access accurate information and move forward with our efforts to ensure accuracy in the voter rolls.

The integrity of the elections system lies in our ability to identify individuals who are not United States citizens and therefore are ineligible to vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ruth Johnson".

Ruth Johnson
Secretary of State