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## Chapter 2 Voter Registration

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**THE QUALIFIED VOTER FILE:** the Qualified Voter File (QVF) is a distributed database which ties Michigan's 1,519 cities and townships to a statewide voter registration file maintained in Lansing. The QVF contains approximately 7.4 million voter registration records.

Approximately 975 city and township clerks currently have direct access to their local QVF data via Michigan's QVF system. The remaining jurisdictions coordinate access to their local QVF data via their county clerk's office.

- With the QVF, each and every "motor voter" registration transaction executed in a Secretary of State Branch Office is electronically forwarded to the appropriate local election official; a paper copy of the transaction follows within days to confirm the electronic notification and supply the election official with the voter's signature.
- 131 Secretary of State Branch Offices, the Secretary of State Renewal by Mail program and the ExpressSOS.com (BAM) online change of address program electronically enter all "motor voter" voter registration transactions (approximately 85% of all voter registration transactions in state). The data is electronically transferred to local QVF files on a daily basis. With the exception of ExpressSOS (BAM) transactions and stand-alone branch office changes of address for voters previously registered in Michigan, the corresponding hard copy voter registration applications are forwarded to local clerks by mail within one week.
- All other voter registration transactions must be key entered into the QVF by county, city and township clerks.

Transactions requiring key entry are generated through the following voter registration programs:

- Federal and state "mail in" voter registrations
  - Public Assistance agencies
  - Armed Forces recruitment offices
  - Federal Post Card Applications (FPCA)
- Addresses used for voter registration purposes are required to be residential addresses. Residence for the purposes of registration and voting is defined according to Michigan election law, as a "place at which a person habitually sleeps, keeps his or her personal effects, and has a regular place of lodging." All voter registration records entered into the QVF system are matched to the Michigan driver's license file. When matches are found, the voter's driver's license record is

flagged. This linkage permits the updating of both files regardless of whether the voter initiates a driver's license address change or a voter registration address change.

- All Michigan drivers are required to use their residential voter registration address for driver's license purposes. As a result, all voter registration address changes are automatically posted to the driver's license file. In the event a local clerk enters a change of address for a voter in the Qualified Voter File, the Department of State supplies an address change sticker for their driver license via the mail.

Note: Although all Michigan drivers are required to use the same residential address for both their voter registration and driver's license records; a Michigan voter is not required to possess a Michigan driver's license in order to register to vote.

- All voter registration application forms produced at Secretary of State Branch Offices are automatically printed with the voter's name, address, date of birth and other data elements common to the voter's driver's license record. Individuals who are currently registered to vote in Michigan that change their Michigan driver's license address to reflect a move to a *new* jurisdiction are automatically registered in their new jurisdiction of residence via the link between the Qualified Voter File and Michigan driver's license file.

**QUALIFIED VOTER FILE (QVF) INBOX:** Electronic notification of all voter registration transactions that are processed at a Secretary of State Branch Office, SOS Renewal by Mail, and ExpressSOS.com are forwarded to each local clerk via the QVF system. A report of all such transactions is electronically forwarded to each jurisdiction on a daily basis and may be accessed via the QVF Inbox. A list of the more commonly used inbox notification types and the associated actions that clerks must take for each is located in *Appendix 1*. Some of the more common notification types and descriptions are listed below:

- **"New Voter"** – An individual who is registering for the *first time* in Michigan has been added to your local file.
- **"Moved From"** – An individual who was *previously registered* to vote in a different jurisdiction within Michigan has been added to your local file.

- “Moved To” – An individual who was/is registered in your jurisdiction has moved to a different address that is located either inside or outside your jurisdiction.

Note: For a full technical explanation of the QVF and its components as they apply to voter registration, please refer to Chapter Two of the QVF Reference Manual found at [mi.gov/elections](http://mi.gov/elections).

**THE STATEWIDE STREET INDEX:** The statewide street index is the foundation for the QVF system. The street index is a database that contains all known addresses within the state and the political districts and subdivisions that correspond to each address. All voter registration addresses entered into the QVF are automatically matched against the addresses contained within the street index. It is by matching these addresses that the QVF system is able to accurately identify and forward each voter registration transaction to the proper jurisdiction subsequently assigning the voter to the appropriate Congressional District, State Senate District, State House District, County Commission District, School District, Library District among other taxing authorities which the voter is entitled to vote based on their residence. Maintaining an accurate street index is critical to ensuring the accuracy of the QVF and for ensuring the accuracy of the precinct lists that are used at the polls on Election Day.

Each local clerk is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the addressing information for his or her jurisdiction. *Addressing changes that take place within a jurisdiction must be immediately reported to the Bureau of Elections* so that the statewide street index can be adjusted. Errors and omissions in the QVF precinct lists used at the polls on Election Day are generally the result of errors or omissions in the statewide street index. To report needed changes to the street index in your jurisdiction to the Michigan Bureau of Elections, refer to the following:

- Fill out a street change request form located in the QVF (Data Maint>Street Index Lookup)
- Fax the form to the number listed at the bottom of the form (517-636-6133)

If you have questions about a street index issue, call Nicholas Daum at 517-335-1003 or email [daumn1@michigan.gov](mailto:daumn1@michigan.gov)

SOURCES OF VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS:

Registration Location	Form Type
Clerk's Office and Other	Any form used in the presence of the local or county Clerk or deputized staff for registering to vote
Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)	
Mail Registration	
SOS Branch Offices	
SOS Renewal by Mail Program	
VR Agencies Serving Disabled Persons	

VR Public  
Assistance  
Agencies

State of Michigan Voter Registration Application  
and Michigan Driver License/Personal Identification Card  
Address Change Form (For use by Michigan designated Agency Only)

Are you a citizen of the United States of America? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Will you be 18 years of age or older? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
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If you checked "No" in response to either of these questions, complete this form.

Last Name	First Name
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FORM # NSP-938A (Rev. 10-05)

**Photo ID Required for In-Person Voter Registration Applicants:** Voter registration applicants that apply in person are required to provide photo identification. If the voter does not have an acceptable form of photo identification, he or she may sign an *Affidavit of Voter not in Possession of Picture Identification* form. Acceptable forms of identification are the same as those required for in-person voting, and include the following:

- Michigan driver's license or Michigan personal identification card
- Current driver's license or personal identification card issued by another state
- Current federal or state government-issued photo identification
- Current U.S. passport
- Current student identification with photo – from a high school or an accredited institution of higher education
- Current military identification card with photo
- Current tribal identification card with photo

The *Affidavit of Voter not in Possession of Picture Identification* form is also the same as what is used for in-person voting. A sample is included in Appendix I.

#### **Voter Registration by Mail Sources:**

- Mail Registration Program. (Includes the state mail-in voter registration application form and the federal mail-in voter registration application form.)
- Direct delivery of voter registration applications by persons working on behalf of voter registration drives. (The state and federal voter registration application forms developed to implement the Mail Registration Program are generally used by organizations involved in such efforts.)

**TRANSMISSION OF VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS:** A Secretary of State Branch office, designated voter registration agency or county clerk in receipt of a completed voter registration application is required to forward the application to the clerk of the county, city or township where the applicant resides *within seven calendar days*. If the receipt of the application occurs *within seven*

calendar days prior to the “close of registration” for an August primary or November general election, the application must be forwarded to the clerk of the county, city or township where the applicant resides *within one business day*.

Branch Transaction	In person – new voter	In person – address change for voter reg & DL	In person – address change for voter reg only	Online – address change
Branch sends application to Clerk	Yes	Yes	No	No

Special Note re: Renewal by Mail forms: Renewal by mail forms are keyed into the system by branch employees. The Secretary of State Branch office system does not allow employees to postdate transactions. If you received this form and it’s near the close of registration date of an election, check the postmark date on the attached envelope and manually adjust the voter registration date on the QVF record accordingly.

**MAIL-IN VOTER REGISTRATION PROGRAM:** Absentee Voting Restriction: With the Introduction of mail-in voter registration in the state, Michigan election law was amended under PA 441 of 1994 with the following restriction (MCL 168.509t(2)):

“A person who registers to vote in a jurisdiction in this state by mail shall vote in person if that person has not previously voted in person in any jurisdiction within the state. This subsection does not apply to any of the following registered voters:

“(a) A person entitled to vote by absentee ballot under the uniformed and overseas citizen’s absentee voting act, Public Law 99-410, 100 Stat. 924.

“(b) A person who has a handicap as defined in section 103 of the Michigan handicappers’ civil rights act, Act No. 220 of the Public Acts of 1976, being section 37.1103 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, or who is 60 years of age or older....”

Given the above restriction, a *new* registrant who submits a state or federal mail-in voter registration application form who has not previously voted in Michigan, is *not* eligible to receive an absent voter ballot for the first election in which he or she wishes to participate unless the voter falls under one of the provided exemptions; the voter *must appear in person to vote*.

The absentee voting restriction applies if the mail-in voter registration application form is delivered to the clerk's office by a third party; the restriction does *not* apply if the applicant personally delivers the form. It merits further note that the absentee voting restriction does *not* apply to electors who register to vote through authorized election assistants appointed under Michigan election law, MCL 168.29.

**Federal Identification Requirement:** HAVA stipulates that a voter who has never voted in Michigan who chooses to register by mail must meet an identification requirement. To comply with the identification requirement, the voter must:

- accurately enter his or her state issued driver license number or the last four digits of his or her social security number where requested on the mail-in voter registration form; or
- send one of the following forms of identification when mailing the mail-in voter registration form to his or her county or local clerk: a copy of any current and valid photo identification or a copy of a paycheck, government check, utility bill, bank statement or a government document which lists his or her name and address.

If a voter subject to the federal identification requirement does not meet the requirement when registering, the voter must present one of the above listed documents before being issued a ballot at the first election in which he or she wishes to participate. The federal identification requirement does not apply if:

- the voter hand delivers his or her mail-in registration form to the county or local clerk's office;
- the voter is disabled; or
- the voter is eligible to vote under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act.

**Implementation Points:** The following implementation points merit close attention:

- The QVF identifies those voters subject to the "voting-in-person" requirement (code: "MVIP"), those voters subject to the federal identification requirement (code: "ID") and those voters who are subject to both requirements (code: "MVIP/ID"). This automatic identification occurs when the clerk properly enters the voter registration into the QVF and identifies the source of the voter registration and whether or not the mail-in registrant provided proper identification.



- A voter who is subject to the federal identification requirement who is unable or unwilling to produce an acceptable form of identification must be issued a Provisional Envelope ballot. In this case, it is not necessary to complete the Provisional Ballot form. It merits note, however, that a special notice must be issued to the voter at the time the Envelope ballot is issued. A sample notice is provided in *Appendix I.*)
- In an instance where 1) a voter who is 60 years of age or more requests an absentee ballot 2) the voter is subject to the federal identification requirement because he or she is a first-time mail registrant who has never voted in Michigan and 3) the voter has not met the identification requirement prior to requesting the absent voter ballot, a Provisional Envelope ballot must be issued. If the required identification is not provided, the voted ballot must be preserved and processed as an Envelope ballot. It is recommended that in this case, the Envelope ballot not be delivered to the precinct or absentee counting board for processing on Election Day. For more information regarding the Provisional Balloting process see Chapter XI.

## PROCESSING VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS:

### **Receipt of Voter Registration Applications Submitted by “First Time” Voter Registration Applicants:**

Upon the receipt of a voter registration application submitted by an individual who was *not previously registered* in the state, the clerk reviews the form to determine its acceptability. The absence of any of the following data on the form *invalidates* the application:

- Name
- Registration address (*must be a street address or rural route number located within the jurisdiction*)
- Birth date
- Signature on qualification certificate (*An original signature must be provided.*)
- Affirmation of U.S. citizenship (*If the citizenship question is not answered change voter’s status in QVF to “Challenge – Citizenship.” If the voter answered “No” reject the registration and send the voter a notice of rejection.*)

### **Receipt of Voter Registration Applications Submitted by Voters Who Were Previously Registered:**

Upon the receipt of a voter registration application submitted by an individual who was *previously registered* in a different jurisdiction within the state, the clerk reviews the form to determine its acceptability. The absence of any of the following data on the form *invalidates* the application *with exceptions* as noted:

- Name
- Registration address *(Must be a street address or rural route number located within the jurisdiction)*
- Birth date
- Signature on qualification certificate *(Exception: As an alternative, if a digitized signature is available in the QVF, an original signature is not required. If a digitized signature is not available, a signature must be obtained before a ballot is issued.)*
- Affirmation of U.S. citizenship *(If citizenship question is not answered change the voter's status in QVF to "Challenge – Citizenship." If the voter answered "No" reject the registration and send the voter a notice of rejection.)*

**Registration Application Not Received (Existing Voters):** With the advent of online change of address for existing voters through the Secretary of State's Express SOS program, no paper registration application is involved. If no registration application is received for previously-registered voters who have moved, the voter remains in active status.

The following illustrates when paper voter registration applications are forwarded by branches:

Branch Transaction	In person – new voter	In person – address change for voter registration & DL	In person – address change for voter registration only	Online – address change
Branch sends application to Clerk	Yes	Yes	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>

**Processing Acceptable Voter Registration Applications:** If the voter registration application is acceptable, the clerk uses the information on the application to verify that the voter is in the QVF, then create the following voter registration records:

- Master card *(May be generated from the QVF or may be manually prepared.)*
- Voter ID card *(May be generated from the QVF or may be manually prepared.)*

After creating the voter Master card on which the voter signature from the application may be affixed or contain a note that a digitized signature can be found in the QVF or EMP, the clerk is required to prepare a voter identification card for the applicant which includes the applicant's name and registration address; Congressional, State Senate, State Representative and County Commissioner district numbers; precinct number; and polling place location.

Upon receipt of application but no later than three weeks after receiving a QVF Inbox notification for registered voter, if no application has been received, the voter identification card must be mailed to the applicant's registration address by *nonforwardable mail*. The successful delivery of the voter identification card completes the registration process.

Following the creation of the voter Master card and Voter ID card, the voter registration application may be destroyed. There is no need to attach the application to the Master card or retain on file.

*Exception:* If the voter provides a post office box as an alternative mailing address, the voter identification card must be placed in an envelope which is addressed to the P.O. Box address. In this case, it is important that the alternative mailing address be entered into the QVF and on the voter's master card.

## RETURNED VOTER IDENTIFICATION CARDS:

**Voter Identification Card Returned:** If a *voter identification card* sent to an elector is returned as "undeliverable" and an address correction is provided, the clerk proceeds as appropriate under the following procedures outlined later in this chapter "Address Change Within Jurisdiction: Written notice not provided by voter" or under "Move to a Different Jurisdiction: Written notice of voter's registration in new jurisdiction of residence not provided."

If an address correction is *not* provided, the clerk changes the voter's QVF status "Verify – Confirm Address." The returned identification card is retained and attached to the voter Master Card until the issue is resolved. Under no circumstances does a returned ID card result in a voter's registration being cancelled or rejected without going through the NVRA cancellation process.

**Processing Deficient Voter Registration Applications:** If the voter registration application is not acceptable, the clerk takes the following actions:

*If the voter was not previously registered in Michigan, and if the signature on the voter registration application is missing, change the voter's QVF status to "Reject – Signature" and send the voter a "Notice of Rejection."*

The clerk may arrange to have the applicant appear in person to sign the form or submit a replacement voter registration application on or before the close of registration for the first election at which the voter chooses to participate. A digitized signature in this case is not acceptable. The signature *may not* be obtained on Election Day.

App with No Signature	Previously registered within jurisdiction	Previously registered elsewhere in MI	New Voter in MI
Digital Signature on file	Active*	Active*	Reject – No Signature & send notice
Digital Signature not on file	Verify – Signature	Verify - Signature	Reject – No Signature & send notice

\*unless voter's application has other deficiencies requiring a status change

- If the voter *was previously registered* in Michigan, the *digitized signature* captured in the voter's record located in the QVF or Election Management Portal (EMP) may be utilized with a simple entry on the voter's Master Card noting: "See QVF/EMP for Signature". If no digitized signature is available or if the clerk prefers to secure a physical signature, this must be obtained prior to the issuance of a ballot. In this case, the signature may be obtained on Election Day. Change the voter's QVF status to "Verify – Sign Registration Card" and the Electronic Poll book or printed QVF Precinct List will contain a note to poll workers to obtain a signature prior to issuing a ballot.
- Following the QVF Inbox notification, if the physical registration application is not received, regardless of previous registration status, change the voter's status to "Verify – Sign Registration Card." A voter *not previously registered* in Michigan must sign an attestation of qualification prior to being issued a ballot. For a voter *previously registered* in Michigan you may get a signature prior to issuing a ballot or use the digitized signature in QVF or EMP. (If you use a digitized signature, a status change is not necessary.)
- If the citizenship question on the application is answered "No," regardless of previous registration status, change the voter's QVF status to "Reject – Citizenship" and send the voter a "Notice of Rejection."

If the citizenship question is left blank, regardless of previous registration status, written affirmation of U.S. citizenship must be obtained prior to the issuance of a ballot. Change the voter's QVF status to "Challenge – Citizenship."

If the *registration application is not received*, proceed as follows:

- New voter: change the voter's status to "Verify – Citizenship."
- Existing voter: leaves as an active voter; no change of status is required.

Election Day Procedure Note: In the event a voter's record is flagged "Verify or Challenge-Citizenship" on the List of Qualified Voters in the precinct on Election Day due to a voter registration application deficiency, the flag may be remedied with the voter's completion of the Application to Vote containing a positive attestation of citizenship that the voter signs prior to being issued a ballot. The flag will be removed from the voter's record upon the update of the voter history.

- If the registration application is unacceptable because it does not bear the applicant's full birth date or full residential address, the clerk attempts to contact the applicant by phone to obtain the required information. This information must be obtained on or before the close of registration and cannot be obtained on Election Day.
- If the registration application is unacceptable because the applicant does not reside in the clerk's jurisdiction, the clerk is required to forward the application to the clerk of the appropriate jurisdiction. If the clerk is unable to determine the applicant's jurisdiction of residence, the clerk forwards the application to the Department of State's Bureau of Elections for review.

**CLOSE OF REGISTRATION STANDARDS:** An unregistered elector who wishes to participate in an upcoming election must register to vote no later than the 30<sup>th</sup> day prior to the election. (If the 30<sup>th</sup> day prior to the election falls on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday, the "close of registration" for the election is moved to the next business day.) Michigan election law specifies that a voter registration applicant who meets any of the following standards has fulfilled the 30-day "close of registration" requirement for the next upcoming election:

- The elector submits a voter registration application through a Secretary of State branch office, a designated voter registration agency or a county, city, or township clerk's office on or before the "close of registration" for the election.
- Voter registration transactions executed through the Secretary of State Renewal by Mail program can only reflect the date the voter registration transaction was entered into the state computer rather than the postmarked date reflected on the customer's envelope. Therefore, any voter registration transactions executed by the Renewal by Mail program after the Close of Registration deadline will be accompanied by the customer's envelope possessing the postmark reflecting the mailing date on or before the Close of Registration. Upon receipt of this voter registration

application and envelope, the local clerk will need to adjust the voter's registration date back to the postmarked date in QVF in order to qualify that voter for the immediate election.

- The elector submits a voter registration application through the mail and it is postmarked with a date that falls on or before the "close of registration" for the election. If the postmark date is missing or unclear, the voter registration application meets the "close of registration" for the election if 1) the clerk of the applicant's city or township of residence receives the application within seven calendar days *after* the "close of registration" date *and* 2) the application is dated by the applicant on or before the "close of registration" for the election.

## ADDRESS CHANGE WITHIN JURISDICTION:

**Written Notice Provided by Voter:** Upon the receipt of written notice *signed by a voter* that he or she has moved to a different address *within the same jurisdiction*, the clerk updates the voter registration files as appropriate. If the change is made through a Secretary of State branch office such notice will include the receipt of a voter registration application form showing the new address and will be preceded by a QVF "Changed Address To" inbox notification. Such changes may also be made through an "Election Day Change of Address Notice" executed by the voter at the polls; or a corrected voter identification card, letter, post card or post office change of address form signed by the voter announcing the address change.

After updating the voter registration files, the clerk prepares an updated voter identification card for the voter and mails it to the voter's new address. Here, it is recommended that the updated voter identification card be sent by *nonforwardable mail with address correction requested*. If the voter identification card should subsequently be returned by the post office as "undeliverable," the address correction can then be used to proceed as appropriate under "Address Change Within Jurisdiction: Written notice not provided by voter" or under "Move to a Different Jurisdiction: Written notice of voter's registration in new jurisdiction of residence not provided."

**Written Notice Not Provided by Voter:** Upon the receipt of "reliable information", (refer to Reliable Information Flowchart, included in Appendix I) obtained through a "third party" source that a voter has moved to a different address *within the same jurisdiction*, the clerk must forward a return postage paid confirmation notice to the voter to confirm the move. The notice is mailed by *forwardable mail*. "Reliable information" on such an address change would include a new address provided on returned mail; information supplied through a local utility; or notice provided through any similar source. The new address *may not* be added to the voter's registration records unless and until it is confirmed by

the voter in writing or in person at the polls on Election Day. After mailing the confirmation notice, mark the voter's QVF record with a "Verify – Confirm Address" status code.

If the voter confirms the move by returning the reply card or during questioning at the polls, the clerk updates the voter registration files as appropriate. After updating the voter registration files, the clerk prepares an updated voter identification card for the voter which lists the voter's new registration address. The updated voter identification card is mailed by *nonforwardable mail*.

If the voter states on the reply card or during questioning at the polls that he or she has *not* moved to a different address, the clerk changes the voter's QVF status back to "Active." If the voter neglects to return the reply card and does not appear to vote, the clerk takes no further action.

If the confirmation notice is returned by the post office as "undeliverable," the voter's status must be changed to "Challenged – Residency." (See: "Returned Confirmation Notices" discussed later in this chapter.)

## MOVE TO A DIFFERENT JURISDICTION:

**Written Notice of Voter's Registration in New Jurisdiction of Residence Provided:** Upon the receipt of *written notice* that a voter has *registered to vote in another jurisdiction*, the clerk cancels the voter's registration. Such notice would include the receipt of a QVF inbox "Moved To" notification or a "Cancellation Authorization" form signed by the voter.

**Written Notice of Voter's Registration in New Jurisdiction of Residence Not Provided:** Upon the receipt of "reliable information" that a voter has moved to another jurisdiction *without any confirmation that the voter has reregistered to vote in his or her new jurisdiction of residence*, the clerk sends the voter a confirmation notice by *forwardable mail*, which contains a postage prepaid and preaddressed reply card. "Reliable information" on such an address change would include a new address in another jurisdiction provided on returned mail, information supplied through a local utility, or notice provided through any similar source including the U.S. Postal Service or its licensees. A possible, but far less common source of such information would be a letter, post card or post office change of address form signed by the voter announcing the address change without any direction given on the desired disposition of his or her voter registration record. In this case, the clerk changes the voter's QVF status to "Verify – Confirm Address."

The confirmation notice, which in this case is referred to as a "Notice of Cancellation," is used to confirm the voter's address within a different jurisdiction. Additional language printed on the notice advises that the voter must respond within the next two statewide November general elections or

their voter registration within the jurisdiction will be canceled. If the jurisdiction *has direct QVF access*, the “Cancellation Countdown” feature may be used to track the response timeframe. In this case, if no response is received and the timeframe expires, the voter registration is automatically canceled. If the jurisdiction *does not have direct access to QVF*, it is recommended that a “tickler” file be established to track the voter registration (Master card) records that are subject to cancellation and work with the County Clerk’s office to assist in tracking through the QVF.

Once the record is cancelled, the date and reason for the cancellation is noted on the voter’s Master Card. The master card is then moved to the jurisdiction’s “cancellation file” where it is retained for 5 years beyond the date of cancellation.

- If the notice is *not* returned by the post office as “undeliverable” it is assumed that the notice was delivered.
- If the voter returns the reply card attached to the confirmation notice to verify that he or she has moved to another jurisdiction, the clerk cancels the voter’s registration.
- If the notice sent to the voter is returned by the post office as “undeliverable,” the voter’s status must be changed to “Challenged – Residency.” (See: “Returned Confirmation Notices” discussed later in this chapter.)
- If the voter appears to vote *in either of the next two statewide November general elections or any intervening election and claims that he or she did not move to an address outside* the jurisdiction, the “reliable information” on which the voter’s “Cancellation Notice” was based may have been erroneous. In this case, the voter is issued a ballot under normal procedure. The “Verify – Confirm Address” status code is automatically removed with the recording of vote history immediately following the election.
- If through the questioning of the voter it is determined that the voter *did move to an address that is outside* of the jurisdiction, the voter may not be entitled to a ballot. (See: Chapter XI “Voters Who Have Moved” for additional information.)
- However, if through the questioning of the voter, it is determined that the voter moved *within the same jurisdiction*, the election inspectors serving in the voter’s precinct direct the voter to complete an “Election Day Change of Address Notice.” Once the notice is completed and signed by the voter, a ballot is issued under normal procedure.



If no response is received over the course of the next two statewide November general elections, the voter's registration is cancelled without further notice. This is handled programmatically through the QVF.

**NAME CHANGE:** If a voter holds a Michigan driver's license, name changes must be made in person at a Secretary of State Branch office. Upon the receipt of a name change, the clerk updates the voter registration files as appropriate. After updating the registration files, the clerk prepares an updated voter identification card for the voter and mails it to the voter's registration address.

**ADDRESSING CONFIRMATION NOTICES:** While the NVRA requires that confirmation mailings be sent to registrants by *forwardable mail*, it does not specify the address which must be used. In certain cases (such as when a mailing to a registrant has been returned as "undeliverable" with no forwarding address), only one address will be available. In other cases (such as when a second address is supplied by the post office), two addresses will be available.

When faced with a choice of addresses, the advantage in mailing to the old address is that a registrant who has only *temporarily* changed addresses may not receive the mailing at the new address. A disadvantage to using the old address is that a registrant, who has, in fact, moved, may not receive the mailing through postal forwarding as post offices retain change-of-address records for a limited period of time (12 to 18 months). There are similar advantages and disadvantages in mailing to the new address: if the registrant has, in fact, moved, the notice will be received. If, on the other hand, the new address is in error, the registrant would never receive the mailing.

Given the above, it is recommended that in those instances where a local election official has both an "old address" and a "new address" for a registrant who must be sent a confirmation mailing, that the mailing be sent to both addresses. The mailing should contain a postage prepaid and preaddressed reply card.

**RETURNED CONFIRMATION NOTICES:** If a confirmation notice sent to a voter who has moved within his or her jurisdiction or to a voter who has moved to a different jurisdiction is returned by the post office as "undeliverable," the following actions are taken:

- The clerk marks the voter's QVF registration record as "Challenged – Residency."

- Each election official must then instruct the election inspectors appointed to serve in the voter's precinct on Election Day to question the voter on his or her residency status if the voter appears to vote. The voter *is not* required to provide documentation or proof of residence.
- If the elector appears to vote and affirms that he or she resides at the new address within the jurisdiction or advises that he or she has moved to *a different address within the jurisdiction*, the election inspectors issue a regular ballot to the elector. In this case, the election inspectors further direct the voter to complete an "Election Day Change of Address Notice." The completed notice is returned to the local clerk in a special envelope following the close of the polls. The new address is then entered into the QVF following the election and an updated voter identification card is forwarded to the voter that reflects the new information.
- If the elector appears to vote and it is revealed under questioning at the polls that the elector is not qualified to vote in the jurisdiction, the election inspectors do *not* issue a ballot to the elector and the voter's registration may be canceled. In this case the election inspector should place a note to this effect in the envelope addressed to the local clerk.
- If the elector does not appear to vote *over the course of the next two, successive statewide November general elections*, the clerk cancels the voter's registration. As noted above, if the jurisdiction has direct QVF access, the Cancellation Countdown feature may be used to track the response timeframe. If no response is received and the timeframe expires, the voter registration is automatically canceled. If the jurisdiction *does not have direct access to QVF*, it is recommended that a "tickler" file be established to track the voter registration records that are subject to cancellation. In this case, the clerk makes arrangements to change the voter's QVF status to "Cancel – Residence."

Once the record is cancelled, the date and reason for the cancellation is noted on the voter's master card. The master card is then filed into the jurisdiction's cancellation file where it is retained for 5 years beyond the date of cancellation.

**SURRENDERED LICENSE:** The "Surrendered License" QVF inbox notification/status code is used by the Department of State to flag the voter registration record of a voter who has surrendered his or her Michigan driver license when applying for a new driver's license in another state. In the past, such

voters were marked “Cancel – Moved Out of State.” Under the new procedure, the voter record is marked automatically as “Verify – Confirm Address.”

This change was made in response to a judicial ruling concerning voters who move to another state and surrender their Michigan driver license when applying for a license in the new state. The fact that the voter has applied for a driver license in another state must be used as “reliable information” that the voter may no longer be a resident of the Michigan city or township in which he or she is registered to vote. Under this scenario, an attempt must be made to confirm the voter’s intent to 1) remain a resident of the jurisdiction (in this situation, the voter’s status code is changed to “Active”) or 2) discontinue residence within the jurisdiction (in this situation, the voter’s status code is changed to “Cancel”).

Legislation was passed and signed into law in 2012 requiring that the State send confirmation notices to Michigan registered voters who have applied for a driver’s license in another state (MCL 168.509aa). The State has instituted an automated process for generating these notices, and **local jurisdictions are no longer responsible for sending confirmation notices in these instances.** The State is also handling all follow-up changes in QVF related to changing status and setting the cancellation countdown for these voters that have moved out of state.

The QVF Cancellation Countdown is used to track the response timeframe. If no response is received over the course of the next two statewide November general elections, the voter’s registration is cancelled without further notice through the QVF. This is handled programmatically through the QVF and once cancelled will appear in the voter’s records as ‘Cancel—NVRA’.

**INACTIVE VOTER FILES:** The voter registration database in the Qualified Voter File is broken down into two components; “Active” registered voters and “Inactive” registered voters. Upon registration the voter’s record goes into the active file and remains there as long as the voter participates regularly in elections. A voter record is placed in the inactive file when the person goes six consecutive years without voting, or when a confirmation notice is sent to a voter after the clerk receives reliable information that the voter has moved. (MCL168.509r) This inactive file is administered in the QVF programmatically and is simply a designation in the database. Master cards do not need to be segregated in a separate file. But if a jurisdiction does not use QVF, notations do need to be made on the voter’s master card indicating their “Inactive Status.”

A voter cannot be cancelled due to inactivity; their presence in the inactive file may be indefinite. A voter who is in the inactive file due to having been sent a confirmation notice should also be placed in cancellation countdown. If the QVF is used to programmatically generate notices, the cancellation countdown is automatically set. (If you do not provide notices using the QVF, the countdown must be manually set.) Those voters for whom you've received reliable information they no longer live at their registration address can be cancelled after two general election cycles unless they vote or respond to the confirmation notice sent them. This process is handled programmatically by QVF if the cancellation countdown has been set.

There are two practical effects of the inactive file. Voters in the inactive file can be subtracted from the total voter registration database for purposes of determining precinct size. The size limit of a precinct, 2,999 voters, can be determined either by use of the total number of registered voters in a precinct or by the number of registered "active" voters in a precinct. This choice also applies to the total of no more than 5,000 voters in a combined precinct.

The second effect concerns voters in the inactive file who have been placed there because a confirmation notice was sent to them. In these cases, if a voter in the inactive file applies to vote by absentee ballot, their ballot must be processed as a challenged ballot.

A voter will remain in the inactive file until they participate in an election, reply to a confirmation notice re-affirming their residence in the community or another voter registration transaction involving that voter occurs (including a change of address).

**VOTER REGISTRATION CANCELLATIONS:** A clerk is free to cancel a voter's registration record should any of the following occur. A notice of the cancellation is not required, excepted where specifically noted.

Requires Update of Voter Record in QVF and Adjustment of Master Card:

- The voter directs the cancellation of his or her registration record in a written, signed communication. Sources: "Cancellation Authorization" forms executed by voters or a letter or post card signed by the voter which requests the cancellation of his or her voter registration.
- The clerk receives or obtains information that the voter has died. Sources: QVF inbox notification; county clerk; death notices published in newspaper; personal knowledge.

- The clerk receives notice that the voter has registered to vote in another jurisdiction through another election official or through a QVF inbox notification.
- The voter verifies his or her residency in a different jurisdiction for voting purposes on a confirmation notice sent to the voter on “reliable information” that the voter has moved to a different jurisdiction.
- The clerk receives a branch office application with the following notation: “Customer no longer wants to be registered” (Cancellation requires notice and attach application to voter Master Card for possible later verification)
- The voter’s registration is challenged and it is revealed through questions directed to the voter in the polls on Election Day that he or she is *not* qualified to vote in the jurisdiction.

Requires update of Master Card only:

- The clerk determines that the voter has registered to vote in another jurisdiction through the QVF’s “Election Management Portal / Statewide Look-Up” feature.
- No response is received from the voter *over the course of two, successive statewide November general elections* to a confirmation notice sent to the voter on “reliable information” that the voter has moved to a different jurisdiction. If the Cancellation Countdown was set in the QVF when the notice was sent, then the voter’s QVF record will be updated automatically and only adjustment of the Master Card is needed.
- The voter fails to appear to vote *over the course of two, successive statewide November general elections* after a confirmation sent to the voter on “reliable information” that the voter has moved within the jurisdiction or to a different jurisdiction is returned by the post office as “undeliverable.”

**RETENTION OF CANCELED VOTER REGISTRATION RECORDS:** City and township clerks are required to maintain the original copy of a canceled voter registration record (Master Card) for at least *five years*. Such records must be available for public inspection upon request. Duplicate copies of canceled voter registration records may be destroyed *two years* after the date of cancellation. As an exception, an original copy of a canceled voter registration record may be destroyed after two years if the record is reproduced pursuant to the Records Media Act (MCL 24.401 - 403). A canceled voter registration record reproduced under the Records Media Act may be destroyed five years after the date of cancellation.

**NOTATIONS ON BRANCH OFFICE VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS:** Secretary of State Branch offices are now providing detailed information on the branch voter registration application to assist local clerks. Reasons for unsigned forms are now printed at the bottom of the form with associated checkboxes for use by SOS staff. The checkboxes mirror the notes previously written on the application and should assist clerks in processing appropriately.

- Currently registered voter indicates he/she is **not** a citizen – Secretary of State staff will check the box **“non-citizen previously registered in error”** on the form. Branches have been directed to send these applications to the Bureau of Elections who will send a notice to the clerk directing them to cancel the record. However, if the application is forwarded to you from the branch, under this scenario:
  - Cancel the voter (Change QVF Status to “Cancel – Citizenship”).
  - Send the voter a notification informing him/her that based on information he/she provided to the Secretary of State’s office, their voter registration has been canceled.
  - Inform the voter that if this cancellation was made in error, he/she can contact your office.
  - Keep the branch form with the Secretary of State notation with the canceled voter’s master card for future documentation.
- Customer indicates he/she no longer wishes to be registered – Secretary of State staff will check the box **“customer no longer wants to be registered”** on the form. Under this scenario:
  - Cancel the voter (Change QVF Status to “Cancel – Voter Requested”).
  - Send the voter a notification informing him/her that based on their request, their voter registration has been canceled.
  - Inform the voter that if this cancellation was made in error, he/she can contact your office.
  - Keep the branch form with the Secretary of State notation with the canceled voter’s master card for future documentation.

- Customer leaves the Secretary of State office without signing the form – Secretary of State staff will check the box “**customer left without signing**” on the form. Under this scenario:
  - If a new/original voter registration application:
    - Reject the application; send the individual a notice informing him/her that the voter registration application did not contain the required signature.
  - If updating an existing voter registration record:
    - Accept the voter registration, utilizing the QVF digital signature (if available); if no digital signature is available, change the voter’s QVF status to “Verify – Signature”
    - Send the voter a new ID card.

Secretary of State employees are taking these steps as directed by Branch Office Administration and the Bureau of Elections. If you receive a form with the box checked but no customer initials, continue to process as requested above. If you receive unsigned forms without a notation as illustrated above or forms with hand written notes that do not pertain to one of the scenarios identified above, please contact the Bureau of Elections and email copies to [elections@michigan.gov](mailto:elections@michigan.gov).

**PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF VOTER REGISTRATION DATA:** All voter registration records are public documents and as such, must be available for public inspection during normal business hours. It is emphasized that the public availability of the records is *required by law*. Despite the public availability of voter registration information, Michigan election law restricts county, city and township clerks from producing lists or releasing copies of voter registration records which show any of the following information as such information is **exempt** from the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

- Driver license or state personal identification card numbers.
- Month and day of the voters’ birth. (Year of birth is not exempt and must be provided if requested.)
- Voter phone numbers.
- The identity or type of office that initially received the voters’ registration applications.
- Any information regarding an individual’s refusal to register to vote.
- Email addresses provided by absent uniformed services voters or overseas voters for transmitting registration applications or absent voter ballots.

The above disclosure restrictions apply to voter registration lists produced on paper and electronically. A county, city or township clerk supplying an interested person with a copy of a voter registration record must block out the restricted information.

It bears note that the above prohibitions do *not* limit a person's right to personally inspect a city or township clerk's registration files. In this case, a written request is not required.

**FEDERAL RECORDKEEPING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:** The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993 requires data collection regarding voter registration activity. After every general election, the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) sends a survey to each State to collect this data. The Qualified Voter File (QVF) has been designed to collect a substantial amount of this data simply through regular data entry. However, some information can only be tracked manually by the local clerk for later entry into the survey by the local clerk via the Elections eLearning Center. The period covered by the biennial report begins the day after the last November general election (even-year) and ends on the date of the following November general election (even-year). The data which must be maintained by city and township clerks in preparation for the completion of the report either tracked automatically through the QVF or requiring manual tracking by the local clerk is detailed below:

**Items QVF tracks automatically:**

- Number of new voter registrations
- Location where the voter registered to vote
- Address changes within a jurisdiction
- Rejected applications if able to enter into QVF
- Cancellations
- Confirmation cards sent

**Items QVF does not track automatically and requires manual tracking by the Clerk:**

- Number of returned absentee ballots and FWAB's which were rejected and not counted, including those returned late.
- Number of returned absentee ballots and FWAB's which were rejected and not counted by military and overseas voters.
- The reason for each rejection.