

# Duckworth, Durbin urge State Board of Elections to stop using inaccurate Interstate Voter Registration Crosscheck Program

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WASHINGTON D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) wrote to the Illinois State Board of Elections (IL SBE) today asking them to stop using the deeply flawed *Interstate Voter Registration Data Crosscheck Program* (*Crosscheck*) to help the state maintain the accuracy of its voter registration system. Reports have shown that the system is not only ineffective at catching duplicate



registrations, but discriminatory as well. Researchers recently found that “one of Crosscheck’s proposed purging strategies would eliminate about 300 registrations used to cast a seemingly legitimate vote for every one registration used to cast a double vote,” often because they had a common first and last name. The Senators encouraged the

Board of Elections to instead participate in the *Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC)* multistate partnership, a far more precise alternative that has resulted in higher voter registration rates and increased voter turnout.

“Maintaining the integrity of our elections is vital to ensuring a fair and equitable democracy. To fulfill this goal, we should use tools that enable us to protect voting rights and ensure that every eligible voter can access the ballot,” the Senators wrote to the Illinois State Board of Elections’ Chairman Cadigan and Vice Chairman Keith. “Voters in Illinois deserve voter lists that are complete and accurate—and no voter should ever be improperly disenfranchised because of inaccurate information produced by a flawed data matching tool. That is why we strongly support the IL SBE completely withdrawing from Crosscheck and becoming a fully active participant in ERIC to improve the accuracy of voter lists and make sure all eligible voters are empowered to freely exercise their right to participate in American democracy.”

The Crosscheck program is run by Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, who currently serves as Vice Chair of President Trump’s voter suppression commission. The large number of inaccurate findings Crosscheck produces has sparked concerns that it could be used to disenfranchise voters, particularly in communities of color. A 2015 Center for American Progress report noted that Crosscheck was much more likely to flag African-American, Hispanic and Asian voters as possibly being registered to vote in multiple states than White voters.

The text of the letter to Chairman Cadigan and Vice Chairman Keith is available below.

Dear Chairman Cadigan and Vice Chairman Keith:

We are writing to encourage the Illinois State Board of Elections (IL SBE) to withdraw from the Interstate Voter Registration Data Crosscheck Program (Crosscheck) and become a fully active participant in the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) multistate partnership.

Maintaining the integrity of our elections is vital to ensuring a fair and equitable democracy. To fulfill this goal, we should use tools that enable us to protect voting rights and ensure that every eligible voter can access the ballot. That is why we are seriously concerned about the use of Crosscheck, which is overseen by controversial Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach and has proven to be an inaccurate and dangerous tool. Recent reports indicate that the system is also vulnerable to significant security threats.

Crosscheck operates by collecting basic information from the participating States’ individually-controlled voter files, including names and dates of birth. We understand

that Illinois has annually submitted more than eight million voter registration records to the program. After States like Illinois submit the files, Kansas election officials review the data and produce lists that flag voters who are allegedly registered in multiple jurisdictions. This imprecise process produces a great number of false positives and results in inaccurate or misleading information that is ultimately of little use to State election officials.

The ineffectiveness of Crosscheck has been widely documented. Researchers from Stanford, Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, and Microsoft recently produced a statistical analysis of the program, which found that “one of Crosscheck’s proposed purging strategies would eliminate about 300 registrations used to cast a seemingly legitimate vote for every one registration used to cast a double vote.”

The invalid findings produced by Crosscheck have led some States to improperly deny Americans an opportunity to exercise their fundamental right to vote. And reports have shown that voter registration purges resulting from the Crosscheck data can particularly impact minority communities. For example, a 2015 Center for American Progress report on “The Health Of State Democracies” noted that there is a “significant overrepresentation of minority voters on the Crosscheck list : While white voter names are underrepresented by 8 percent, African American voters are overrepresented by 45 percent; Hispanic voters are overrepresented by 24 percent; and Asian voters are overrepresented by 31 percent.”

Federal law requires States to maintain accurate and current voter registration rolls, but Crosscheck is clearly not the solution. At a time when American voter turnout lags behind that of many other developed nations, public servants should be doing everything in our power to increase access to the ballot—not wasting taxpayer dollars on a sham system that has been proven time and time again to be inaccurate and harmful.

In stark contrast to the problematic Crosscheck system, the ERIC system appears to be a valid and far more precise alternative. Twenty States—including Illinois—and the District of Columbia are currently members of ERIC; however, we understand that Illinois has been unable to fully participate in ERIC due to recent budgetary constraints. States participating in ERIC submit a wider swath of data to ensure accuracy; ERIC then flags records with inaccurate or out-of-date information and requires States to contact the voters to correct and update the registrations. States are also required to contact potentially eligible but unregistered voters with instructions on how to register. Additionally, ERIC implements a significant number of security measures and anonymization processes to ensure that voters’ data is protected.

The PEW Charitable Trusts commissioned a third-party review of ERIC that found that, in 2012, States participating in ERIC experienced higher voter registration rates and a net increase in voter turnout compared to non-ERIC States.

Voters in Illinois deserve voter lists that are complete and accurate—and no voter should ever be improperly disenfranchised because of inaccurate information produced by a flawed data matching tool. That is why we strongly support the IL SBE completely withdrawing from Crosscheck and becoming a fully active participant in ERIC to improve the accuracy of voter lists and make sure all eligible voters are empowered to freely exercise their right to participate in American democracy.