

Cleveland State University

Center for Election Integrity



Research Series

Estimates of the Number of Voters Whose Driver's License Address May Differ from Their Voting Address

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**Estimates of the Number of Voters
Whose Driver's License Address
May Differ from Their Voting Address**

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August 2, 2006

Executive Summary

This report provides the results of an analysis of the order of magnitude for potential loss of voting privileges or use of provisional ballots in Ohio due to unclear or misunderstood requirements concerning driver's license address verification of registered voters at the polls in November 2006.

Unless poll workers are aware that valid identification includes a driver's license that may have a former address for persons who have moved some number of properly registered voters may be required to vote a provisional ballot.

Thus we address the following question:

If poll workers are unaware that a former address is acceptable on a driver's license ID, how many registered voters who show up to vote in November may be asked to vote with a provisional ballot because their driver's license has an address that is different from the one for which they are registered to vote?

Two separate methods are employed.

In Method 1 we use census data on migration to estimate a four year annual average number of movers. We assume that each year a portion of movers have not renewed their driver's license and that their driver's licenses will have their former address. We apply assumed voter registration and voter participation rates to derive estimates.

In Method 2 we use databases on registered voters for two years to identify registered voters who moved. Like Method 1 we estimated the number who renewed their licenses. We apply alternative assumptions about the voter participation rate to estimate the number that will vote in November.

The following table provides the ranges of results discussed the paper.

Our analysis indicates that the number of registered voters who have a driver's license ID with a former address is approximately 1,277,000 for Method 1 and 650,000 for Method 2. The midpoint between these two independent estimates is approximately 964,000.

The number of persons attempting to vote in November with a driver's license ID with a former address is approximately 511,000 using the midpoint of Method 1 estimates and approximately 406,000 using the midpoint of Method 2 estimates. An average of these two independent methods is approximately 458,000. The number could also be as high as approximately 638,000 or as low as 325,000 given the data and assumptions used in this analysis.

Estimates of the Number of Voters whose Driver's License Address May Differ from Their Voting Address

PURPOSE

This report provides the results of an analysis of the order of magnitude for potential loss of voting privileges or use of provisional ballots in Ohio due to unclear or misunderstood requirements concerning driver's license address verification of registered voters at the polls in November 2006.

Ohio House Bill 3 specifies that voters must show photo identification (ID) or certain other specified documents in order to vote. Lack of proper ID may result in casting provisional ballots. Photo identification documents must include, in addition to the person's name and photograph, the person's current address. However, a former address is permitted if the ID is a valid state driver's license or state identification card.¹ This exception is due to the fact that persons who change address often do not change the ID and thus the address on it for some time. The Ohio driver's license must be renewed every four years, therefore persons who move may continue to use a driver's license that has a former address until the state requires its renewal, i.e., every four years.²

Unless poll workers are aware of this exception concerning current and former address, some number of properly registered voters may be required to vote a provisional ballot. This report attempts to estimate how many such persons may face this prospect in the coming general election in November 2006.

Thus we address the following question:

If poll workers are unaware that a former address is acceptable on a driver's license ID, how many registered voters who show up to vote in November may be asked to vote with a provisional ballot because their driver's license has an address that is different from the one for which they are registered to vote?

METHODS

We employ two separate methods to address this question described below.

Method 1. We use data on the number of voting age persons who lived in a different house five years earlier from the 2000 census and estimate a four year annual average number of movers.³ We assume that each year a portion of movers have not renewed

¹ See Sec. 3501.01.AA(2).

² Some number of persons may get a new driver's license as a result of losing one, its destruction, or for other reasons; but it is assumed for this analysis that there are comparatively few of these.

³ An annual estimate based on five years will underestimate the annual number of movers for a four year period since some movers move more than once during the five years. On the other hand, the late 1990s was a period when migration rates were lower than more recent years.

their driver's license and that portion is larger in more recent years. One year ago one out four persons with a license will have renewed their license by today; two years ago half of them would have renewed by now; three years ago three quarters would have renewed by now, and four or more years ago all would have a new license by today. The average number of persons with a former address on their driver's license in each of the last four years is assumed to be 87.5% in the most current year, 62.5% in the year before, 37.5% in the third prior year, and 12.5% in the first year of the four year period. If the number of movers is the same for all four years the average number of movers who have a driver's license with a former address is 50 percent. Thus we apply 50 percent to the number of movers over a four year period which is the same as doubling the one year estimate of the number of movers. Not all movers are registered voters nor do they vote. So we apply assumed voter registration and voter participation rates to derive estimates.

Method 2. We use databases on registered voters for two years to identify registered voters who changed addresses between the years. Like Method 1 we apply the proportions of driver's that have renewed their licenses to an annualized estimate of registered voters who moved. These assumptions result is a doubling of the estimated annual movers (since we are accounting for four years at diminishing proportions of affected registered voters). Also like Method 1, we apply alternative assumptions about the proportion of them that will vote in November.

RESULTS

Method 1: Census Estimated Movers and Assumed Proportion who Vote

Movers. The 2000 Census reports that 3,549,267 persons age 18 or older lived in a different house five years earlier. The computed annual rate is 709,853 persons and over four years this would result in 2,839,412 movers.

Former Address on ID. Since Ohio drivers are required to renew their driver's licenses every four years, we estimate that 1,419,706 persons may not have an updated address on their driver's license.⁴

Registered to Vote. Not all persons who are 18 or older are registered to vote. Recent registered voter counts and estimates of the voting age population from the 2004 American Community Survey (ACS) indicate that more than 90 percent of the voting age population is registered to vote – approximately 95 percent in the fall of 2004 and 92 percent in the fall of 2005 and February 2006. These percentages are inflated by the inactive registered voters in the state. Nevertheless, if assume a rate of 90 percent for the population that moved, we estimate that 1,277,735 persons without a current address on their driver's license are registered to vote.

Voter Participation. Voter participation rates vary depending on the election and public interest. Based on recent past elections in Ohio for this analysis we assume here that 50

⁴ Calculated as 2*709,853 (the number of annual movers). Doubling the annual number accounts for diminishing percentages over the four year period in which drivers must renew their licenses.

percent of the voting age population might vote in November 2006.⁵ Thus, in November, if migration rates noted above hold and those who move vote at the same rate as the general voting age population, 638,867 persons will have moved in the past four years, have an address on their driver's license that is not current, and will attempt to vote,.

However, it is also a reasonable hypotheses that those who move more frequently are less likely to vote. Renters have higher mobility rates than home owners and may be less likely to vote for a variety of reasons. Thus if we assume that the voting rate for movers is only 30 percent, rather than 50 percent, the estimated affected population is 383,321. The range of possible numbers of affected voters using these data and assumptions is therefore between 383,321 and 638,867.

While any of the assumptions that are applied here may be incorrect (in generating either incorrectly high or low estimates), we think that they provide a reasonable range of estimates of the number of potential voters who might experience difficulties in voting due to incorrect application of the address requirements concerning the voter ID. An estimate of approximately 511,000 persons is reasonable given this method.

Method 2: Register Voters who Moved and Assumed Proportion who Vote

The Data. We attempted to match the registered voters in the February 2006 statewide registered voter database with registered voters in the October 2004 database.⁶ The object was to identify those registered voters who had changed addresses in this period.⁷ The number of such changed addresses provides a more direct measure of registered voters who moved than the ACS-based method described above.

There are 7,714,795 registered voters in the February 2006 database and 7,986,053 in the October 2004 database. The 2004 election was a highly contested presidential election; the May 2006 election was a primary election with state office positions at stake.

Matching Voters. We matched a total of 7,247,132 of the February 2006 registered voters to the October 2004 database. That is, approximately 93.9 percent of those in the 2006 database were identified in the 2004 file. Most of these (5,337,587) were matched using unique state and county ID and the remainder by matching name, birth date, and date of registration. False matches are highly unlikely. The 467,663 unmatched records from the 2006 file consist of persons who were new to the state or to voting, or other factors. Some of the unmatched records may represent persons who would be identifiable in the earlier

⁵ See the Ohio Secretary of State's Internet site for data on number and percentages of registered voters and ballots cast - <http://www.sos.state.oh.us/>.

⁶ The selection of the October 2004 and February 2006 files was largely for expedience since these files were already available to us at the time the project started and delays in acquiring data from other periods, including more current 2006 data, would have delayed the analysis and limited time available for remedying the potential problem addressed. A more appropriate analysis would use registered voter data at two comparable elections to the one expected in November in regard to voter participation rates. However, a pair of such elections involving gubernatorial and other statewide offices and with the recent registered voter and balloting rates may not exist. We know of no substantial reason why use of these two files would not be sufficient for this analysis.

⁷ We assume the vast majority of these cases indicate the person moved.

file if IDs and other matching fields were correct in both files. Thus the matches constitute a minimum number of the same person appearing in both files.

Movers. Among the matched registered voters we found 438,219 in the 2006 file that had a different address in the 2004 file. These are assumed to be persons who moved during the period.

Annual Rate. Since the period between the two files is about a year and a third, we estimate that 325,101 of the 438,219 registered voters who moved would have moved in one year.⁸

Former Address on ID. We use similar assumptions to those we used in the first method. Since Ohio drivers are required to renew their driver's licenses every four years, we estimate that 650,202 persons may not have an updated address on their driver's license.⁹

Voter Participation. Again, not all of these recently moved registered voters will attempt to vote in November. If 50 percent do, then an estimated 325,101 of the estimated 650,202 registered voters with a former address on their driver's license will go to the polls in November.

However, this population of movers has demonstrated that they are interested in maintaining their franchise since they bothered to submit a change of address to their board of elections. Thus it is reasonable to assume that they will turn out at the polls at a higher rate than the general population of registered voters. If we apply a voter turnout rate of 75 percent, rather than 50 percent, we estimate that 487,651 will be at risk at the polls.¹⁰

As with Method 1 some or all of the assumptions that are applied here may be incorrect (in generating either incorrectly high or low estimates). However, we think that they provide a reasonable and conservative range of estimates of the number of potential voters who might experience difficulties in voting due to incorrect application of the address requirements concerning the voter ID. An estimate of approximately 406,000 persons, roughly midway between the high of 487,651 and low of 325,101 persons, is reasonable given this method.

SUMMARY and CONCLUSIONS

The following table provides the ranges of results discussed above and midpoint estimates for the most likely assumptions for voter participation rates.

⁸ One year, 365 days, is 74.187492% of the 492 days between the two databases

⁹ Calculated as $2 \times 325,101$ (the number of annual movers). Doubling the annual number accounts for diminishing percentages over the four year period in which drivers must renew their licenses.

¹⁰ Calculated as $0.75 \times 650,202$.

Our analysis indicates that the number of registered voters who have a driver’s license ID with a former address is approximately 1,277,000 for Method 1 and 650,000 for Method 2. The midpoint between these two independent estimates is approximately 964,000.

The number of persons attempting to vote in November with a driver’s license ID with a former address is approximately 511,000 using the midpoint of Method 1 estimates and approximately 406,000 using the midpoint of Method 2 estimates. An average of these two independent methods is approximately 458,000. The number could also be as high as approximately 638,000 or as low as 325,000 given the data and assumptions used in this analysis.

Assumptions		Method 1	Method 2
Movers over a four year period will have their former address on their driver's license 50% of the time - or double the annual number of movers.			
Registered Voters	90%	1,277,735	NA
	known from 2 files	NA	650,202
Average of Methods 1 and 2		963,969	
Voter participation rate (% of registered voters)	75%	NA	487,651
	50%	638,867	325,101
	30%	383,321	NA
Midpoint Voter Participation Estimate		511,094	406,376
Average of Methods 1 and 2		458,735	