



ELECTIONS BULLETIN

To: All Town and City Clerks
From: Kathy DeWolfe

IMPORTANT!!

Re: Statewide Checklist – Challenge & Purge
Date: May 2, 2008

If you have not adopted a practice of challenging voters each month, we strongly suggest that you review your entire checklist to challenge and purge voters prior to June 1, 2008. (This needs to be done at least 90 days before an election.)

REMOVING (Purging) VOTERS: There are a number of “tools” that can be used to remove voters. Some clerks and BCAs are not taking advantage of all the tools that can be used.

Reasons for Clerk to Remove Voters Immediately from Active or Inactive to Purged/Archived: No need to send a challenge letter or for the BCA to meet for these reasons! You can do these immediately.

- 1. Notice of Death** – Vermont law allows a town clerk to remove a voter from the voter checklist upon receipt of any notice of death—this is not limited to a Death Certificate (which are sometimes delayed or not sent from neighboring states)—it can be an obituary, public announcement, or a letter from family. The HAVA 2002 law also requires the VT Department of Health to notify the VT Secretary of State of death notices. Katie sends these notices to town and city clerks quarterly. PLEASE remove voter names immediately upon notice of death—family members sometimes report that it is emotionally painful to see the name of a deceased family member remaining on the checklist.
- 2. Written request of the voter:** This can come in many different forms. See 17 V.S.A. §2150(a)
 - The voter may sign a **DMV Change of Address Form** and check the box that the address change applies “for voting purposes,” i.e. applies to voter registration.
 - The voter may come into your office to do other business preparing to leave town and you can **ask the voter to sign a statement that he or she is leaving the town and consents to being removed** from the voter checklist. (You can use a copy of the challenge response letter.)
 - Some clerks send informal letters (with a challenge response letter form enclosed) to each voter who files a PTR (Property Transfer Return) indicating the sale of the voter’s property in town and providing a new address in another jurisdiction and asking for the response to be returned. When voters are asked right away when they are moving, they are more likely to respond.
- 3. Statewide Duplicate:**
 - If you see the voter in question has registered more recently in another town, you may purge him from your checklist. Use the “search for statewide checklist” box to help you search.
 - Make sure that you check the date of birth and the voter’s complete name. We suggest contacting the other town clerk to verify that it is the same person. We have had some voters with the same surname removed in error.

Office of the VT Secretary of State – Elections Division

Phone: (802) 828-2464 or Toll-Free (800) 439-8683

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CHALLENGING VOTERS:

Reasons to ask Board of Civil Authority to send Challenge Letters : This can be done **monthly or quarterly**. **Don't wait until September of odd-numbered years**, that is simply the time that the legislature requires clerks to notify our office that list maintenance is being done.

In fact, many clerks tell us that by working together with the BCA on a regular basis to determine which voters may have moved from their town or city and sending challenge letters as soon as the move has been noticed, the number of responses from voters to challenge letters is greatly increased.

Places you or BCA volunteers can look to find names of voters who may have moved include:

- Property Transfer Returns filed in your office – Many clerks review these monthly for filers who appear to have moved out of town.
- Returned mailings – Whenever any town department sends out mail and it is returned as undeliverable.
- NCOA (National Change of Address Files) – These can be purchased and run against the names and addresses in your checklist file. Newspaper articles, word-of-mouth notification from another town resident, telephone directories, street directories, etc. See 17 V.S.A. §2150(d) (2)
- Telephone or door-to-door canvasses can be done by members of the BCA to attempt to contact voters personally.
- Voters on your Drivers License Not Verified and SSN Not Verified lists. If you have voters on these lists who have been on there for months, have never returned your requests for more information, and have never come in to vote, they would be good candidates to challenge. Once challenged, the system will move these voters OFF your Not Verified status lists and onto your Inactive/Challenged list. Remember that you can look at their Voter History screens to see the dates they were originally added. Please call Katie (828-2464) if you have questions.

17 V.S.A. §2150(d)(3) authorizes the Board of Civil Authority to send a challenge letter to the voter who it has any reason to believe may have moved out of the town or city.

NOTE: You can use the “Batch Challenge Letter” feature on the Statewide Checklist to generate the letters to voters. This will record the date the voter is challenged. This will simplify the purging of voters after two general elections have passed if the voter has not responded to a challenge letter or participated in an election.

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