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I am David Becker, Director of Election Initiatives at The Pew Charitable Trusts. I am pleased to be here today to discuss important upgrades that will improve the accuracy and access of New Mexico's state voter registration system.

The Election Initiatives team helps states advance fiscally sound, data-driven policies and practices in election administration that foster elections that achieve the highest of standards accuracy, convenience, efficiency and security.

For the past five years, Pew has led research on the inefficiencies of state voter registration systems that create problems for voters at the polls. Our research reveals that, nationwide, one in eight voter registrations in the United States are no longer valid or are inaccurate. About 1.8 million deceased individuals remain on the voter rolls. Further, about 2.75 million voters were registered in more than one state, and 51 million Americans, or nearly a quarter of the voting eligible population, are not registered to vote.

The challenges to keeping voter rolls up-to-date while ensuring opportunity of access to all eligible residents are felt here in New Mexico and across the nation. States have the difficult responsibility of keeping pace with a mobile American society. Census data shows that about one in eight Americans move in a given year, and younger Americans move at nearly twice that rate. Voters who have recently moved are the most likely to experience a problem with voter registration. These problems result in more than mere inconvenience – in 2012 1.2 million eligible Americans were unable to cast a ballot due to voter registration problems.

Fortunately, there are cost-effective reforms that can mitigate these issues. Working with election officials and experts from across the country and with leading technical experts, Pew set out to find feasible, long term solutions. Our recommendations include:

- Offering voters the opportunity to register to vote entirely online, which minimizes manual data entry, and results in lower costs and fewer errors;
- Increasing the automation by which state voter registration agencies, such as the Motor Vehicle Division (MVD), collect and transfer voter registrations; and
- Comparing voter registration lists with other data sources to broaden the base of information used to update and verify voter rolls, through a data service run by the states called the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC).

Online voter registration is popular with the public and championed by election officials for reducing the chances of duplicate or inaccurate voter records, all at a lower cost to taxpayers than processing paper forms. Because applications come in electronically, the information is more accurate, as sloppy handwriting and data-entry errors are eliminated. Online voter registration also gives voters a convenient and secure tool to check their record prior to the registration deadline and correct any inaccuracies.

States that have moved the registration process online have realized substantial cost savings. Pew research from Maricopa County, Arizona, home of Phoenix, found that on average, it cost 83 cents to process a paper registration form compared to just 3 cents to process an online application. Other states have estimated similar, and some even more dramatic, savings. Other states have seen similar savings, as in California, the Secretary of State's office calculated that each registration it receives electronically saves the state $2.34 per application compared to paper.

Online voter registration is also a more secure path to registration, as no third parties handle the form and each electronic application is verified against an existing record on file with the state, typically a state licensing or identification record. This additional check goes beyond the verification process for paper registration, providing for additional integrity. And no state with online voter registration has experienced a security breach or any alleged voter registration fraud through online registration.

The clear benefits of moving the registration process online have led to fifteen states now offering full online voter registration, and five more have passed legislation and are in the process of building their systems. These states make up a politically and geographically diverse group (see the attached map). Research suggests there is no partisan impact from online voter registration, and reports from the states with online registration confirm that online registrants mirror the overall electorate.

Equally important to providing New Mexicans secure, convenient ways to register online, the Secretary of State should have secure access to advanced technology to manage data on voters that will result in cleaner, more complete voter rolls in New Mexico.

As indicated above, states are aware of the challenges in keeping their voter lists up-to-date in our mobile society. As people move, or people die, it's very difficult for election officials to get current information to update their lists with confidence, ensuring that records that are out-of-date can be flagged, while also making sure no records of eligible voters are removed.

To address this problem, a group of pioneering states founded the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) in 2012 with support from Pew. ERIC is a sophisticated data center owned, managed, and funded by state election officials with the sole mission of improving the access and efficiency of state voter registration systems. The seven states are Colorado, Delaware, Maryland, Nevada, Utah, Virginia, and Washington, with several more states expected to join soon.

States participating in ERIC gain access to records from neighboring states, as well as data from other official sources, such as the US Postal Service and death records from the Social Security Administration. Unlike any tool previously available to election officials, ERIC uses advanced software matches records from multiple data sources simultaneously, and thereby maximizes the quality of and confidence in possible matches. States then receive reports from ERIC that reveal voters who have moved or died, voters with duplicate registrations, and eligible citizens who are not yet registered to vote. ERIC was designed to provide actionable data, pointing election officials to records that may be outdated or no longer accurate so that the voter can be contacted, consistent with federal and state laws, such as the National Voter Registration Act, and the record can be updated.

ERIC has already enabled participating states to proactively improve the quality and accuracy of their voter rolls beyond that which was possible before. ERIC has identified over 850,000 records of voters who had moved from the address on file, in just the seven states currently participating. ERIC also identified just over 23,000 records of deceased individuals still on the rolls in those seven states. For instance, in Washington, the Secretary of State's office found that ERIC identified over 30 percent more records of deceased individuals on the rolls than the state was able to discover on its own.

ERIC's data is collected, matched, and stored in a secure environment, and its technical and governing models have been reviewed and commended by leading advocates in the fields of data security and privacy, including the Center for Democracy and Technology. Only data directly relevant and necessary for voter registration is input into ERIC, and any private data is anonymized before it leaves a state's control, rendering it useless to potential hackers. Furthermore, ERIC fosters better security by enabling participating states to direct more of their registration activity away from unsecure paper and towards efficient and cost-effective online voter registration.

That's why Colorado Secretary of State Scott Gessler, in his official 2012 General Election Review, stated that "[p]articipation in ERIC facilitated dramatic increases in voter registration" while "ERIC will fulfill its second goal by identifying people registered in more than one state." http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/newsRoom/publications/2012GeneralElectionReview.pdf

By expanding the New Mexico online registration system to new voters, the state will be expanding the cost-savings while improving the integrity of the rolls. ERIC would enable state election officials to better keep the state's voter lists complete and accurate at all times.

Thank you, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.