

On June 28, Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, vice chairman of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity, created by executive order in May, sent a letter to election authorities in all 50 states requesting voter data.

Requested information includes registrants' full names, addresses, dates of birth, political parties, the last four digits of their social security numbers, a list of the elections they voted in since 2006, information on any felony convictions and whether they were registered to vote in other states, their military status or if they live overseas. The letter states, "It is crucial for the Commission to consider your input as it collects data and identifies areas of opportunity to increase the integrity of our election systems to the public."

Chris Carson, President of the League of Women Voters, immediately released this statement:

"There is no justification for this giant fishing expedition. The Commission itself is a distraction from the real issue of voter suppression...efforts to 'investigate voter fraud' threaten our most fundamental voting rights.

"This...move by Mr. Kobach is an indicator that the so-called Election 'Integrity' Commission is not interested in facts, but false accusations and dangerous policy recommendations.

"State laws govern the release of voter registration information, and, at a minimum, election officials must follow those laws before releasing data. The League stands with those state leaders who have already come out to support their voters and refuse these requests....

Voter protection and unfettered access to voting are principles bedrock to the League of Women Voters of Illinois' mission.

In Illinois, the election authority to which the Kobach request was sent is the State Board of Elections (SBE). On Friday, July 7th, the SBE, through its General Counsel, Kenneth Menzel, advised the Kobach Commission that "...our agency does not have any material responsive to the Commission's request," further stating that the Illinois Election Code "protects the confidentiality and privacy of voter registration data...."

The League of Women Voters of Illinois is grateful to the State Board of Elections who joins at least 45 (including Kansas, where Mr. Kobach is the Secretary of State) other state election authorities in refusing to release detailed, sensitive information on their states' voters. The SBE meets again on August 22nd where this issue is likely to be on the agenda; we hope the SBE will maintain its current position on the release of voter data. We fear how Illinois citizens would be subjected to those using the information for non-election or commercial purposes. A greater fear is the data will be used to enact a stringent voter law intended to suppress the vote. Please call the State Board of Elections (217-782-4141) and urge them to stand firm in their current position.

Bonnie K. Cox

President, League of Women Voters of Illinois

