



## **Response to Representative Wes Allen**

In his recent electronic posting, Representative Wes Allen (R-Troy) falsely claimed that the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) is a “Soros-funded, leftist group.” Both assertions are patently false, and they show a lack of understanding about how the elections process works in our state.

First and foremost, ERIC was not founded nor funded by George Soros, and to claim otherwise is either dishonest or misinformed. ERIC was founded by the original seven-member states: Colorado, Delaware, Maryland, Nevada, Utah, Virginia, and Washington with the assistance of Pew Charitable Trusts. Also, ERIC’s operating costs are funded completely by annual dues paid by member states, not by George Soros.

In 2015, the legislature passed Act 2015-459, which authorized “the Secretary of State to enter into agreements to share information with other states in order to maintain the statewide voter registration database.” I asked a freshman legislator, with great promise, to carry this bill for our office, and it was his first piece of meaningful legislation. That freshman legislator was Lieutenant Governor Will Ainsworth. In 2016, Alabama was certified to join ERIC. Also, it is important to note that currently ERIC is the only organization capable of providing the necessary data for proper voter list maintenance.

In Alabama, ERIC is used to preserve a clean and accurate voter list and to contact eligible residents who are not registered voters. Each month, we provide ERIC with a voters list and driver’s license data, and we receive information from

ERIC for voter list maintenance in return. Monthly, our office receives a list of voter records that potentially need to be removed or inactivated based on deceased records from the Social Security Administration, potential duplicate voter records in Alabama, or voters that have potentially moved out of the state.

Since joining the program in 2016, ERIC has identified more than 19,000 voter records of potentially deceased Alabama voters that died in this state or another ERIC member state. 98% of those voter records are no longer on the Alabama voter rolls. ERIC identified more than 222,000 voter records of potential cross-state movers from voter lists and driver's license information obtained from other ERIC member states. 90% of those identified voter records are either no longer on the Alabama voter rolls or have been placed on a path to be removed in accordance with federal law. ERIC identified more than 24,000 voter records of potential duplicate registered voters in which an Alabama voter had duplicate records with potential inaccurate data. ERIC helped us match these voter records, and 95% of those duplicate records are no longer on the Alabama voter rolls.

Annually, our office receives a list of individuals that have received a driver's license or non-driver's identification card and are not registered voters. Once a year, we reach out to all eligible individuals via a postcard that contains information on how to register to vote. Every two years, with data from ERIC, we perform a voter participation review to determine whether individuals potentially voted more than once in Alabama or voted once in Alabama and once in another state for the same election.

These election security measures would not be possible without our partnership with ERIC. Our office does not have direct access to other states' voter databases or driver's license records. ERIC does. Our office does not have the authority or capability to securely store other states' information. ERIC does. Our office does not have the certification and license requirement to access the Social Security Administration Death Master Index. ERIC does. Finally, neither the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency nor our office have the ability to compare driver's license records for our state with other states for the purpose of voter list maintenance. ERIC does. ERIC has helped us to remove more than 1,350,000

ineligible voters from the rolls in the last six years.

If elected as Secretary of State, how would Representative Wes Allen ensure that voters who have moved or have passed away are purged from our voters list without the necessary data that ERIC provides? By leaving ERIC for cheap political points, Representative Allen could undermine the election security measures that have made Alabama the gold standard for election integrity throughout the nation.

Another flagrant mischaracterization by Representative Allen is the assertion that Alabamians' information is transmitted to nefarious actors. This could not be further from the truth. ERIC's membership agreement strictly prohibits them from selling, sharing, or disclosing Alabama's data to any person, party, organization, or group. Also, the data is protected under the Federal Driver's Privacy Protection Act (DPPA), and the data is not public record.

Representative Allen has been rather quick to demand that Alabama end its relationship with ERIC. Hopefully, he will also be timely in outlining how he would end our relationship with ERIC, while simultaneously maintaining election security without access to the necessary data, legal authority, or capability to conduct proper voter list maintenance. The State of Alabama could spend tens of millions of taxpayer dollars on a recurring annual basis and still not be able to provide the same level of services. While I am still Secretary of State, we will always choose election integrity, security, accountability, and transparency, along with sound and responsible financial decision-making over scoring cheap political points and to continue to ensure that it is easy to vote and hard to cheat. Let's hope whomever the voters of Alabama elect to succeed me will do the same.

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