

How do we keep voter registration lists “clean” in Maryland?

Maryland follows federal law. The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 defines the process of removing a voter from the voter registration list. Sometimes we can remove a voter’s name without the voter confirming the action, but other times, the voter must confirm by signature the removal. Under this law, we can’t remove a voter just because he or she doesn’t vote.

When can we remove a voter’s name from the voter registration list?

We can remove a voter from the list without further confirmation if:

- The voter asks by signature to have his or her registration cancelled or
- We learn from Maryland’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene that the voter has died.

We can also remove a voter after notifying the voter if:

- The voter has been convicted of a felony and is in prison
- The voter is under a mental disability and a court has specifically found that the voter can’t communicate a desire to participate in the voting process
- The voter has been convicted of buying or selling votes
- A jury commission notifies us that a voter has moved, died, or is a non-citizen
- The Social Security Administration reports that the voter has died

When we receive this information, we send a letter asking the voter to explain why his or her registration should not be cancelled. If the voter doesn’t respond to the letter within 2 weeks, the voter’s registration is cancelled.

What happens if a voter moves to another state?

If the voter tells us by signature that he or she has moved, we remove the voter’s name.

Most of time, we learn from other sources that a voter has moved. For example, the United States Postal Service returns a voter’s sample ballot and provides the voter’s new address. When we receive this information, we send a letter asking the voter to confirm where he or she lives. The letter is sent by forwardable mail and includes a return card for the voter to use to tell us his or her new address. This is the called “confirmation mail” process and is required by federal law.

If the voter returns the card and confirms that he or she has moved to another state, we cancel the voter’s registration.

If the voter doesn't respond to the mailing within 2 weeks, the voter becomes an "inactive voter." If the "inactive voter" doesn't vote or try to vote in the next two election cycles (four years), the voter's registration will be cancelled. Again, this process is required by federal law.

If I'm designated as an "inactive voter" may I still vote?

Yes, as an "inactive voter" your name will appear in the electronic pollbook. The check-in judge will ask you to confirm your residential address and the voter registration record will be returned to an "active" status.