



SUMMARY

A REVIEW OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA ELECTION PROCESS



JANUARY 2024

VOTER REGISTRATION LIST MAINTENANCE

INDIVIDUALS WHO MAY HAVE VIOLATED STATE LAW

Among SEC’s list of 3.7 million registered voters, we found instances of individuals who may have violated state law, but further investigation by a law enforcement agency is needed to verify any criminality. We also found a few thousand individuals whose statuses were listed as active who should not be active. We found no incidences where non-U.S. citizens with state IDs or driver’s licenses had voted.

3	Ballots cast in elections spanning 2022-2023 under a dead registered voter’s name.
1,502	Dead individuals whose voter registration status was listed as active as of March 1, 2023.
10	SCDC inmates who voted in elections spanning 2010-2021 while incarcerated.
203	SCDC inmates whose voter registration status was listed as active as of March 1, 2023.
212	PPP offenders who voted in elections spanning 2000-2022 while on probation or parole for a felony offense.
1,189	PPP offenders on probation or parole for a felony offense whose voter registration status was listed as active as of March 1, 2023.

DUPLICATIVE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

In analyzing SEC’s voter registration list as of March 1, 2023, we found 4,950 registered voters with duplicative Social Security numbers and 766 registered voters whose name, Social Security number, and date of birth had multiple matches.

UTILIZATION OF ERIC INFORMATION AND RISING COSTS

In 2018, SEC joined the Electronic Registration and Information Center (ERIC), an organization that helps states in voter registration list maintenance and voter registration outreach efforts. Since joining, SEC has paid over \$200,000 in membership dues and over \$300,000 on mailings the organization requires its members to send to unregistered residents. However, SEC has not implemented all voter registration list maintenance reports that could allow the agency to determine instances of improper voting. Moreover, SEC’s membership dues will likely increase in the future as nine states, including several in the Southeast, have left the organization since 2022.

SECURITY AND INVENTORY ISSUES

VULNERABILITIES AT COUNTY ELECTION OFFICES AND STORAGE FACILITIES

Based on physical security assessments conducted in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security, SEC learned multiple county election offices and storage facilities have insufficient or no lighting, cameras, locks, panic alarms, and back-up power generators. Despite receiving several million dollars from the federal government in HAVA funding,

SEC has given no money to county election offices to improve their physical security vulnerabilities even though these funds can be used for this purpose.

NO INVENTORY OF VOTING EQUIPMENT

SEC never created an inventory list of voting equipment procured using state funds. Since 2021, SEC has spent more than \$450,000 on a cloud-based asset management system and has not fully implemented it.

Members of the S.C. General Assembly requested that we review the state’s overall process for handling elections.

OBJECTIVES

- Review South Carolina’s overall process for handling elections.
- Examine state/county relationship regarding the administration of elections.
- Review the process for maintaining voter registration records.
- Conduct a follow-up of the 2013 LAC report *A Review of Voting Machines in South Carolina*.

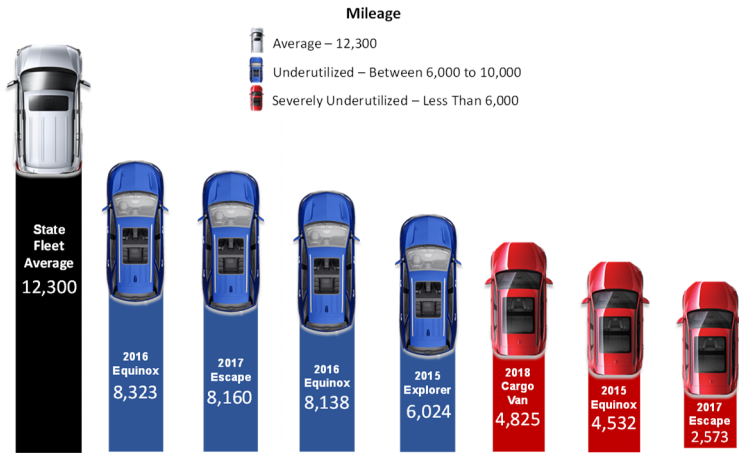
BACKGROUND

The State Election Commission (SEC) is South Carolina’s chief election agency. The agency:

- Maintains the statewide voter registration system.
- Supervises 46 county boards of voter registration and elections.
- Performs audits and post-election analyses of county boards of registration and elections.
- Conducts training and certification programs for local election officials.

While SEC has numerous responsibilities regarding South Carolina’s election system, elections in South Carolina are run by the 46 county boards of voter registration and election. Among the responsibilities of the county boards are the registration of voters and establishing voting locations.

SEC'S AVERAGE UTILIZATION OF VEHICLES PER YEAR (IN MILES)



PROCUREMENT

PROCUREMENT OF TEN NEW SUVs

SEC spent approximately half a million dollars in state funds in FY 22-23 to procure 10 additional SUVs despite having an unsound justification for purchasing these vehicles and the fact that the agency underutilized or significantly underutilized the SUVs it already owned.

SOLE SOURCE PROCUREMENT VIOLATIONS

SEC awarded a cloud-based election asset management program contract and a ballot tracking solution contract to EasyVote Solutions, LLC in violation of the S.C Consolidated Procurement Code.

PRIVATE GRANTS

For the 2020 election, 41 of the 46 county election offices received \$5,201,955.25 from the Center for Tech and Civil Life, and some counties used these funds to purchase vehicles and to give extra pay to county election board members and staff at county election office. For the 2020 election, SEC received \$1,267,500 in Center for Election Innovation and Research grant funding and the agency spent most of this grant funding (\$1,069,727.23) on advertising services provided by Chernoff Newman.

POST-ELECTION AUDITS

Our review of hand count audits of the 2022 general election found counties did not uniformly conduct hand count audits or provide public notice of hand count audits. Additionally, SEC assigned Dorchester and Sumter counties to conduct a hand count audit of early voting for the 2022 general election but failed to do so. Florence County incorrectly conducted its hand count audit and had to redo it the next day.

ELECTION LAW CHANGES

Act 150 revised the state's ballot collection law by limiting the number of absentee ballots an individual may return on behalf of others to five (not including the returnee's absentee ballot). During the 2022 election cycle, we found one person violated the new ballot collection law by returning 12 absentee ballots during the 2022 primary election and another person potentially violated the new ballot collection by returning 6 absentee ballots during the 2022 general election.

BOARD MEMBER TRAINING

There are 50 board of voter registration and election members in 26 counties missing statutorily required continuing education credits. However, SEC has few remedies to sanction individuals who have not received proper training.

ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

Electronic poll books used during the 2022 general election showed people who had already voted during early voting period as still being eligible to vote on election day. This created a situation where early voters could vote more than once, but SEC did not receive any reports that any person took advantage of this error.

SOUTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Legislative Audit Council

Independence, Reliability, Integrity

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