

Trump Administration Has Sued More than 20 States for Refusing to Turn Over Voter Files

The Justice Department's attempts to collect sensitive voter information are part of a plan to interfere with elections.



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[Voting & Elections](#)

The Trump administration's [campaign](#) ^[link-1] to undermine future elections is in full swing. One part of that campaign is its bid to sweep up voter rolls across the nation, which began last spring and has now made its way to the courts. Make no mistake about what these actions represent: an attempt to take over election administration, a

role that the Constitution grants to states, not the federal government.

Since May 2025, the Justice Department has demanded full, unredacted voter rolls — which would include driver's license and partial Social Security numbers — from at least 44 states and the District of Columbia. Most have refused to provide these records

and have instead provided publicly available versions of their voter files. Since September, the DOJ has sued 24 of those jurisdictions for refusing to hand over their voters' sensitive information. Courts in

[California](#) [\[link-2\]](#) and

[Oregon](#) [\[link-3\]](#) have already rejected the DOJ's claims that it is entitled to the unredacted voter files. The Brennan Center is using public reporting to track the DOJ's voter data requests and states' responses [here](#) [\[link-4\]](#).

The Trump administration's bid to collect full voter rolls from nearly every state in the nation is unprecedented and cause for concern. States alone have the authority to run elections, which includes the responsibility of

maintaining accurate voter rolls, also known as list maintenance. This entails registering eligible voters and removing voters who have moved, passed away, or otherwise become ineligible.

States have the expertise and tools to keep voter lists accurate and up to date, and they have procedures in place to ensure that only eligible American citizens are included on the rolls. The federal government has neither the authority nor the resources to conduct list maintenance, yet the Trump administration has made clear that one of its goals in collecting nationwide voter files is to run its own [analyses](#) [\[link-5\]](#) and attempt to force states to remove voters from the rolls based on incomplete and likely inaccurate information.

The Justice Department, which is
now [led](#) [\[link-6\]](#) and [staffed](#) [\[link-7\]](#)

by [people](#) [\[link-8\]](#) who spent years
unsuccessfully disputing the results

of the 2020 election, might also use these voter files to sow distrust in the election system ahead of the upcoming midterm elections. In addition, there are serious privacy and security risks inherent to amassing a vast collection of personal information about citizens across the country. Without a doubt, such a trove of personal data would be a prime target for hackers, and unauthorized individuals could disclose or misuse the information.

The demands for voter rolls are not justified by federal law and, in many instances, may [violate state law](#) [\[link-9\]](#). In its letters and lawsuits demanding voter rolls from the states, the Justice Department claims that the Civil Rights Act of 1960 grants it the authority to collect this information. Under that law, the attorney general is permitted to request records “relating to any application, registration, payment of poll tax, or other act requisite to voting in such

election.” However, the law requires that the DOJ provide “the basis and the purpose” for the request.

In the states where the administration has attempted to articulate “the basis and the purpose” for these sweeping requests, it has claimed that it needs the voter files to ensure compliance with the National Voter Registration Act and the Help America Vote Act. But it fails to explain how these statutes provide the required basis and purpose to obtain sensitive information such as driver’s license and Social Security numbers. Both laws require states to conduct general programs of list maintenance that make a reasonable effort to remove people who should no longer be voting. But a single snapshot of the voter rolls doesn’t provide enough information to evaluate a state’s list-maintenance programs. The administration’s true motives for the collection of this data are hard

to discern but are becoming clearer as these cases proceed.

In dismissing the DOJ's case against California for its voter rolls, the court [stated](#) [\[link-10\]](#), “While the DOJ has told this Court that its purpose for demanding the sensitive voter information of Californians is ‘voter roll maintenance enforcement and compliance,’ representations made by the DOJ elsewhere paint a starkly different picture that this Court cannot ignore.”

The judge went on to discuss various statements by DOJ officials that led him to conclude that “the DOJ’s campaign to collect sensitive

voter data . . . paints an alarming picture regarding the centralization of Americans’ information within the Executive Branch — without approval from Congress or Americans themselves.”

The states are vigorously defending their voters against these lawsuits, and nonpartisan organizations, including some represented by the Brennan Center, are fighting to protect voters’ privacy and the integrity of the election system itself. The Brennan Center will keep this [tracker](#) [\[link-11\]](#) updated with important developments in the cases.

Links

link-1: campaign <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/timeline-trump-administrations-efforts-undermine-elections>

link-2: California <https://www.brennancenter.org/media/14943/download/128-court-granted-defendant-and-intervenors-mtd-2026-01-15.pdf?inline=1>

link-3: Oregon <https://www.courthousenews.com/judge-rules-oregon-wont-need-to-hand-over-unredacted-voter-rolls-to-trump-admin/>

link-4: here <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/tracker-justice-department-requests-voter-information>

link-5: analyses <https://www.brennancenter.org/media/14806/download/2025-12-01-doj-mou-to-colorado.pdf?inline=1&inline=1>

link-6: led <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/nov/29/2020-election-deniers-trump>

link-7: staffed <https://www.democracymachine.com/news-alerts/new-doj-voting-lawyer-spread-conspiracy-theory-about-dominion-voting-machines/>

link-8: people <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2025/12/eric-neff-new-justice-department-voting-rights-chief-had-prior-job-suspension-for-ties-to-election-deniers/>

link-9: violate state law <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/requests-access-election-data-and-equipment-require-balancing-risks-and>

link-10: stated <https://www.brennancenter.org/media/14943/download/128-court-granted-defendant-and-intervenors-mtd-2026-01-15.pdf?inline=1>

link-11: tracker <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/tracker-justice-department-requests-voter-information>