

The State of Texas



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David Whitley
Secretary of State

February 13, 2019

The Honorable Dawn Buckingham
Texas Senate
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711-2068

Dear Senator Buckingham:

Last week, I was deeply humbled to appear before the Texas Senate Committee on Nominations to discuss my qualifications to serve as Texas' 112th Secretary of State.

In succeeding all of the outstanding men and women who have served in this position, I have sought to demonstrate to all Texans that I am prepared to take on the responsibilities of the job.

The cornerstone upon which our nation is founded – the right to vote – must be supported by a strong foundation of laws, a code of ethics, and an assurance that everyone who participates in our democracy plays by the same rules.

The Secretary of State is required by law to ensure that voter rolls are accurate and do not include persons who are ineligible to vote while ensuring that all eligible voters can participate in the electoral process. The tasks are complementary: they promote integrity in elections and that, in turn, promotes voter turnout. Democracy in Texas will be strengthened and will endure by striving to achieve two goals: protecting the integrity of elections and combating voter suppression. I will never waver in my commitment to achieving those goals.

Regardless of whether voters were born in the United States or have dedicated themselves to become naturalized U.S. citizens, all eligible Texans deserve to have their voices heard in our democracy. I will faithfully and fully discharge my duty to ensure everyone who is qualified to vote has access to the ballot box.

As Secretary of State, it is my responsibility to ensure that no eligible voters are discouraged from exercising their most fundamental right.

Last month, my office announced the beginning of a list maintenance process, in accordance with state and federal law, to ensure the accuracy of our state's voter rolls. The purpose is to make sure that every single eligible voter has a voice at the ballot box, and that voters who have not attained citizenship do not register and cast ballots in Texas elections.

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From the beginning, my intent has been to promote maximum transparency to the public. Like any state agency, we are held accountable to the Texans we serve on a daily basis.

As Texas Secretary of State, I expect to be held accountable every day for my service to the voters of Texas.

After close consultation with the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), the counties, and members of the Texas Legislature, I have discovered that additional refining of the data my office provides to county voter registrars, both in substance and in timing, is necessary to ensure a more accurate and efficient list maintenance process.

My office devoted significant time and effort to educating local registrars about the upcoming list maintenance activity. In hindsight, however, before announcing the number of people who may not be eligible to vote, more time should have been devoted to additional communication with the counties and DPS to further eliminate anyone from our original list who is, in fact, eligible to vote. Moreover, the announcement could have been communicated better by including more substance from the election advisory, and by emphasizing my goal to ensure that no qualified voters are removed from the rolls. I recognize this caused some confusion about our intentions, which were at all times aimed at maintaining the accuracy and integrity of the voter rolls. To the extent my actions missed that mark, I apologize.

I want to personally commit to you and your constituents that I will do everything in my power as Texas Secretary of State to protect all eligible Texans' right to vote, and to provide regular and transparent updates on the progress of my office's ongoing list maintenance activities.

I am committed to serving honorably and working with you to help address the challenges of maintaining a free and fair electoral system. I hope to engage more Texans than ever before in the democratic process, and to continue protecting our most cherished right.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Whitley". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Whitley
Texas Secretary of State