

Justice Department Seeks Voter and Election Data from States

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The U.S. Department of Justice has requested comprehensive election records and voter registration data from at least 19 states, sparking concern among state officials about voter privacy and federal overreach. The requests, made over recent months, seek information tied to the 2020 and 2024 elections and have drawn resistance from both Republican- and Democrat-led states.

According to documents reviewed by the *Associated Press*, the Justice Department asked for full voter registration lists, data on how states maintain and update their rolls, and details on any noncitizens removed from the records. Additionally, officials requested technical information about voting machines and procedures used by local election offices. The requests reference a Trump-era executive order focused on enhancing election integrity and enforcing compliance with voting laws.

Several state election officials have raised legal and constitutional objections. Some states have declined to provide the data, citing conflicts with state laws that protect voter information. Others are seeking clarification from federal officials before proceeding. Election leaders in both major parties have voiced concern that the request could undermine public confidence in electoral systems.

The inquiry represents a noticeable shift in focus by the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. Traditionally tasked with safeguarding voting access and combating voter suppression, the division appears now to be aligning its priorities with a renewed federal emphasis on investigating voter fraud and administrative compliance.

Former Justice Department officials have criticised the move. David Becker, a former DOJ attorney, described the effort as “a fishing expedition,” questioning both its scope and legal basis. Voting rights advocates also warn that the action could lead to the formation of an informal federal database of voters, heightening risks to privacy and election independence.

Some requests reportedly lacked clarity on legal authority, leading experts to argue the department could be overstepping its jurisdiction.

Civil liberties groups are also watching the situation closely, warning that vague references to executive orders cannot substitute for established legal procedures.

With midterm elections approaching in 2026, the timing of these inquiries has added to the scrutiny. Secretaries of state from several jurisdictions have called for discussions with the Justice Department to clarify the intent and legality of the requests. As the situation evolves, the conflict underscores ongoing tensions over federal involvement in state-administered elections.