

# VOTER REGISTRARS ASSOCIATION OF VIRGINIA



May 23, 2007

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The Honorable Valarie Jones, Acting Secretary  
State Board of Elections  
200 N. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 101  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Acting Secretary Jones:

As you know, the Virginia Election and Registration Information System (VERIS), a replacement for the Virginia Voter Registration System (VVRS) was launched on February 1, 2007. Since the launch of VERIS, we have discovered many problems with VERIS, such as:

1. Under certain circumstances VERIS has been assigning voters to the incorrect precinct, not always with the knowledge of the registrar.
2. Voters entered into VERIS have been mysteriously disappearing, despite the confirmation of their entry on subsequent reports.
3. Pollbooks generated from VERIS have had as many as 25% of the registered voters omitted.
4. The use of the United States Postal Database is resulting in significant complications in entering voters because of its known unreliability and inaccuracies.
5. It has been reported that during data conversion from the old computer system to VERIS, if the USPS database did not recognize the street address of a voter, VERIS would change the voter's address randomly to something the database would recognize. In other words, the system *changed* a voter's address without any interaction from a registrar to do so.
6. When absentee voting for the June Primary began on May 14, the labels required to mail ballots to voters were not printing properly. The printing of a Certificate of Mailing, required by law, had been totally omitted.

These and other problems found are very disappointing because many of them represent the most fundamental requirements of an automated voter registration system, but they fail in VERIS.

These failures are even more disturbing when considering that one-week prior to the launch of VERIS, the Secretary of the State Board of Elections (SBE) stated in an email to all general registrars that:

"VERIS has been completely tested. The system will perform all of the functions required for you to do your job. ... Finally, because the system has been so thoroughly tested, you are not being asked to test the system."

The empirical evidence represented in part by the above list makes it very clear that VERIS was NOT properly tested as announced. One can only wonder what other problems will surface as time passes.

At this point, it is not known how many voters are improperly recorded in VERIS. It is unknown how many voters will report to vote in the upcoming primary election or the November general election who will find their addresses different, their names omitted from the pollbook, or who will be told they are at the wrong precinct, all because of the failures of VERIS. These instances will do nothing but erode voter confidence and have blame placed unfairly and inappropriately on the general registrars and other local election officials.

The Executive Board of VRAV is of the opinion that the integrity of the electoral system in Virginia is in jeopardy because of the failures of VERIS. We want to work with SBE to correct VERIS, but we are dissatisfied with the processes and the approaches that have been taken and we are dissatisfied with the response from the vendor, QUEST.

In view of the previous misrepresentations by SBE regarding the readiness of VERIS, and the loss of legacy functionality in VERIS from the VVRS, we are not convinced that SBE can do what is right to fix VERIS. We are asking that VRAV have a role in decision making for the repairs of VERIS. We recommend the following steps:

1. An "all stop" should be ordered as soon after the primary election as possible, suspending the use of VERIS in production mode.
2. Any persons left working on VERIS that were involved at the time of the misinformation regarding the testing (and there is at least one that is known) should be dismissed from the project immediately. These are the ones who made and continue to make poor decisions.
3. Between "all stop" and July 31, extensive testing should be conducted in a joint effort of VRAV and your new administration at the State Board of Elections, with emphasis and primary direction allowed to the registrars through VRAV. VERIS would re-launch on August 1.

4. QUEST should be required during that time to have developers on site in Richmond with directives to fix identified problems in a timeframe of hours (not the current timeframe of months). Payments due QUEST should halt.
5. Finally, QUEST should be directed to remove from VERIS any reliance on the USPS database for voter address verification; this action should be restored to our reliable street file from VVRS. (It is known that updates to the USPS database in VERIS will take months to occur. Meanwhile, we are all the more delayed in the proper processing of voter applications.)

Within the membership of VRAV, there are those who can offer experience and expertise – previously declined by SBE – to help in fixing VERIS.

Let us join together to fix VERIS and avoid a Constitutional crisis. Let us remember the poor decisions, the poor planning, and poor implementation and let us pledge to one another that we will not repeat them. Let us hold accountable those responsible then and now and require a truly reliable VERIS. Let US – SBE and VRAV – tackle this problem together, beginning with the implementation of the above recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lawrence C. Haake, III  
President

Copy: The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine, Governor of Virginia  
The Honorable Viola O. Baskerville, Secretary of Administration  
The Honorable Lacy E. Putney, Chairman House Privileges and Elections  
The Honorable Stephen H. Martin, Chairman Senate Privileges and Elections  
Ms. Margaret Luca, President Virginia Electoral Board Association