



DENISE W. MERRILL
SECRETARY OF THE STATE
CONNECTICUT

July 2, 2017

Kris Kobach, Vice Chair
Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity
Via email: ElectionIntegrityStaff@ovp.eop.gov

Mr. Kobach:

I am in receipt of your request of information and have concluded that fulfilling your request is not in the best interest of Connecticut residents.

In America, our elections are administered by state and local government, those closest to the people. Each state determines its own procedures of who, what, where, when and how a voter becomes registered and casts a ballot. As Connecticut's Secretary of the State I am charged with the responsibility to ensure free, fair and accurate elections and my duty is to the residents of Connecticut, first and foremost.

Your request of information is overly broad and requires the sharing of Connecticut residents' personally identifiable information for the vague purpose of "analyzing vulnerabilities and issues related to voter registration and voting". Your request fails to outline any legal authority of the Commission and lacks the detailed assurances necessary regarding how to safeguard the personally identifiable information you are attempting to obtain.

I am particularly troubled by the fact that while you request files with personally identifiable information, there is no mention of how you intend to protect those who are eligible for specific confidentiality terms under state law such as victims of domestic violence and law enforcement officers.

Before further consideration of your attempts to gain the personal information of Connecticut's citizens, I must insist on transparency on your part regarding the authorities and intent of this commission. In particular:

- Will the Commissions meeting schedule, minutes, and testimony be posted online?
- What will be the process for public comment?

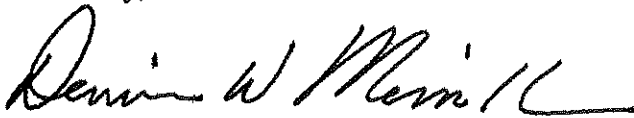
- Does the Commission acknowledge that Russia *attempted* to affect the outcome of the 2016 election and that the Russians *attempted* to hack into election systems?
- What is the Commission's role in protecting our electoral infrastructure from the sabotage of foreign nations or other types of malicious acts?
- Is the information submitted to the Commission required to be available to the public under the rules of Freedom of Information laws?
- Will the voter databases and personally identifiable information requested by the Commission subject to Freedom of Information laws?
- What is the purpose of providing the state's voter registration database?
- Will there be an attempt to match records into some national dataset and if so what is the methodology and data points being matched? Will the Commission use the methodology of Kris Kobach's "Interstate Crosscheck" program which has a long history of poor quality data matches that ultimately are determined to be "false positives"?

Finally, I think it important to provide this guidance for your deliberations.

The most urgent and immediate crisis facing our democracy today is the mounting evidence that Russian agents probed our election systems for vulnerabilities. And yet, it is the decentralized nature of our electoral system that has protected in these circumstances. To my mind the answer is clear: provide for states the resources to defend their election infrastructures from such invasions and support a strong, inclusive, transparent democracy that makes it easy for all Americans to participate.

Let us work together to ensure the confidence of voters in our system based on meeting the challenges that are already identified, and avoid wasting precious time and resources on overly broad and unfocused requests for information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denise W. Merrill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Denise W. Merrill
Connecticut Secretary of the State