



Are there really dead people on voter rolls, as Trump says?

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Newton residents voted at Grace Episcopal Church in November.

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

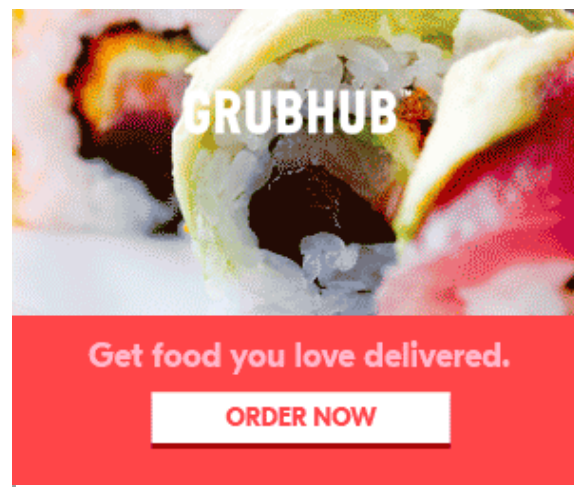
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President Donald Trump asserts that there are large numbers of people registered to vote in the United States who are dead or registered to vote in multiple states.

And he's right.

But Trump's claim that millions of people actually cast ballots fraudulently — including by using a deceased person's identity or voting in more than one state — is not supported by evidence.

If anything, there's significant evidence that voter fraud is exceedingly rare.



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So, why are there dead people on voter rolls and people registered in more than one state?

Each state maintains its own voter registration database.

State and local election organizers say that while they tend to keep good track of voters who move or die within their state, they are not always able to track when registered voters move out of state or if they die outside of a given state.

As a result, the voter rolls — the lists of people who are registered to vote — are believed to be inflated in many states, including in Massachusetts.

As the Globe reported in November, Massachusetts voter rolls listed 4.5 million registrations at the time. But an



untold number — potentially as high as 1 million registrations — should have no longer been on the books.

Eventually such individuals are removed from voter rolls because of processes in place to identify and remove out-of-date registrations. But there can be a lag time of several years, and in the meantime more registrations become out of date.

A [2012 Pew report](#) called voter registration systems in many states inefficient and said they have failed to keep pace with technological improvements, creating inaccurate lists of registered voters.

The study estimated that about 24 million, or one in every eight, voter registrations nationwide were no longer valid or “significantly inaccurate.” That included more than 1.8 million deceased individuals listed as voters and 2.75 million people with registrations in more than one state.

Trump, in [an ABC News interview](#) Wednesday, cited that Pew report as evidence of his claim of widespread voter fraud. But the Pew report makes no suggestion that large numbers of people cast ballots fraudulently.

In fact, the author of that study, [David Becker](#), [told the New York Times](#) and [others](#) in 2012 when the study was released — that the poor record keeping was not evidence of fraud at polling places.

“These bad records are not leading to fraud but could lead to the perception of fraud,” Becker told the Times.

State officials in charge of voting [have also said](#) they do not believe any of the discrepancies in registration systems are nefarious in nature or signs of voter fraud.

Efforts have been made in recent years to improve the accuracy of voter rolls, including the 2012 launch of the Electronic Registration Information Center, or ERIC, a consortium of states that have

agreed to share voter registration and drivers license data.

Massachusetts is not one of the 21 members, but Secretary of State William Galvin, whose office maintains state voter records, said he has been advocating for Massachusetts to join ERIC.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele)

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