



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor

Executive Order

NUMBER FIFTY-THREE (2025)

ENHANCING SECURITY FOR ELECTION PREPAREDNESS

By virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor, I hereby issue this Executive Order to ensure enhanced security of the Commonwealth's electoral process and additional coordination of state agencies and law enforcement to ensure election preparedness.

Importance of the Initiative

The Commonwealth of Virginia has a robust set of critical security requirements for its election infrastructure and processes prescribed by state and federal law. These security requirements and processes ensure that the Commonwealth's elections are secure, transparent, and accountable. This comprehensive framework continues to assure public confidence in the electoral process. These measures are designed to safeguard every stage of election administration, from voter registration through results certification.

All ballots in the Commonwealth are cast on paper and retained after every election for audit and verification purposes. Ballots are counted using counting machines, not voting machines, which are prohibited from wireless communication and not connected to the internet, adding a further layer of security. Accuracy is reinforced through rigorous Logic and Accuracy testing before every election and verified through post-election audits and triple-check counting procedures. Voter rolls are kept accurate through daily cross-checks with the Department of Motor Vehicles, death records, and other data sources, and any non-citizens or otherwise ineligible individuals are removed promptly to ensure only qualified voters remain on the lists. Together, these measures provide Virginians with one of the most secure and transparent election systems in the nation.

Prior to every election, Logic and Accuracy testing is conducted on every counting machine, electronic pollbook, and ballot-on-demand printer. These tests verify that counting systems operate as intended, display correct information, accurately read ballots, and properly tabulate results. Every machine must produce a zero-tape after testing, confirming that vote counters are reset to zero before machines are sealed and transported to polling places. Political parties and candidates, if in a nonpartisan election, are notified and given the opportunity to observe this testing, further enhancing transparency and public trust.

Virginia's voter registration system is protected by rigorous cybersecurity controls. These include compliance with Virginia Information Technology Agency Security Policy SEC530, access

segmentation by locality, multi-factor authentication, and continuous logging and monitoring. Vulnerabilities are addressed through advanced security tools, while users undergo

annual cybersecurity awareness training. These layered defenses ensure that voter registration data remains secure and reliable.

Virginia law mandates that each electoral board annually assess its security procedures and report on compliance with the Locality Election Security Standards (LESS) adopted by the State Board of Elections. Localities must conduct risk assessments and submit detailed remediation plans to the Department of Elections, ensuring a standardized and responsive approach to evolving security threats.

Following the LESS assessment, every locality is required to submit an annual Voting System Security Plan tailored to its jurisdiction. These plans address physical and technical safeguards, equipment storage, access controls, security training, and incident response protocols. The plans cover not only the general registrar's office but also any satellite offices used for early voting, ensuring that all election-related facilities are held to high security standards.

In addition to regulatory safeguards, there has been a focus on providing secure, transparent, and accountable elections through both Executive Orders 31 (2024) and 35 (2024). EO 31 established a multi-agency data sharing protocol regarding voter list maintenance. EO 31 specifically built on the administration's robust improvements to list maintenance, including establishing one-to-one data-sharing agreements with 11 states, conducting two National Change of Address mailings, and streamlining the process for removing deceased voters through an audit of Virginia deceased records. All of the measures laid out in EO 31 not only enhance the integrity of the voter registration system but also provide election officials with the reliable data necessary to administer elections effectively.

EO 35 built on the progress established through EO 31 by broadening the focus of election security to ballot security procedures, rigorous testing of counting machines, and strengthened standards for maintaining accurate voter rolls. EO 35 further directed the Commissioner of Elections to provide an annual written certification that these protections are in place, ensuring accountability and consistency every year. Additionally, EO 35 reinforced clear procedures for addressing non-citizen voter registration violations, requiring referral to local Commonwealth's Attorneys and the Office of the Attorney General. The final piece of EO 35 was encouraging registrars and requiring state agencies to post clear information on election-related offenses and their penalties. This practice serves as a further safeguard against misconduct and reinforces public trust in the integrity of Virginia elections.

Together, EOs 31 and 35 represent a transition from improving individual elements of election administration to embedding a holistic and enforceable framework that safeguards both voter eligibility and the accurate counting of every ballot.

Protecting the integrity of Virginia's elections is foundational to preserving public trust in democracy. The Commonwealth has implemented a comprehensive, multilayered security framework that governs every phase of election administration, from voter registration to the result tabulation. By mandating rigorous practices such as Logic and Accuracy testing, strict cybersecurity protocols for the statewide voter registration system, and annual locality-level risk assessments, the Commonwealth ensures its electoral systems remain secure, transparent, and

accountable. These standards not only deter threats but also promote voter confidence by emphasizing accuracy, accessibility, and verifiability.

As the threat landscape continues to evolve, election security must advance accordingly. This Executive Order strengthens the Commonwealth's existing protections by updating technical

standards to align with federal best practices, reinforcing Virginia's higher threshold for security by prohibiting wireless communication and internet connection by counting machines, and mandating interagency coordination ahead of elections. These actions are necessary to stay ahead of emerging risks, foster resilience across all localities, and ensure that all Virginians can continue to rely on free, fair, and secure elections.

Directive

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority vested in me by Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and as the Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth, and pursuant to § 2.2-103 of the Code of Virginia, I hereby direct that:

1. The Commissioner and Department of Elections shall, to the maximum extent possible under state and federal law, coordinate with the federal government through partnerships with the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. This coordination shall include the secure sharing of data to identify and remove ineligible individuals from voter rolls in accordance with state and federal law. The Commissioner and the Department shall comprehensively evaluate any new functionality added to SAVE by federal officials for use in accordance with state law. The Commissioner shall continue to use the Department of Homeland Security's SAVE database to identify non-citizens on Virginia's voter list using bulk upload functionality in accordance with state law, a requirement first implemented by my administration. The Commissioner will also provide feedback to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission on their efforts to evaluate statewide voter registration systems and election night reporting modules through the ESTEP program (Election Supporting Technology Evaluation Program).
2. The Commissioner of Elections shall present to the State Board of Elections for consideration an update to the Virginia Voting System Certification Standard that incorporates the United States Election Assistance Commission's Voluntary Voting System Guidelines 2.0 (VVSG 2.0). Upon the State Board of Elections' adoption of these guidelines, the Commissioner of Elections shall ensure that all new voting systems submitted for certification in the Commonwealth are tested against the VVSG 2.0 standards.
3. The Commissioner of Elections shall ensure that Virginia's Voting System Certification Standard conforms to and reflects the Commonwealth's election laws, which impose requirements that exceed federal standards.
4. The Virginia Fusion Center and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management shall collaborate with the Department of Elections to convene an Election Preparedness Tabletop Exercise prior to the start of early voting beginning on September 19, 2025, to evaluate interagency plans, test coordinated response protocols, and identify any gaps in communication or readiness. The following agencies and organizations shall be invited to participate:

- Virginia Fusion Center via Virginia State Police

- Virginia National Guard
- Virginia Capitol Police
- Virginia Department of Emergency Management
- Virginia Information Technologies Agency
- Virginia Department of Transportation
- Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles
- Virginia Department of General Services
- Virginia State Corporation Commission
- Office of the Attorney General
- Virginia Department of Elections
- Virginia Electoral Board Association
- Voter Registrars Association of Virginia
- Virginia State Board of Elections

Effective Date

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in force and effect unless amended or rescinded by further executive order or directive. Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia, this 12th day of September 2025.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glenn Youngkin".

Glenn Youngkin, Governor

Attest

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly Gee".

Kelly Gee, Secretary of the
Commonwealth