

Milwaukee Common Council President Johnson: State effort to remove registered voters from rolls is routine maintenance, but voters need to be mindful

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State effort to remove registered voters from rolls is routine maintenance, but voters need to be mindful

Council President Cavalier Johnson and Election Commission director urge affected voters to look for notices from state

The state Elections Commission's decision earlier today to start the process of removing as many as 188,000 people from the voter rolls for not voting in the last four years is a routine exercise, but it could catch people by surprise and hinder their ability to vote - that according to Common Council President Cavalier Johnson and Claire Woodall-Vogg, head of the city's Election Commission.

The bipartisan state commission took up the issue three weeks after a legal battle over whether it should remove tens of thousands of people from the rolls because they were believed to have moved. In a 5-2 ruling earlier this month, the state Supreme Court sided in favor of the commission, finding it did not have to quickly take those voters off the rolls.

But the commission is now preparing to act under a state law meant to clear the rolls of those who have not voted in the last four years. The targeted voters will receive a postcard notifying them that they have 30 days to ask to keep their voter

registrations active - and to avoid being removed from the rolls.

President Johnson said the state notices are to be mailed in June and voters will have until July 15 to ask to remain registered.

“The City of Milwaukee is watching this situation closely,” President Johnson said. “Routine maintenance may be needed on voter rolls, but it is important to ensure that this exercise is accurate and does not disenfranchise voters.”

Ms. Woodall-Vogg said state officials will deactivate the voter registrations of those who do not respond to the mailings, as well as those whose notices are returned as undeliverable. She said deactivations are expected to be complete by August 1.

“The Wisconsin Election Commission has been complying with this routine voter maintenance for years to ensure that voting rolls are accurate and up-to-date. If residents have not voted since the 2016 Presidential Election, they will need to be watching their mailboxes in June in order to respond to the mailing and stay registered,” Ms. Woodall-Vogg said.

Ms. Woodall-Vogg continued: “Of those being sent the notices, 38,000 are voters who haven’t recently voted and are also believed to have moved. This is an excellent reminder to always make sure you are registered and especially if you have recently moved. Registering to vote is not difficult and I urge anyone with questions to call the Election Commission at 414-286-3491.”

To provide residents more information on this issue, President Johnson has introduced a communications file “from the Milwaukee Election Commission relating to the state Election Commission’s recent decision to remove a significant number of voters from the rolls due to inactivity.”

It is expected that the file could be heard by the Judiciary and Legislation Committee during the next cycle.

Voters who are removed from the rolls can re-register by mail, online, in clerk’s offices or at the polls. Those affected will need to have proof of residence to restore their voter registrations.