

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

November 2010



Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) had effective monitoring controls to ensure States were using the Help America Vote Verification (HAVV) program appropriately.

Background

On October 29, 2002, the President signed Public Law Number 107-252, the *Help America Vote Act of 2002* (HAVA), which mandates that States verify the information of newly registered voters. HAVA places certain requirements on SSA for verifying information to be used in each State's voter registration process. To comply with HAVA, SSA developed HAVV, an online system that allows the States to submit the required voter applicant information for verification. HAVV uses the last four digits of the Social Security number (SSN) to match with SSA's database records.

To view the full report, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO/BEPDF/A-03-09-29114.pdf>

Monitoring Controls for the Help America Vote Verification Program (A-03-09-29114)

Our Findings

Based on our review, we believe SSA could improve its monitoring controls of the HAVV program so it can detect anomalies that may indicate States are not using the program appropriately. While SSA had determined in Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 that at least six States had submitted an excessive number of verification requests, the Agency was not aware a significant portion of the verification requests in FYs 2008 and 2009 related to the same voter information being re-submitted numerous times throughout the year. In FY 2008, about 32 percent of the transactions was re-submissions, and in FY 2009, about 20 percent of the transactions was re-submissions.

SSA staff stated they did not detect the re-submissions because HAVV was not designed to detect these types of transactions, and they believed the States were responsible for detecting anomalies with their own data. Based on discussions with officials from the top 10 States, we found the following.

- Six States were not aware, and could not explain why, the same voter information was re-submitted numerous times.
- Four States indicated staff erroneously re-verified voters who changed their voter information or verification requests were re-submitted automatically because of system errors.
- Six States indicated they did not have any controls or safeguards in place to detect when voter information was unnecessarily re-submitted through HAVV.

Our Recommendations

We recommended the Agency:

- (1) Consider methods to provide States with reports that reflect each State's usage of the HAVV program as these reports could help States ensure they are using the HAVV program as intended and
- (2) Consider developing a process that would detect when States submit through HAVV an excessive number of verification requests using the same voter information.

The Agency agreed with Recommendation 1 disagreed with the Recommendation 2. However, we believe SSA should implement this recommendation because the Agency possesses available information to determine whether States are compliant with HAVA.