

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

June 2009



Objective

To assess the accuracy of the verification responses provided by the Help America Vote Verification (HAVV) program

Background

On October 29, 2002, the President signed Public Law Number (Pub. L. No.) 107-252,¹ the *Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)*, which mandates that States verify the information of newly registered voters. HAVA places certain requirements on the Social Security Administration (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-03-09-29115.pdf>

Quick Evaluation Response: Accuracy of the Help America Vote Verification Program Responses (A-03-09-29115)

Our Findings

Our review found the HAVV program did not always provide States with accurate verification responses for individuals who were registering to vote. We determined the HAVV program had a significantly higher no-match response rate when compared to other verification programs used by States and employers. HAVV's no-match response rate was 31 percent, while the no-match response rate for other verification programs used by States and employers ranged from 6 to 15 percent. Additionally, the HAVV program did not provide consistent verification responses to the States when the same applicant data were entered into the program. We believe the high no-match response rate and the inconsistent verification responses can be attributed to the lack of (1) a unique identifier, (2) flexible matching criteria, and (3) testing to assess the accuracy of the verification responses. Because of the limitations of the matching criteria established by the legislation, the HAVV program may indicate a no-match when a match does in fact exist in SSA records. The high no-match response rate and inconsistent verification responses could hinder the States' ability to determine whether applicants should be allowed to vote.

Matters for Consideration

Since SSA is mandated to use the last four digits of the SSN, the HAVV program provided the States with responses that may have prevented eligible individuals from registering to vote and allowed ineligible individuals to vote. Given that the HAVV verification responses are used as part of the process to approve or deny an applicant's right to vote, SSA should consider working with the States to develop an acceptable level of false negative or false positive verification responses for HAVV that would provide assurance to the States of the reliability of the data. Furthermore, SSA should continue to work with the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to allow the EAC to provide the Congress with the mandated report. As part of this process, the Agency should ensure that the EAC is aware of the limitations and potential risks (risk of providing a high rate of false positives or false negatives to the States) of using the last four digits of the SSN to verify the identity of an individual registering to vote.