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**Regarding the Recent Request for Voter Information by the
Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity**

As has been widely reported, Kris Kobach, Secretary of State of Kansas and Vice Chairman of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity, recently sent out [blanket requests for very sensitive data about every voter in America](#) to the chief election officials in every state and the District of Columbia, including the Florida Secretary of State.

The public outcry over this data grab was loud and swift. This past week, I and my staff have received scores of calls from concerned and outraged voters. The calls have been unanimous in demanding that my office, and Florida in general, not cooperate with the commission's request. I have even had voters request that they be removed from the voter rolls in order to protect their data from release.

These voters are rightfully concerned about the motives behind the forming of this commission and the release of this personal data. They have expressed their belief that the commission is a fraud. They have expressed their outrage that their personal data is being requested and will be made publicly available to further a political agenda instead of improving the integrity of elections.

I share their concerns. I have [been in communication](#) with the Secretary of State's office, relating to them the concerns expressed by Leon County citizens.

Based on these calls, I have prepared a short FAQ covering many of the topics of concern:

1. Can the Presidential Commission really ask for my political party, date of birth, address, social security number, driver's license number, and voting history?

-- Unfortunately most, but not all, of that data is freely available in Florida. State statute says anyone can ask for it and we have to provide it. The only data we can withhold are FL ID #s, driver's license #s, social security #s, signatures, and the location where a voter registered to vote. Note that some additional information for professions such as judges, police officers, social workers, certain military personnel, etc. may be protected if those voters request it. Also, victims of domestic abuse, in conjunction with the Attorney General's office, can have their voter entire data protected.



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2. The Presidential Commission is asking for my voter history. Does this mean they want to know how I have voted in the past?

-- NO. Your ballot and the votes on it are secret. Your votes are not part of any database we maintain, public or private. The commission wants to know which elections voters voted in, not how they voted. This is called voter history. We track voter history so we can prevent people from voting more than once in an election.

3. Who had the final say about releasing the data?

-- The Secretary of State, Ken Detzner is the chief election official in the state of Florida. As such, [he had the final say](#), and he was required to follow state law.

4. How would you respond if you had the final say in the matter?

-- I was asked this question many times. As I do every day in my role as Supervisor of Elections for Leon County, I would protect the privacy of any and all voter information, and only release the data I was legally required to provide. Furthermore, I believe there should be tougher restrictions on what types of voter data are public, what that data can be used for, and stricter limitations on who can request the data.

For several years, I and many Supervisors of Elections in Florida have lobbied the legislature to change Florida Law and protect voters' personal information. The legislature has turned a deaf ear to our proposals, refusing even to protect the records of 16 and 17 year old children who pre-register to vote. Hopefully after this public outcry, the legislature will do the right thing and work with us to protect your voting records.

5. What concrete steps do you suggest to improve the integrity of elections and voter trust in the elections process?

-- That is my favorite question. If there is a silver lining in all of this, perhaps it is the raising of awareness within the media and our voters about how openly available their private data really is. Truly protecting the private data of voters would go a long way towards restoring faith in voting and increasing participation in our democracy.

Also, one of the known weaknesses of state based voter registration data is that a person can be registered in more than one state, accidentally or intentionally, with little likelihood that the error will be caught. Again, there is a solution to this problem and it does not involve gathering all voter records from every state into a nationwide database. Florida's Supervisors of Elections have lobbied the Florida Legislature to join the voluntary consortium of states that cooperatively compare voter registration data through the [Electronic Registration Information Center](#) (ERIC). This group provides a very powerful tool to help us maintain accurate voter rolls while safeguarding voter information and minimizing false positives. So far, the legislature has refused to join.



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Lastly, concerns about “hacking” voting machines and changing the actual votes cast during elections can be solved by requiring that all voters use paper ballots, upgrading to modern and secure voting systems, and requiring effective and comprehensive post-election audits to independently and transparently verify that all votes are being tabulated and reported correctly.

In Leon County we understand that *trust in elections* is a precious thing. Trust is hard earned and easily lost. That’s why we recently upgraded our voting system to one of the most modern, secure and certified paper ballot systems in the nation. We also lead the way in auditing elections. We took the initiative and spent 6 years developing an advanced post-election paper ballot audit system that we use to bring transparency to elections by validating every result in every contest in every election we conduct. That system is now being used in several counties in Florida and was recently used to audit Maryland's 2016 General Election.

6. What can I as a voter do?

-- Stand up and take part in democracy – VOTE in every election. Call your legislator and demand that they pass common sense changes to election laws to protect voter records and increase transparency in elections, and demand effective post-election audits be implemented in the rest of the state and nation as we have done in Leon County.

I am proud of the voters of Leon County. I am proud of the many people who recently contacted my office to voice their concerns and demonstrate the best of democracy in action. And I am proud that Leon County has led the way in deploying the best paper based voting and election audit systems in the nation to guarantee the security and accuracy of your vote.

Thank you for taking the time to make a difference.

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