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SBE CALLS ON PUBLISHER TO REMOVE PERSONAL VOTER DATA FROM WEBSITES

SPRINGFIELD (April 5, 2024) – The Illinois State Board of Elections has asked the publisher of numerous Illinois websites to remove from its sites personal data of thousands of voters that SBE believes may have been published in violation of the Illinois Election Code.

Since late March, the State Board of Elections (SBE) has received calls from voters who were concerned that their dates of birth and complete street addresses had been published on websites statewide operated by [Local Government Information Services](#), a self-described “media watchdog” based in Lake Forest that operates [20 websites and 11 print publications](#) geared toward specific cities and regions of Illinois. The data appeared in dozens of articles purporting to show which voters in specific precincts had and had not voted in the 2020 presidential election.

While the State Board of Elections is mentioned several times in the introduction of each article, SBE did not provide data to Local Government Information Services for these stories.

Under Illinois statute, political committees registered with the State Board of Elections are entitled to purchase the SBE’s voter data file for “bona fide political purposes” and with an [explicit prohibition](#) on use for other business purposes. In January 2018, in an effort to further protect the personal data of voters, the board of elections stopped providing voters’ dates of birth in the voter file provided to political committees.

Through communications with a representative of LGIS, the board of elections believes that the company combined 2016 and 2020 data sets for its voter stories. It used a copy of the 2016 voter file to obtain the birthdates and many of the street addresses it has published. SBE believes LGIS gained

access to the 2016 voter file because at that time it was affiliated with a political committee, Liberty Principles PAC, that funded its operations.

After complaints were filed with SBE regarding the PAC's financial reporting related to LGIS in 2016, Liberty Principles PAC ended its financial support of the company. Liberty Principles PAC [closed in 2020](#). LGIS bills itself on its website as "a real media watchdog."

SBE does not know how LGIS obtained 2020 voter data, which would have been available only to registered political committees and whose use for non-political purposes is prohibited. SBE also has confirmed that some of the published voter lists are inaccurate.

So far, LGIS has resisted SBE's requests to remove the personal data from its sites.

"While LGIS may arguably have had legal access to the voter data when it was being financed by a political committee, any semblance of legality ended when the relationship with the PAC was severed in 2016," said SBE Executive Director Bernadette Matthews. "In 2018, we decided to remove dates of birth from the voter file provided to political committees as an added security measure for voters. It is disappointing when an organization shows such little regard for voters."

SBE has been in contact with the Illinois Attorney General's Office about potential legal action in this matter.

The State Board of Elections is an independent state agency charged with the responsibility of having general supervision over the administration of election laws of the State of Illinois. Elections are administered locally by the state's 108 election authorities.

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