

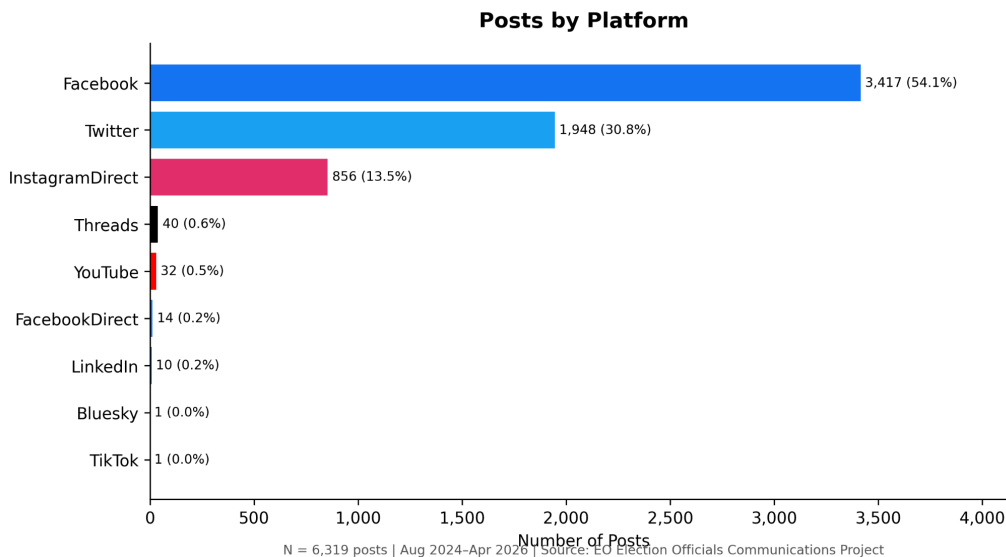
# How Election Officials Communicate to Voters About Voter List Maintenance

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This analysis draws on the [Election Officials Communications Tracker](#) (EO Comms Tracker), a time-series dataset of 120,000+ social media posts from 1,500+ state and local election officials maintained by Professors Thessalia Merivaki (Georgetown University) and Mara Suttman-Lea (Connecticut College) and powered by Junkipedia, the [National Conference of Citizenship's](#) (NCoC) digital listening platform. The findings below focus on a curated subset of 6,319 posts related to voter list maintenance, voter registration, and provisional voting collected between *August 2024 and April 2026* across Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X (former Twitter), and TikTok.

## PLATFORM AND VOLUME PATTERNS

Election officials are active across multiple platforms but concentrate their communications heavily on Facebook (54% of posts) and Twitter (31%), with Instagram a distant third (14%). ***This platform distribution is important when it comes to building communications that will reach broad audiences.*** Facebook dominates in raw volume, but Instagram generates the highest median engagement per post (median composite engagement: 8, compared to Facebook's 7 and Twitter's 3). X/Twitter's lower per-post engagement despite high volume may reflect algorithmic architecture that suppresses high quality content shared by election officials .



**Figure 1.** Post volume by social media platform (N = 6,077; August 2024–April 2026).

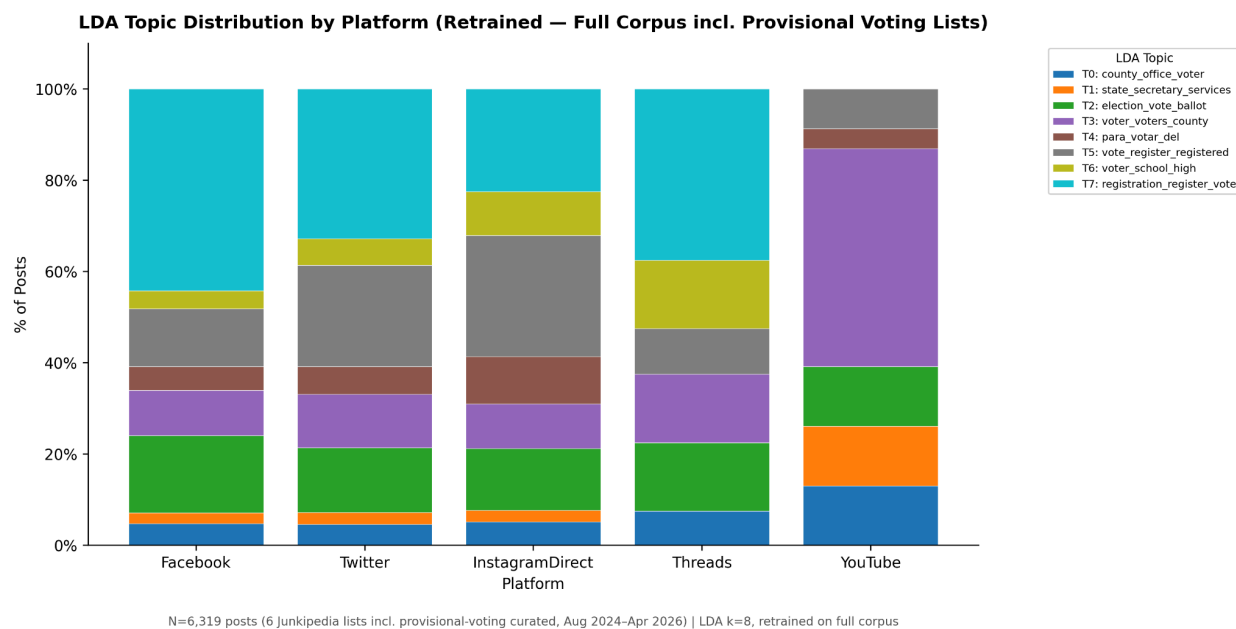


bottom, covering both list maintenance notices ( address confirmation mailings) and registration deadline reminders.

The remaining four accounts each have 1–2 posts:

- San Luis Obispo County Clerk-Recorder's Office (CA) with 3 posts, list cleanup process, 2024 and 2026.
- Maricopa County Elections (AZ) with 1 bilingual deadline post ("¡Faltan sólo DOS días para...").
- Madera County Elections Dept (CA) with 1 registration check post.
- Miami-Dade County Elections Dept (FL) with 1 list maintenance post in 2026.

A list maintenance topic (county, maintenance, state, list, voter) grows more prominent in the 2026-cycle data, reflecting the thematic focus of the VLM-curated lists that populate that period (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Stacked bar chart showing the proportion of posts assigned to each of eight LDA topic clusters within each platform (k=8, combined corpus, coherence  $c_v = 0.59$ ).

To further understand how communications around list maintenance are connected thematically, the analysis includes targeted keyword classification, using keywords that explicitly capture the list maintenance process, including voting procedures related to list maintenance such as provisional voting (*list maintenance, voter roll, NVRA, provisional ballot, deceased registrant, inactive voter*).

The keyword classification process was designed in two tiers to balance breadth and precision. Tier 1 keywords with high specificity to list maintenance content classified a post on any single match. Broader registration-adjacent terms (Tier 2), such as

"recently moved," "registration status," or "inactive," were more likely to appear in non-list maintenance-related posts; two or more were required to qualify. This two-tier structure was applied to remove false positives while ensuring that explicit list maintenance content is not missed. Subtheme assignment followed a hierarchical priority order: each post received its most specific label, with the first matching rule applied. Removal-specific content (deceased registrants, non-citizen removals) was classified before the broader list cleanup category; explicit provisional ballot language was captured before the bare word "provisional," which can appear incidentally in unrelated posts.

Drawing from this classification, we built a Voter List Maintenance Message (VLM) databank, organized into six sub-themes based on what the post is communicating about the list maintenance process as we conceptualize it above.

### **VOTER LIST MAINTENANCE COMMUNICATIONS**

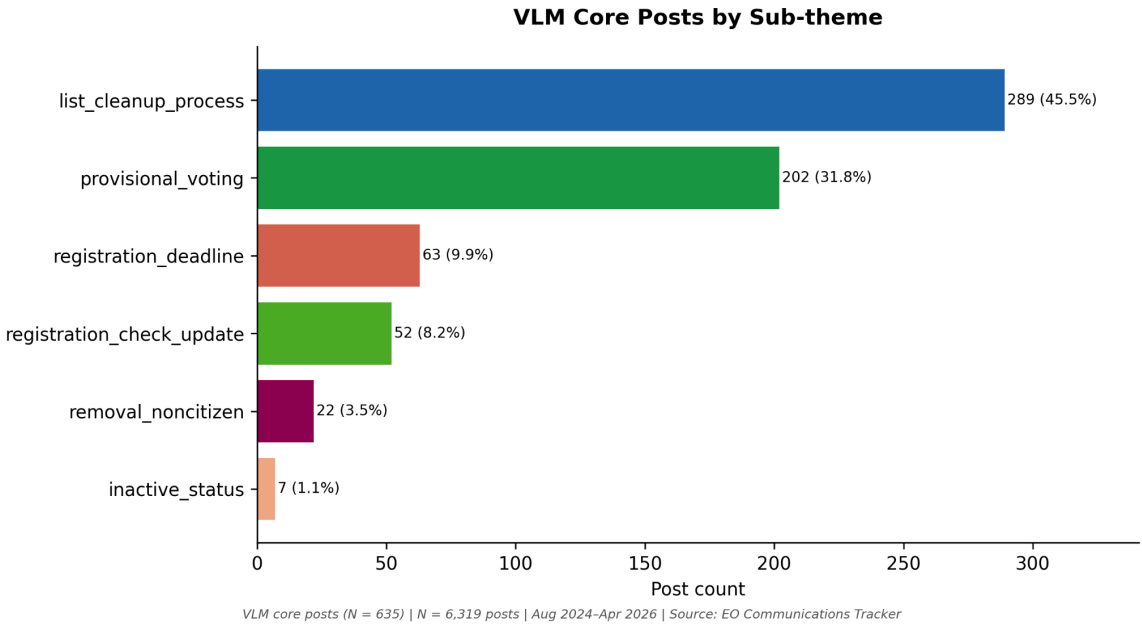
Of the 6,319 total posts, 642 (7.3% overall) qualify as voter list maintenance core content (Figure 4).<sup>1</sup> The highest rates of VLM related communications are present in the post-2024 election period. This may reflect intentional communications strategy, but also the natural VLM cycle that picks up after an election concludes.

Within the VLM corpus, list cleanup process posts dominate (289 posts, 46%). These are posts that explain the process by which election officials maintain voter rolls, from complying with the National Voter Registration Act, updating voters' contact information, verifying eligibility, and cross-state data sharing through ERIC.

Registration deadline posts are the second most common sub-theme (63 posts, 10%), concentrated in the weeks before Election Day and state registration closing dates. Registration check and update posts — prompts for voters to verify their status, update a changed address or name, or confirm their record — account for 52 posts (8%). Removal of non-citizen or deceased registrants accounts for 22 posts (5%); inactive status notices for 7 (1%).

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<sup>1</sup> VLM content was defined as content that explicitly talks about the voter list maintenance process, active/inactive registration status, removal of deceased, movers, non-citizens, NVRA, voter rolls, and ERIC, among others.



**Figure 4.** Post counts for all 642 VLM core posts by sub-theme and platform.

Across 6,319 posts, only one explicitly names ERIC: a September 2024 post on X from [Oregon Elections](#) that reads, "Oregon regularly maintains voter registration lists through a national voter registration data sharing system called the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC)." The post uses the #TrustedInfo2024 hashtag, frames list maintenance positively ("voting in Oregon feels GOOD because..."), and links to further information, what we consider a best practice example of clear, neutral public communication about an increasingly politicized process. However, this is the only such post in two years of data from nearly 900 channels. Despite ERIC's central role in cross-state list maintenance, election officials are not explaining it publicly. This may be a missed communication opportunity, particularly given that ERIC has become a target of political criticism in several states. On the other hand, it may be a conscious decision not to attract attention and criticism.

**PROVISIONAL VOTING: COMMUNICATING THE FAILSAFE**

Of the 635 posts classified as core VLM, 202 (31.8%) reference provisional voting. Procedurally, provisional voting is linked to voter list maintenance: eligible voters whose information is not on the voter rolls may reflect administrative issues. At the same time, election offices update voter records after processing provisional ballots. It is therefore a critical procedure for voters to be informed about, not only as it relates to their ability to vote, but also to ensuring that voter records are up-to-date.

## TOP 10 MESSAGES: ENGAGEMENT VS. BEST COMMS PRACTICES

The ten highest-engagement voter list maintenance-related posts reveal an important distinction between messages that generated the most audience reaction and messages that represent the most replicable communication models for election officials. The Oregon ERIC post, while not in the top 10 by engagement, is included here as a highlighted example precisely because it does something almost no other post in the corpus does: it names the mechanism behind list maintenance and explains it plainly to a public audience.

Composite engagement (likes + shares + comments) measures how much an audience responded to a post — but not why. Several of the top-performing posts in this databank attracted high engagement most likely because they entered politically charged national debates. For instance, Louisiana's announcement of using a [DOGE-linked voter maintenance database](#) (#3, 1,494 engagement); a New Mexico Secretary of State post responding to a federal data request with language about an "[assault on free and fair elections](#)" (#5, 1,029 engagement); a Wyoming update on criminal investigations opened after non-citizen registrations were removed (#6, 730 engagement); and posts from [Ohio](#) and [Pennsylvania](#) defending their list maintenance practices against political criticism (#4, #9). High engagement in these cases reflects political polarization and controversy, not necessarily messaging effectiveness.

By contrast, three posts stand out as genuine best-practice templates, generating substantial engagement by being clear, factual, action-oriented, and politically neutral:

#1 — [Michigan Secretary of State's Office](#) (Facebook, Oct 18, 2024)

*"Monday, Oct. 21, is the LAST day to register ONLINE or BY MAIL to vote in the Nov. 5 General Election. Citizens can still register to vote in person at their local clerk's office with proof of residency, even on Election Day. Visit [Michigan.gov/Vote](#) to register or to check your registration status."*

This post is the highest-engagement message in the entire databank by a wide margin. It is voter-centric, direct, deadline-specific, includes all three registration pathways, and provides a clear call to action with a portal link.

#2 — [Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate](#) (Facebook, Oct 9, 2024)

*"How does Iowa maintain voter lists? From address updates to status changes, we'll explain how we keep voter rolls current. Learn how Iowa maintains accurate records as part of our layered approach to election integrity. #NationalVoterEducationWeek"*

This post follows the process-transparency approach: it explains the process of list maintenance in plain language, uses an accessible framing ("layered approach"), and ties the message to a national education campaign. It generated nearly 1,000 comments, suggesting that the public is genuinely interested in learning about the VLM process.

#7/#8 — [PA Department of State](#) (Facebook, Apr 21 and Mar 3, 2026)

*"Counties follow state and federal law as they perform continuous, year-round updates of Pennsylvania's voter registration database to ensure the voter rolls are accurate. Learn more about voter list maintenance in Pennsylvania by visiting [vote.pa.gov/FactCheck](https://vote.pa.gov/FactCheck)."*

These two nearly identical posts demonstrate the value of consistent, repeated messaging. They are factual, grounded in election law, emphasize year-round maintenance (countering the perception that list upkeep is episodic), and direct readers to a dedicated fact-check resource.

#9 — Virginia Department of Elections ran the most systematic pre-election communications on provisional voting, all framed around the registration deadline, and what options voters have if they miss it:

- [September 19, 2024](#) (Facebook): A full election calendar listing every key date, including "Oct 16: First day of same-day registration for provisional ballot."
- [September 30, 2024](#) (Facebook, and X): A focused explainer: "After the deadline, all new or updated registrations will vote a provisional ballot."
- [October 15, 2024](#) (Facebook, and X): "REGULAR VOTER REGISTRATION ENDS TODAY! All new registrations received after the deadline will vote a provisional ballot."

A few election officials shared communications explicitly referencing provisional voting in the 2024 post-election period, explaining what primarily triggers casting a provisional vote.

#10 — [Hanover, MA Town Clerk](#) (Facebook, Nov 10, 2024)

*"What's a provisional ballot? 31 people cast provisional ballots at the November 5th State Election, claiming to be registered voters in the Town of Hanover, but not appearing on our registered voter list when they arrived at the polls or during In-Person Early Voting. Today we finished researching and vetting those 31 provisional affirmations."*

There is a notable gap in how provisional voting is communicated to voters. First, the adjudication timeline of provisional ballots post-election, and the steps voters need to take to have their provisional ballots counted, like showing identification. In the full sample, only a few election offices shared such communications:

#11 — [Arizona Secretary of State](#) (Threads, Nov 6, 2024)

"Voters who received conditional provisional ballots because they forgot ID have until 5 p.m. Sunday, Nov 10, to show ID to county election officials to ensure their vote will count."

**Takeaway:** These examples strongly suggest that messages that combine high engagement with neutral, informational framing are the ones that can be replicated and adapted across jurisdictions. Posts that attract attention through political controversy generate reactions, but not necessarily the kind of audience educational and trust-building communications aim to build.

## Recommendations

Based on the patterns above, three strategic observations follow for election officials communicating about voter list maintenance:

### 1. Time Messaging Around Voter Registration Deadlines

VLM communication peaks six weeks before registration closes, which seems to be a useful window. Deadline-adjacent messages — those that prompt voters to check, update, or confirm their registration — generate the highest engagement of any VLM sub-theme.

### 2. Use Facebook for reach, Instagram for engagement.

Facebook reaches the largest audience in absolute terms. Instagram produces disproportionate engagement relative to its post volume. A robust social media comms strategy would use both.

### 3. Distinguish between high engagement and high quality.

Politically reactive posts generate large comment counts, but those comments are often adversarial rather than trust-building. The Michigan, Iowa, and Pennsylvania posts above demonstrate that factual, service-oriented messaging can achieve substantial reach without triggering polarized responses. These are the templates worth replicating.

### 4. Include important procedural information for provisional voters.

Operational, deadline-specific messaging generates engagement in the immediate post-election window. Arizona's ID cure window posts and Virginia's deadline

calendar posts demonstrate that voters share time-sensitive procedural information they think others need. This formula is straightforward and replicable.