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New Jersey accidentally registered 6,600 noncitizens to vote years ago, governor says

The governor cited a "serious software error" for the incorrect registrations.



1:15

NJ voter registration controversy The Department of Justice announced it is investigating after New Jersey's governor disclosed that more than 6,000 people who said they were not U.S. citizens were mistakenly registered to vote.

By [Oren Oppenheim](#)

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About 6,600 people in New Jersey who said they were not U.S. citizens had been incorrectly registered to vote due to a technical error during the previous gubernatorial administration, Gov. Mikie Sherrill, who took office this year, said Tuesday. She added that fewer than 400 were found to have actually voted and that the state is taking action to remove them from its voter rolls.

The admission came less than a week after Department of Homeland Security Secretary [Markwayne Mullin](#) sent letters to New Jersey and three other states alleging that those states might have tens of thousands of noncitizens registered to vote, although Mullin did not explain how precisely DHS got those numbers.

Mullin and DHS had alleged that New Jersey could have "as many as ... 35,152 non-citizens registered to vote in New Jersey."

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Sherrill said in a statement on Tuesday, "Last week I learned that a serious software error in New Jersey's Motor Vehicle System led to the registration of roughly 6,600 people who indicated that they were not U.S. citizens between June 2023 and June 2024, almost three years prior to my taking office. These individuals answered 'no' when asked on a keypad whether they were a U.S. citizen when applying for drivers' licenses and identification cards, but through no fault of their own, the system registered them anyway."

The governor's statement said that the state's "preliminary analysis" found that less than 400 people who were erroneously registered to vote had voted in elections and were not tied to just one party; they were registered as Democrats, Republicans, or unaffiliated voters.

During a press conference on Tuesday, Sherrill said those voters could have potentially voted in any election since being registered, but the state has "no evidence at this time that any elections were swayed" because of those voters.



A precinct official performs logic and accuracy testing on voting machines ahead of the upcoming general election, at Wake County Board of Elections headquarters in Raleigh, N.C. Sept. 5, 2024.

Jonathan Drake/Reuters, FILE

Sherrill said that she has ordered an independent investigation about what happened, the removal of any New Jersey residents from the state's voter rolls who should not have been registered to vote, and that the new administrator of New Jersey's Motor Vehicle Commission is starting to replace the vendor tasked with running the faulty system.

The governor also said she will present the state's findings after it investigates, and that the state is taking care to protect the identities of noncitizens who were registered inadvertently so that their immigration status does not get imperiled.

In a statement, IDEMIA, the company that runs the system faulted by the governor, said: "IDEMIA works with the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, and has for more than 40 years, to support the process through which eligible individuals may indicate their interest in registering to vote when applying for or renewing a driver's license or state-issued identification card. IDEMIA's role is to transmit information through the motor vehicle system. The voter registration information is transmitted to the New Jersey Department of State, Division of Elections, which is ultimately responsible for verifying eligibility to vote. Information submitted by IDEMIA must still be validated and adjudicated by the Division of Elections."

At her press conference, Sherrill pushed back against any insinuation that the finding validates claims the Trump administration has made about New Jersey's voter rolls.

"Let me be clear: Donald Trump has zero credibility on the issue of election integrity. For the past 10 years, he's cried wolf and peddled bizarre conspiracy theories about fraud with no evidence," she told reporters during the press conference.

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Sherrill also briefly referenced the DHS letter, saying that the number of alleged noncitizen voters appears to be unrelated to the number of noncitizen voters New Jersey uncovered. She confirmed New Jersey received the DHS letter, but said the state asked the administration for any evidence of there being that many noncitizen voters and has not gotten anything back yet.

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Meanwhile, the Department of Justice said Tuesday that is investigating the matter.

In a letter to Sherrill shared on social media, Assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon, wrote: "Ensuring that U.S. citizens' votes are not illegally diluted by noncitizens votes is of paramount importance. We therefore write to formally request additional information to assess New Jersey's compliance with various federal statutes." Dhillon asked for the state to provide within five business days personal information on the registered noncitizens the state identified and details on the around 400 who voted.

A spokesperson for the governor framed the Department of Justice's ask for personal details of the noncitizens who were registered to vote as part of "a long history" of the White House "weaponizing the Justice Department".

"The Trump administration has a long history of weaponizing the Justice Department for political purposes and attempting to overturn election results. Governor Sherrill has been clear that she will use all the legal tools available to her to protect New Jerseyans' personal information," spokesperson Sean Higgins wrote in a statement to ABC News on Wednesday.

Higgins did not clarify if the state plans to respond formally to the DOJ, which said it wanted the information "within five business days".

The White House said Tuesday's announcement from Sherrill bolsters the need for Congress to pass the president's signature [SAVE America Act](#), which would significantly retool the administration of American elections.

"Democrats and their media allies have repeatedly said it is impossible for noncitizens to register to vote, let alone cast a ballot," White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson said in a statement.

"As President Trump has said, there is nothing more important than the integrity of our elections. And this latest incident underscores the absolute necessity of the SAVE America Act," she added. "American voters deserve to have confidence that our elections are safe and secure -- President Trump will never stop fighting to make that happen and all patriotic Americans should join in his effort."