

Californians have little protection from voter impersonation

By [EIP](#) on December 10, 2013 in [Press Room](#)

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SANTA CLARITA, CA. December 10, 2013 - *EIP report raises concern of serious procedural breakdowns at polls in 2012 election.* [Election Integrity Project](#) (EIP), an independent, non-partisan citizen organization, today released its [California Poll Observer Report for the November 6, 2012 Presidential Election](#). The report documents **a significant level of non-compliance with the state election law designed to prevent voter impersonation.** The research also highlights insufficient training of poll workers— leading to systemic non-compliance with California and federal election procedures.

“In a state with no voter ID, it is most concerning to find a lack of compliance with the basic voter check-in law,” EIP President Linda Paine said. “Our findings show that **California voters have virtually no protection from impersonation at the polls.**”

[California Elections Code §14216](#) requires voters to announce their name and address out loud, the clerk to repeat the name and address in a like manner, and the voters to write their name and address in the roster— each step a deterrent to voter impersonation. Non-compliance with this law was the primary problem documented by EIP observers. The following violations were documented:

- no audible mention or repeat of voter name and address
- clerks taking names and addresses off of slips of paper
- clerks taking name and address information off of sample ballots
- clerks offering the name or address to the voter
- voter addresses pre-printed (rather than blank) in the check-in roster

“California’s check-in procedure is only effective if the poll workers are in full compliance,” said Ellen Swensen, EIP’s Chief Analyst. “This is critical because EIP is seeing thousands of registrations in our counties’ voter rolls that we believe are illegitimate, many indicating post-mortem voting or multiple votes by one person. Registrants that have moved away, died or never existed are easy to impersonate. **Voter impersonation cancels out someone’s lawful vote and that’s not acceptable.**”

EIP’s efforts and its Poll Observer Report stand in stark contrast to the State’s own [Election Day Observation Report](#). In a state with over 100,000 poll workers, 25,000 precincts and 13 million ballots cast, Secretary of State Debra Bowen deployed only eight observers to seven counties and reported, “Only a few problems were encountered by voters and poll workers on Election Day.” EIP’s report consists of over 1,700 violations submitted by more than 450 of EIP’s trained observers, reporting on over 650 precincts in 21 counties.

The Secretary of State has been in possession of the EIP report since August 23. EIP had hoped to work together with the Secretary to craft solutions to the problem, but a meeting October 29 with Deputy Secretary of State Evan Goldberg and Chief Counsel Lowell Finley was unproductive. After reading EIP’s report, Deputy Goldberg acknowledged that the report shows legal violations but Counselor Lowell claimed that the Secretary has no line authority over the conduct of county elections officers. **Both officials indicated that they have no plans to ensure that the counties better comply with the election laws highlighted in the report.** However, EIP’s reading of [Government Code § 12172.5](#) shows that, as

the chief elections officer of the state, “the Secretary of State shall see that state election laws are enforced”. EIP is awaiting a clarification from Counselor Finley on this point of disagreement.

“We still hope to work with the Secretary to ensure county compliance with California law in 2014 and beyond,” said Paine. “Voters expect and deserve an election system they can have confidence in.”

To read EIP’s comprehensive study, *California Poll Observer Report for the November 6, 2012 Presidential Election*, [click here](#).

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