



# *Tennessee Department of State*

*Secretary of State*

*Tre Hargett*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 20, 2009

## **HARGETT WORKING TO MAKE SURE GRAVEYARD VOTING IN TENNESSEE NO LONGER EXISTS**

Tennessee's Division of Elections has identified at least 9,800 deceased voters who should be removed from voter registration rolls across the state.

Tennessee drew unwanted national publicity in 2005 when it was discovered someone had illegally voted in a state Senate race by using names of the deceased.

When Secretary of State Tre Hargett appointed Mark Goins as Coordinator of Elections earlier this year, they set a goal to remove deceased voters from the voter rolls.

"Secretary Hargett made it very clear to me during the interview process he wanted dead people off the voter rolls," Goins said. "It is despicable that someone would use the names of the deceased to commit voter fraud. Dead people can't vote. Our goal is to make sure they don't."

As a matter of practice, county election administrators purge deceased voters on a regular basis. However, sometimes names of the deceased voters aren't caught during that process.

Goins' staff compared the state voter registration database to a national death master list provided by the Social Security Administration. The staff found about 9,800 cases in which a name, Social Security number and a date of birth matched on both lists. That information was forwarded to the respective county election administrators to double check for accuracy before the names were purged.

In addition to the 9,800 "hard" matches, about 2,200 "soft" matches were identified. Soft matches include instances in which a name and Social Security number matched or a name and birth date matched, but not all three. Local election administrators have been instructed to investigate the soft matches as well.

"We owe it to properly registered Tennesseans to ensure the voter rolls include only eligible voters," said Secretary Hargett, who oversees the Division of Elections. "Mr. Goins and his staff are working diligently to provide the utmost confidence in Tennessee's elections."