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United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

March 23, 2001

The Honorable Christopher S. Bond
United States Senate

Subject: <u>Comparison of Voting Age Population to Registered Voters in the 40 Largest U.S. Counties</u>

Earlier this month, you introduced S. 528, the "Safeguard the Vote Act." Section 3 of that legislation would require states and localities to purge voter rolls if they discover that the number of registered voters exceeds the number of eligible voting age residents. You asked us to compare data on the number of registered voters for the largest counties in the United States with estimates of voting age populations for those jurisdictions.

The enclosed table provides the data for the 40 largest counties. As you will see, none of the counties have voter registration numbers that exceed the number of eligible voting age residents.

To determine the largest U.S. counties and their voting age populations, we used 1998 population estimates from the Census Bureau–based on the 1990 census–to estimate voting age populations ("1990 to 1999 Annual Time Series of County Population Estimates by Selected Age Groups"). To estimate voting age population, we subtracted the estimate of population 17 years and younger from the total population estimate for each county. We obtained the number of registered voters for these counties from Election Data Services (EDS), a political consulting firm specializing in election administration and the analysis and presentation of census and political data. EDS obtained these data directly from the counties. For Milwaukee County, EDS did not have data, so we obtained the number of registered voters from the Wisconsin State Board of Elections. The latest comparable data sets are for 1998; although the Census Bureau has population data based on the 2000 census, EDS had not made its data on the numbers of registered voters for the 2000 election available when we did this analysis.

If you have any questions about this analysis, please call me on (202) 512-9110. Wendy Ahmed was responsible for the data gathering and analysis for this report. David Alexander and Kristeen McLain supported the effort.

We are sending copies of this letter to Senator Mitch McConnell, Chairman, and Senator Christopher Dodd, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, and to other interested Members and committees. This letter will also be available on GAO's home page at http:www.gao.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Norman Rabkin
Managing Director
Tax Administration and Justice

Enclosure

Total Voting Age Population and Registered Voters for 40 Largest Counties

County	Voting age population for 1998	Number of registered voters in 1998	Percent
Los Angeles County, CA	6,702,638	3,854,817	58%
Cook County, IL	3,843,111	2,625,022	68
Harris County, TX	2,283,210	1,755,809	77
San Diego County, CA	2,046,497	1,324,482	65
Orange County, CA	2,021,616	1,173,732	58
Maricopa County, AZ	2,020,424	1,345,370	67
Kings County, NY	1,644,730	1,207,419	73
Miami-Dade County, FL	1,614,738	832,234	52
Wayne County, MI	1,553,202	1,370,052	88
Queens County, NY	1,548,372	978,557	63
Dallas County, TX	1,491,866	1,146,673	77
King County, WA	1,283,041	1,005,074	78
New York County, NY	1,263,481	998,105	79
Santa Clara County, CA	1,233,716	726,410	59
Broward County, FL	1,163,334	817,403	70
Middlesex County, MA	1,113,607	865,056	78
San Bernardino County, CA	1,104,128	664,022	60
Philadelphia County, PA	1,068,992	960,206	90
Cuyahoga County, OH	1,051,442	889,418	85
Alameda County, CA	1,050,893	714,134	68
Riverside County, CA	1,034,075	597,078	58
Suffolk County, NY	1,023,532	826,659	81
Nassau County, NY	1,010,072	867,606	86
Allegheny County, PA	996,674	861,511	86
Tarrant County, TX	981,487	814,547	83
Bexar County, TX	954,901	818,370	86
Oakland County, MI	891,354	867,144	97
Clark County, NV	850,922	562,557	66
Sacramento County, CA	846,787	600,499	71
Bronx County, NY	839,530	640,279	76
Palm Beach County, FL	814,685	613,058	75
Hennepin County, MN	811,258	709,455	87
Franklin County, OH	770,672	657,232	85
St. Louis County, MO	756,207	704,907	93
Erie County, NY	711,056	600,958	85
Fairfax County, VA	703,252	531,456	76
Westchester County, NY	697,449	529,967	76
Hillsborough County, FL	685,215	463,972	68
Contra Costa County, CA	683,040	485,910	71
Milwaukee County, WI	676,857	605,653	89

Source: GAO compilation of data from Election Data Services and the U.S. Census Bureau.

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