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**For immediate release**

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**Secretary Condos Opinion Editorial:**

**Vermont Resists the President's Election Integrity Commission Request for Sensitive Personal ID Data**

I recently received a letter from the Election Integrity Commission's Co-Chair Kris Kobach requesting sensitive voter data, including social security numbers, driver's license numbers and dates of birth of Vermont voters. I am deeply concerned by this request. The true purpose of this Commission, I suspect, is to use the President's false claims of widespread voter fraud to intimidate voters, disenfranchise our electoral process, and pursue an aggressive campaign of voter suppression.

I have heard from many Vermonters who have contacted me with their concerns about sending their personal information to President Trump's so-called Election Integrity Commission. I want to make one thing perfectly clear: Vermont will NOT be complying with the Commission's request for Vermont voters' private and sensitive information. Social security numbers, dates of birth and driver's license numbers are all off limits. Protecting the privacy and security of Vermont voters' most sensitive information is something I take very seriously, and I will not compromise the privacy of Vermont citizens to support the Trump Administration's witch hunt for widespread voter fraud, which has been disproven many times over by non-partisan experts.

Additionally, the email address for submission of voter data that was contained in the letter is unsecured. For Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach and Vice President Pence to think that having sensitive voter data sent in this manner is acceptable is baffling.

I replied to the Commission's request for information asking how this data will be used, transferred securely and stored in a secure manner. I have not received a response. I am working with the Vermont Attorney General's Office to understand all of our options. We believe that since the Commission stated that they plan to publish the state voter data they receive publically, the data could and likely would be used for commercial purposes, which is prohibited by state statute regarding the statewide voter checklist.

The President has used social media to ask what states have to hide about voter fraud, revealing the true purpose of this commission: to rationalize the President's unsubstantiated claims that 3-5 Million people voted illegally in the last election and that he actually won the popular vote. The answer to his question is quite simple: Vermont has nothing to hide. Vermont has had no complaints of voter fraud in at least a decade. If we did receive one, I would seek aggressive investigation and prosecution under

the law as a serious crime and an affront to democracy. The penalty for voter fraud is up to 15 years imprisonment, a \$10,000 fine, or both.

We should take every reasonable step to make it easier to vote and harder to cheat, but not at the expense of disenfranchising otherwise eligible voters. Could we require proof of citizenship, eliminate absentee voting, and create a new government ID for voters? We could, but it would be costly and ineffective with the potential to create additional barriers for citizens to exercise their fundamental right to vote. Experts have determined time and again that these kinds of restrictions on the right to vote block many more eligible voters than they do of those isolated few determined to cheat the system. At best this Commission is a waste of taxpayer money, and at worst its true purpose is to champion the President's false and baseless claims of voter fraud to aggressively pursue a campaign of voter suppression and intimidation.

As Vermont's Chief Elections Officer, I'm committed to protecting free and fair elections based on facts and evidence. If this Commission is truly interested in the integrity of elections, I suggest they start first by examining at least a dozen other more meaningful issues regarding our electoral process:

- Foreign interference and attacks on our voting systems;
- EAC Funding;
- HAVA 2 – provide funding to states;
- Partisan gerrymandering;
- Updating election equipment;
- Automatic voter registration;
- Election Day voter registration;
- Requiring paper ballots;
- Requiring election audits;
- Providing expanded early voting opportunities;
- Voting by mail;
- Eliminating unnecessary voter ID laws that deter eligible voters;
- More convenient and accessible polling places; and
- Reducing long lines and wait times at polls

I will not compromise the security of Vermont voters' personal data, and my office continues to explore all available options.

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