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Chicago
Board of Election Commissioners

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Recent Supreme Court rulings won't impact Chicago voter registrations, polling places

This week, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on two election law cases involving voter registration programs in Ohio and anti-electioneering rules in Minnesota. Neither ruling is expected to have any impact on Chicago elections.

In a case that originated in Ohio, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld federal laws that move voters to inactive status and then remove the voter from the rolls if mail is returned and the voter does not participate in any elections during the next two federal election cycles.

"Chicago and other jurisdictions across the country perform similar canvass mailings, but with a two-step process. If a first mailing is returned undeliverable, a second forward-able mailing is sent to a voter. Illinois also affords more protections than most other states with the ability to register online and on Election Day," Election Board Chairwoman Marisel A. Hernandez said. "Additionally, Illinois is among an elite and growing number of states that are introducing Automatic Voter Registration, which will capture name-and-address changes as voters update their Illinois driver's licenses and state IDs."

In a separate case, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states can restrict what voters wear in polling places, but that Minnesota's anti-electioneering law was too vague.

"Chicago enforces a campaign-free zone inside the polling place with rules that prohibit clothing, buttons or signs that promote specific candidates, political parties and referendum questions that are on the ballot," Hernandez said.

The Minnesota restrictions contained a ban of clothing or buttons that referenced any "political" message or any "group with recognizable political views." The Court said the Minnesota law covers too many possibilities and "raises more questions than it answers."

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