



U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION
1225 New York Ave. NW – Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005

EAC Requests Review of Voter ID, Vote Fraud and Voter Intimidation Research Projects

For Immediate Release
April 16, 2007

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Chair Donetta Davidson today issued a formal request to the commission’s inspector general to conduct a review of the commission’s contracting procedures, including a review of two recent projects focusing on voter identification and vote fraud and voter intimidation. The chair’s memo to the inspector general is attached.

“The actions taken by the commission regarding these research projects have been challenged, and the commissioners and I agree that it is appropriate and necessary to ask the inspector general to review this matter,” said EAC Chair Davidson.

Chair Davidson has requested that the inspector general specifically review the circumstances surrounding the issuance and management of the voter identification research project and the vote fraud and voter intimidation research project.

EAC is an independent bipartisan commission created by HAVA. It is charged with administering payments to states and developing guidance to meet HAVA requirements, implementing election administration improvements, adopting voluntary voting system guidelines, accrediting voting system test laboratories and certifying voting equipment and serving as a national clearinghouse and resource of information regarding election administration. The four EAC commissioners are Donetta Davidson, chair; Rosemary E. Rodriguez, Caroline Hunter and Gracia Hillman.

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April 16, 2007

MEMORANDUM

To: EAC Inspector General Curtis Crider
Fr: EAC Chair Donetta Davidson
Cc: Commissioners Rodriguez, Hillman and Hunter, Tom Wilkey, and Julie Hodgkins
RE: EAC requests review of contracting procedures

On Friday, April 13, each of my three colleagues – Rosemary Rodriguez, Gracia Hillman, and Caroline Hunter -- agreed with my recommendation that we issue the following formal request to the Commission’s Office of Inspector General to review the circumstances surrounding two recent EAC research projects – vote fraud and voter intimidation and voter identification.

Background

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) is an independent, bipartisan Commission created by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002.

EAC develops guidance to meet HAVA requirements, adopts voluntary voting system guidelines, accredits voting system test laboratories, certifies voting systems and audits the use of HAVA funds. HAVA also directs EAC to maintain the national mail voter registration form developed in accordance with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993.

The Commission serves as a national clearinghouse and resource of information regarding election administration. It is under the Commission’s clearinghouse role that research projects are conducted with the goal of providing information that will lead to improvements in election administration, as well as inform the public about how, where and when we vote.

The voter identification research was conducted by Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, through its Eagleton Institute of Politics (“Contractor”). The contract, awarded in May 2005, required the Contractor to perform a review and legal analysis of state legislation, administrative procedures and court cases, and to perform a literature review on other research and data available on the topic of voter identification requirements. Further, the Contractor was asked to analyze the problems and challenges of voter identification, to hypothesize alternative approaches and to recommend various policies that could be applied to these approaches. Last month, the commission voted

unanimously not to adopt the report, citing concerns with its methodology, but voted to release all of the data provided by the Contractor.

The vote fraud and voter intimidation research was conducted by Tova Wang and Job Serebrov ("Consultants"). The contracts, awarded in September 2005, issued to these Consultants tasked them with defining the terms vote fraud and voter intimidation and providing recommendations how to conduct extensive research in the future on these topics. The contract stated that the Consultants were responsible for "creating a report summarizing the findings of this preliminary research effort and Working Group deliberations. This report should include any recommendations for future EAC research resulting from this effort."

Review Request

The actions taken by the Commission regarding both the voter identification and the vote fraud and voter intimidation research projects have been challenged. Specifically, Members of Congress, the media, and the public have suggested that political motivations may have been part of the Commission's decision making process regarding these two projects. Also, the Commission has been criticized for the amount of taxpayer dollars that were spent on these two projects, as well as how efficiently these projects were managed.

The Commission takes these allegations very seriously, and we request that you fully review the following issues and provide the Commission and the Congress with a report of your findings as soon as possible. The Commission stands ready to assist you in these efforts and will provide whatever information, including memos, emails and other documents you will need. Cooperating with your review will be the staff's top priority.

1. Current Commission policy regarding awarding and managing research contracts.
2. Issuance and management of the vote fraud and voter intimidation contract.
3. Circumstances surrounding the receipt of information from Consultants regarding the vote fraud and voter intimidation project.
4. Circumstances surrounding staff efforts to write a final report for Commission consideration.
5. Identification of staff members who assisted in the editing and collaboration of the final vote fraud and voter intimidation report for Commission consideration.
6. Staff and/or Commissioner collaboration with political entities or other federal agencies regarding the vote fraud and voter intimidation project.
7. Circumstances surrounding Commission discussion and deliberation of final adoption of *Election Crimes: An Initial Review and Recommendation for Further Study*.
8. Issuance and management of the voter identification contract.
9. Circumstances surrounding the receipt of information from Contractor regarding the voter identification report.
10. Identification of staff members who assisted in the editing, collaboration, and recommendation to the Commission regarding final adoption of the voter identification report.

11. Staff and/or Commissioner collaboration with political entities or other federal agencies regarding the voter identification project.
12. Circumstances surrounding Commission deliberation whether to adopt a final voter identification report.

For your information, I have attached statements and related correspondence from Members of Congress, and a statement issued by the Commission regarding the criticism.

It is our hope that your findings will instruct us how to move forward in a more efficient, effective and transparent manner. The Commission takes its mandates under HAVA very seriously, and this small Commission has an enormous amount of work to conduct, including testing and certifying voting equipment, providing guidance and assistance to election officials, and auditing the proper use of the \$3.1 billion that was distributed under HAVA.

We look forward to your findings so that we may take the actions necessary to improve the way we conceive research projects, manage research contracts, and make decisions regarding the final release of data provided to the Commission from a third party.

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 12, 2007

The Honorable Donetta Davidson
Chairman
U.S. Election Assistance Commission
1225 New York Avenue, N.W.
Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Commissioner Davidson:

We are writing to seek a response to very troubling news reports that included allegations that the Commission may have altered or delayed release of two taxpayer-funded studies of election issues for political purposes.

While the Commission is within its rights to decide what guidance it issues to election officials, it is critical that its actions are not perceived as politically motivated and it is imperative that you provide full documentation about the Commission's proceedings on these matters.

On Wednesday, the *New York Times* reported that a bipartisan team of election law experts hired by the Commission to research voter fraud in federal elections found that there was little such fraud around the nation, but the Commission revised the report to say that the pervasiveness of voter fraud was still open to debate.

On Monday, *Roll Call* reported that the Commission two weeks ago rejected the findings of a report, prepared as part of a \$560,000 contract with Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute and Ohio State University's Moritz College of Law. That report found that voter identification laws may reduce election turnout, especially by minorities.

Commissioner Davidson

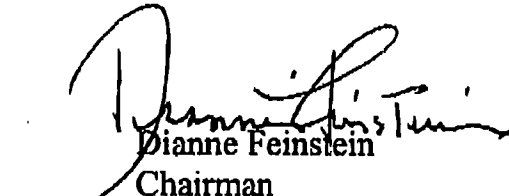
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It is imperative that the Commission's actions and deliberations are unbiased, free from political influence and transparent. While the Commission does not have to agree with the experts who perform its research, it should make the research available unfettered and unfiltered.

Attached are a series of questions, we would like the Commission to address. We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
Chairman
Committee on Rules
and Administration



Richard J. Durbin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Financial
Services and General
Government
Committee on Appropriations

We request information and documentation from the Commission that answer the following questions:

COMMISSION'S OVERSIGHT ON EAGLETON CONTRACT TO PERFORM A STUDY ON VOTER IDENTIFICATION

1. Did the Commissioners or Commission senior staff receive any outside communication or pressure to change or not release the entire draft report or portions of the draft language on the voter fraud report? If so, who made those requests?
2. Would you please provide a copy of the approved Request For Proposals, as well as any contract modifications that were agreed to between the Commission and Eagleton Institute and subcontractors?
3. Can you provide the names and qualifications of Election Assistance Commission staff that worked on the Eagleton Institute project?
4. Please indicate how many project meetings occurred during the term of the Eagleton contract, including in-person meetings, conference calls regarding the status of the report, and any meeting where Commissioners were present for at least part of the meeting. Please provide copies of any minutes from those meetings.
5. Please identify the names and affiliations of members of the Peer Review group or groups that examined the Eagleton Institute drafts. Please also indicate the dates upon which any such review of the Eagleton research was conducted, and the specific concerns or complaints that were raised by members of the Peer Review group as to either the analysis or statistical methodology, if any. Please provide copies of any minutes from those meetings.
6. If certain members of the Peer Review groups had concerns with the data or methodology of the Eagleton study, was that information communicated to Eagleton, and were any changes made to the study based on Peer Review group concerns with methodology or data?
7. Who were the individuals (and what were their academic qualifications) that advised the Commission that the data, methodology, or the results of the Eagleton Contract were so flawed that the Commission should reject the report? At what point did the Commission receive input from those individuals?

8. The Commission previewed its research on the Eagleton Institute's study on Provisional Voting at its May 2006 Advisory Board meetings—why was the Voter Identification Draft Study not discussed at that time? What is the status of the Provisional Voting report?
9. In rejecting the Eagleton report, the Commission indicated concerns that there was only one year's worth of data. Given that this was the first year that Commission had studied the results, isn't "one year" what was originally contemplated in the Eagleton contract? Isn't the reason for having a major research institute conduct this study is so they can draw initial assessments from that data—even though that data can be augmented in future years? Because of the rejected report, will the Commission start anew for research in the 2008 elections?
10. What was the final, total cost of the Eagleton contract, and what was produced or released by that Commission as a result of that contract?

COMMISSION'S OVERSIGHT OVER VOTER FRAUD/INTIMIDATION STUDY

1. Did the Commissioners or Commission senior staff receive any outside communication or pressure to change or not release the entire draft report or portions of the draft language on the voter fraud report? If so, who made those requests?
2. Given the bipartisan nature of the Working Group that guided the Voter Fraud/Intimidation report, and the bipartisan nature of the contracted experts who uniformly support the results of this report, what concerns lead the Commission to determine the report should not be released?
3. If there were points in the report that the Commission objected to, were there attempts to work with the contractors to deal with specific concerns? If there were such attempts, please describe them.

4. Who drafted the Commission summary (released in December, 2006) of the Voter Fraud/Intimidation report, and what were their credentials and involvement in the original research process? Were there instructions or guidance given from Commissioners or senior staff as to what portions of the research should be emphasized? Who at the Commission reviewed the summarized report? Since the contracted experts are referred to in the Commission's released report, were the contractors allowed a chance to review or edit that Commission's final report that was released in December, 2006?
5. Please provide copies of any electronic or written communications between Commission employees that relate to the editing of the Voter Fraud/Intimidation report.
6. Please explain what Mr. Job Serebrov was referring to in his email referenced in the *New York Times* article of April 11, 2007. Please provide any documents in the Commission's possession where employees or contracted experts discussed pressure, political sensitivities, or the failure of the Commission to adopt the Voter Fraud/Intimidation report from March 1, 2006 to present.
7. While we realize that the Commission voted to release its summary report in December 2006, was there a public vote taken to reject the Draft Voter Fraud/Intimidation report? Such a monumental decision to reject the contract experts' work is a policy decision, and one that should be done in public. When was the decision made to reject the original report, and what notice was provided to the public that the Commission would reject that report?
8. Prior to the Draft Voter Fraud/Intimidation report's release, had other organizations requested a copy of that original report? Please include copies of your responses to those organizations, if any.
9. Had any States requested that the Commission or staff provide guidance related to voter identification requirements in the Help America Vote Act, or identification requirements generally? Please provide those requests, and any responses from the Commission.
10. Please indicate what steps the Commission is taking to ensure that political considerations do not impact the agency's research and that decisions are handled in a public and transparent manner.

