

United States Election Assistance Commission

Election Response to COVID-19
Administering Elections During the Coronavirus Crisis

Virtual Public Hearing

Held at

1:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 22, 2020

Via Zoom Meeting

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

The following is the verbatim transcript of the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Virtual Public Hearing that was held on Wednesday, April 22, 2020. The meeting convened at 1:05 p.m. and adjourned at 3:03 p.m.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Well, good afternoon, everyone. I am U.S. Election Assistance Commission Chairman Ben Hovland, and I'd like to call this hearing on the administration of elections during the COVID-19 crisis to the -- to order. First, I'll start by -- for the first order of business, I'll start by calling the roll.

Vice Chairman Donald Palmer?

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Present.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Commissioner Thomas Hicks?

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

Here.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Commissioner Christy McCormick?

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

Here.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Great. We are all present. Unless there are any corrections to the previously distributed minutes, I will now take a motion to adopt the minutes for the May 20, 2019, public meeting of the EAC.

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

I so move.

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

I second.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

All in favor, say aye.

DRAFT

[Chorus of ayes]

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Opposed?

Hearing none, the minutes from the May 20, 2019, meeting have been adopted. Unless there are any corrections to the previously distributed minutes, I will now take a motion to adopt the minutes from the March 27, 2020, VVSG 2.0 public hearing. Is there a motion?

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

So moved.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Second?

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Second.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Properly moved and seconded. To adopt this, please say
aye.

[Chorus of ayes]

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Any opposed?

Hearing none, the minutes from the March 27th, 2020,
meeting have been adopted.

Could we please have the agenda for today's event shown
on the screen? I will now take a motion to approve the agenda, as
submitted.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

So moved.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Second?

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

Second.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

All in favor, say aye.

[Chorus of ayes]

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Opposed?

Hearing none, today's agenda has been submitted and approved.

With that, I'd like to go ahead and welcome everyone who has joined us to discuss administering elections in the coronavirus crisis. It is because of COVID-19 pandemic that we are adapting and using a virtual format for this hearing today. We appreciate all of the viewers who are joining us and the speakers who are participating and sharing their ideas while staying safe.

The COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted our routines and many facets of life. This includes the management of elections and voting. We have seen many States move their primaries or adapt procedures to address this developing situation, and election officials continue to plan for the remaining primaries and the general election. With each State traditionally administering elections in its own unique way, the response to administering elections in this pandemic is also somewhat different in each State. We applaud the hard work election officials have been doing to keep their voters and election workers safe while keeping elections secure and accessible. These have been challenging times, and these officials have been making tough decisions in an everchanging environment.

At the EAC, we've benefitted substantially to focus our attention on how we can support State and local election officials as

they make tough decisions about their primaries and the general election. We've done this by working within the critical infrastructure subsector on a number of products. The EAC is leading a joint working group between the Government Coordinating Council and the Sector Coordinating Council. Essentially, that means we have State and local election officials, along with private industry experts, working with staff from the EAC and CISA on a number of documents that address considerations and best practices for voting during the pandemic.

The EAC has also hosted a number of Zoom videos or webchats where we bring together experts from the elections field to discuss best practices and lessons learned on particular topics. These are available on our website, along with other guidance on our COVID-19 page and guidance around the CARES Act funding that was released recently provided by Congress and is being distributed to the States as we speak.

Today's discussion is a continuation of the EAC's efforts to share information and ideas about administering elections during these times. Our speakers today come from different communities and represent different aspects of election management and will address many of the challenges election officials are facing at this difficult time.

I'd like to thank the panelists in advance for joining us today, and I look forward to the conversation.

Now, I'd like to ask EAC Vice Chairman Don Palmer for some opening remarks. Thank you.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Thank you, Chairman Hovland.

Americans are facing monumental challenges of COVID-19. Thousands have died, millions are out of work, and resources are strained. There's uncertainty in our current situation. Our goal today is to litigate any uncertainty on how Americans will successfully vote.

Undoubtedly, election officials are facing challenges because of COVID-19, but the American people can be assured that State and local election officials will do everything they can to accommodate the right to vote.

In my conversations with State and local election officials, they've emphasized the need to offer voters different options and choices in voting and providing a variety of paths for voters to successfully cast a ballot. The election community is working to quickly adapt to the new environment and be flexible enough to meet the needs of the voters in their communities. At this hearing, I hope to hear more about these election officials preparing to meet

the expectations of voters and make these voter options safe and secure.

Logistics aside, the real challenge we have will be to educate the public on options, deadlines, and the rules of the road prior to the election, and if we do, Americans will do what they need to do.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Vice Chair Palmer.

Commissioner Hicks, would you like to offer opening remarks?

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

Thank you.

Election officials are doing a good job working with their State health departments, State officials, and Federal partners. Wisconsin held their primary two weeks ago. We're now hearing about election workers and voters who are showing signs of the coronavirus, which has an incubation period of about two weeks. It's important to make sure that upcoming elections will be safe for voters and election staff.

It is also important that whatever means election officials adopt for the upcoming elections that they are accessible, especially for voters with disabilities. The EAC will continue to do

our part to provide stakeholders with tools that can be used for an effective elections process.

And with that, I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Commissioner Hicks.

Commissioner McCormick?

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to our panelists today. Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this hearing. Welcome also to all our viewers and listeners. We hope this hearing provides valuable information on running elections during this pandemic.

I have a few brief points. First, to all voters, please make sure your voter registration is up to date. You can do that by contacting the election official in your jurisdiction. Some States also have an online option for you to do that. Updating voter registration is important to make sure that voters are not disenfranchised and to make sure voters -- that -- excuse me, that the election officials know that there is a voter on the other end of a ballot that's being sent out.

Second, options for voters are very important, especially for those with disabilities, so that they can vote privately and

independently, as the law requires, as my fellow Commissioners have said.

Third, know that election officials are working on this issue day and night. I've said often that election officials are some of the most obsessive-compulsive people that I've ever met, and they stay up awake at night thinking up every possible scenario of what can go wrong and all the possible fixes. So, thank you to our election officials for being so diligent and hardworking in this often thankless job.

And finally, we need to underscore the importance of communication and voter education in this time which is very confusing. Voters need trusted information, and they need to be aware of possible disinformation and misinformation. And we still need to keep security of our systems at the forefront. This will be crucial to bolster confidence as voters decide how to cast a ballot safely and securely this year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Commissioner McCormick.

Today's first panel will focus on considerations for absentee and mail voting. With the safety of voters and election workers in mind, many States are looking at how to handle an increase in mail

ballots and how best to prepare for that. Thank you to the three speakers joining us to address this crucial topic.

To begin with, I'd invite Washington Secretary of State Kim Wyman to say -- share some of her thoughts. Secretary Wyman?

SECRETARY WYMAN:

Thank you, Commissioner.

I guess I would say to open this, if you talked to my colleagues around the country, I would -- they would probably tell you that I'm one of the biggest advocates for vote-by-mail and absentee voting. And with that said, the impacts of COVID-19, I am very concerned that with only six months really to implement vote-by-mail or absentee voting in a jurisdiction, that it's going to be a heavy lift. And if it's not rolled out properly, we will lose confidence in the results of the election, public confidence in the results of the election.

And so just some of kind of my 30,000-foot-level thoughts on this and things that keep me up at night worrying about the impacts of COVID-19, first and foremost is that, four years ago, 24 percent of our ballots nationwide were cast by mail or absentee ballot. And States are in very different places of where their readiness level is to being able to implement vote-by-mail or even expanded absentee voting. And I think that the further from vote-by-mail a State is and when you get into States where 4 or 5 percent of the

ballots in each election are cast by mail, the more heavy that lift is going to be.

The three things I really think we need to focus on as we let this -- look at this in the coming months, first and foremost is how you build in the compensating controls for all of this accessibility that vote-by-mail or expanded absentees can allow. We're hearing a lot of comments made about the security of voting systems, particularly absentee and vote-by-mail systems. And from a State that has been vote-by-mail for a decade, I can tell you that you can build in the controls and the security to instill that kind of confidence, checking signatures, for example, of each of the return ballots against the signature on file to verify that the person that was issued the ballot voted and was eligible to. So, you need to build in those controls.

The second tier that is a little bit less out of control of election officials is the capacity in the supply chain. As States and local jurisdictions need to ramp up the ability to be able to process tens of thousands or possibly hundreds of thousands of absentee ballots or vote-by-mail ballots, they're going to need high-speed envelope sorters. They're going to need tabulation equipment that can actually count ballots in a faster manner. And whether or not that is even existing right now six months away from the election in

the supply chain is a concern. And how do you get those implemented and on the frontlines in that time is in question.

And then finally, just the capacity for election officials to be able to retool their operations, build out the facility space that they need to process ballots with the six feet of social distancing necessary, as well as the staffing issue that is affecting every type of election system. Most of our seasonal workers come from people who are 65 and older, and we know that out of the gate we're going to lose between half and two-thirds of our workforce and we are going to have to rebuild that nationally.

In closing in my remarks I would say that, one, thank you to the EAC Commissioners for conducting this webinar and convening this. I know that organizations like the Secretaries of State Association and Election Directors Association have been working to share as much information and get that out, and we're doing really well. And I think the bright spot in the last four years in the election community has been the critical infrastructure designation because we built up this sector in a way and with a speed that has allowed election officials to communicate like never before.

And I really want to give a shout out to the work that CISA has done in this space and really trying to get States like mine that are vote-by-mail and have experience in getting our information and sharing that with our partners across the country, and State and

local election officials are working together because of it. So, I want to thank you all for the work.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Secretary Wyman.

Next, we will hear from Anthony Albence, the State Election Commissioner for Delaware.

MR. ALBENCE:

Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you for -- Mr. Chairman, thank you for the invitation today. I'm honored to follow Secretary Wyman's remarks as well.

We here in Delaware, just a perspective from here, we do come from a State that is traditionally in-person polling-place voting. We know the East Coast, as Secretary Wyman and everyone else knows, you know, we're kind of on the opposite end of that spectrum of the West Coast. So, it's interesting that we all find ourselves here in this situation.

Delaware, just to do a quick kind of a snapshot, you know, we were just going through the process of upgrading and replacing all of our equipment and systems here in Delaware, and of course that was, you know, built with the mindset of our traditional approach with our 5 percent absentee voting with reasons, so, you know, a very limited scale. And although we're not necessarily ourselves in a position where we would be voting vote-by-mail at

this point, you know, it's certainly something that we're also considering as we look at our options that are out there.

A few things that I would add in terms of my remarks, you know, very important, as Secretary Wyman also mentioned this as well is, you know, if you are in a position -- and even though, you know, we're exploring options and we're not necessarily in a position to make a decision here yet in our State, the lead time is so important. And, you know, of course, Mr. Runbeck's on here as well, and, you know, with firms like his, you know, they have great capacity, but everyone has a certain capacity that they can only go so far and do so much. And the lead time is -- you know, is very important to begin that research right now and to also -- you know, again, discussions we're having here in our exploration, discussing what is the best approach, what capacity can you realize in your local setting, you know, is an outbound -- your outbound mailing managed by a firm such as Runbeck, for example, the option, and then the inbound managed through your staff? Is that even feasible, or do you need to look at a fully managed outbound/inbound vendor-supported model if you don't have the resources.

And, again, in light of that as well, what is your -- looking at what your State's procurement requirements are. You know, some States have exemptions for that. Perhaps elections being a critical

infrastructure may have some flexibility, but, you know, you may not and you don't want to get caught in the contracting and bidding procedures, again, when we only have a few months really available as well. So that's a very important evaluation I think to make and what your local situation is.

As well, you know, the USPS, the U.S. Postal Service has been phenomenal in terms of their support. And we know in the elections community all the way from the Postmaster General herself down to the Deputy Postmaster General Ron Stroman, who is extremely hands-on and very much an advocate in our community, they are committed in all things.

But I think it gets down to even at the local level, the nuts-and-bolts level, that, as an elections official, as local elections officials, engage all of the resources that you have at your disposal with the Postal Service. For example, your mail piece design analysts are essential when you design any new products, whether that be your vote-by-mail products or even your traditional absentee or regular mailing envelopes. You know, one of our watchwords that we talk about all the time, for example, in the postal committee with the elections center and when we have all the experts such as Tammy Patrick and Dan Bentley from the Postal Service, engage your MDA, your mail piece design analyst, to review your existing mail, not just your new mail because you may have mail pieces that

are deficient or may not be taking advantage of the full range of resources that the Postal Service can help you with in terms of analytics and metrics.

Look very closely, again, on that same vein with your Intelligent Mail barcode opportunities. It's -- there's so much -- again, so much data, there's so much analytical capability out there and not just for you as an organization but, more importantly, most importantly, servicing your voters, giving them that additional reassurance, you know, that you can locate their ballots at a more specific level. Again, it takes some legwork with the Postal Service. I can tell you from enhancements we've been doing here locally in Delaware, you know, they are there to help you, and they are extremely customer-friendly and very focused on elections and what we do.

So, take advantage of those tools. Use your local experts. Build those relationships with your local postal officials, you know, all the way down from the Deputy Postmaster General, you know, getting that message out to all of the local officials. The local officials, the elections officials tapped in the Postal Service, they are making concerted efforts to reach out to elections officials, to contact them, to build that relationship. But it's a two-way street I always like to say. Elections officials need to be making their local postal officials, whether that's your local postmasters or your local

political and election mail contacts, make them available of your plans, make sure they're looped in, make sure they're part of the communication stream. They can only help you if they know what's coming, I mean, you know, what you're planning on doing. And they want to help you, but, you know, they are operating within a situation, too, where they have a lot of demands on their time, so you just need to be sure you're coming up on the radar and that it's not just a one-time contact a couple days before Election Day. You build that rapport now all year and make it ongoing.

Attend your local postal events, you know, the Postal Customer Council, the PCC that may exist in your region. You may think it's kind of outside your wheelhouse; it's more of a business type of roundtable, but attend those events. That's when you get to talk face-to-face with those experts and really get some face time with them so to speak or maybe virtual face time, you know, these days, with them, to talk about what's going on.

Also, a couple other things to cover from an elections official's standpoint, voter registration, accuracy and confirmation, again, if you're moving into an environment where you're going to have largely vote-by-mail or completely vote-by-mail, make sure that you are -- your relationships -- and, again, I know this is a longer-term conversation, but make sure your relationships with your -- you know, your DMV and those, you know, here in Delaware

we've had a very strong relationship for many, many years with the DMV. But that's going to be essential. I know many of them are curtailed in terms of operations right now, but for so many of us, that's the main source of our registrations. Make sure those relationships are solid, you know, getting the data you need.

And just in general, be aware that, you know, whether it is this current interruption we're experiencing with DMV processing and, again, if you're moving to a more vote-by-mail environment, it's so essential to make sure that your addresses are up-to-date and accurate, because that's going to be another headache, you know, you could experience, if you don't have up-to-date address files and you are mailing out hundreds of thousands or more ballots and getting tons and tons back. Save yourself time on the lead time.

Also, a couple other things and I'll wrap up my remarks -- and Secretary Wyman also alluded to this, too. If you are going to be moving into that realm where you're handling a higher volume of vote-by-mail, again, invest now the time with regards to equipment acquisition as in the lead times. Like as I mentioned earlier, when we implemented our new systems here in Delaware, we built the model based on what we traditionally have experienced. We knew we would see a gradual increase in absentee voting but, you know, certainly not anticipating this current situation.

The lead times for this equipment, you know, we're finding, of course, is significant. A lot of this equipment is built to spec. It's not off-the-shelf, especially these high-speed scanners. You need to be getting your orders in now if you want them for the fall. And that's what we -- we found ourselves in that position and, you know, go ahead and make sure that that's -- you're making those preparations now.

And I would say, most importantly, the last thing I'll say is that you have a lot of experts in the community whether, they be, you know, for example, the folks in Washington State, for example, other people, you know, in the field, Washington, Oregon. People I mentioned earlier at the Postal Service, Tammy Patrick, a lot of our colleagues in the field. There's a lot of expertise out there, and it's being facilitated very effectively through the EAC, through NASS, through NASED. There's a lot of roundtables out there. There's a lot of information-sharing. You're not in this alone. Make yourself -- avail yourself of those -- that expertise and don't be afraid to ask any questions. There's a lot of knowledge. As I always say, it's like drinking from a firehose, you know, when you get to this.

So, make sure -- you know, don't be proud. You know, leave your pride at the door. If you don't know something, ask. Don't assume, because it's much easier to prepare, of course, than try to

fix a problem on the backend. So thank you very much for everyone's time and the invitation.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Commissioner Albence.

And now, we'll hear from Kevin Runbeck, the CEO of Runbeck Election Services, Incorporated. Mr. Runbeck?

MR. RUNBECK:

Thank you, Chairman Hovland, excuse me. I'd like to give just a brief background because most people don't know who we are, as we usually serve behind the scenes. The first election we worked on or I worked on was Nixon-McGovern in 1972, so this will be our 13th Presidential election. And I do want to say, even after 48 years, it's a sacred honor to be part of the process to defend democracy.

What we look for as an election support company is building systems that are accurate, transparent, and auditable. In all our lines of service, which include ballot printing, vote-by-mail, inbound processing, outbound processing, and voter registration, we currently serve about 30 percent of the registered voters in the country, over 20 States.

With respect to vote-by-mail for the 2020 general election, which is what everybody's concerned with, it happens on the same day all over the country, and you can't spread out your resources.

We, at Runbeck, can approximately handle 30 million ballots and 20 million vote-by-mail packets, which is about 10 percent of the electorate.

We're here today to discuss what support industries are available to provide elections officials across the country in this time of COVID-19. It is a unique time for all of us. There are 3,200 counties ranging from 8,000 to over 5 million voters. One size does not fit all, and there's going to be a lot of systems that are going to be adapted simply out of need because there's nothing else we can do with the time allotted.

So, a lot of this has already been covered by Secretary Wyman and Commissioner Albence. I can't say enough about the data that you have now and how accurate it needs to be to jump to vote-by-mail. Many counties don't even have their voter information and signatures digitized. I've even heard one county is looking for programmers for COBOL. COBOL was a software operating system that was something I studied in college back in the mid-'70s, and that was well before Microsoft was even a company.

So, you've got systems across the country that range from the most up-to-date, to very, very antiquated. And some of those cannot translate into a change quickly. So, you need to look at how you transmit your data, the structure of the data, how good it is, the quality of the data, of course, and what security does the vendor

provide. Are they experienced in election mail? Because it is a unique animal and requires a lot of automation, a lot of backup checking to be successful.

The worst thing we can do is send out a ballot that's the wrong style to a voter, and they don't know that they have a problem. So, we spend a lot of time focused in on 100 percent accuracy before anything leaves the building. And you need to know that your vendors can accommodate that if you select vote-by-mail.

So, our biggest challenge right now is decision-making, as was stated, needs to be right now. We cannot gear up, we cannot build equipment fast enough if you wait until July to place your orders. Some of the things you need to think about is how to onboard with new suppliers. As mentioned, you have to design your envelopes to meet USPS approval. That actually takes a lot of time, and if you don't do it correctly, you're going to end up with circular mail coming right back to you. So it takes time to order the envelopes. That is a chokepoint across the industry, and if everybody waits till the last minute, there is no way that the manufacturers can produce at the same time for everybody. So getting your orders in early is, again, critical to success on this. That's what we look at is the supply chain limitations or what can be done in the time given.

As I mentioned, right now, we only have four to five weeks of actual production time from the time we get our paper ballots and the data list to produce all these ballots. Anything jurisdictions can do to spread out that time increases the industry's capacity.

So, one of the things we look at is chain of custody. This is another thing that, if you handled everything internally, you didn't really think about it, but if you're going to send data outside the building, and if you are going to use mail packets, you need to be able to track them, both from the UPS and the IMb barcodes and tracking the trucks using GPS.

As mentioned before, the inbound processing goes from a simple thing with just a few number of ballots coming back, to boxes and boxes and boxes of envelopes stacked in corners. You need to have a process in place for the county to ingest those ballots in a timely fashion. There is some automation available, but again, it's limited to what we can manufacture and produce in the time left that we have. So, some counties are going way too long, and they're going to have to manually do it.

A big thing we see in our counties is physical space. They literally do not have the warehouse capacity to handle what comes back at them, so looking at that ahead of time and renting more space is going to be critical.

Our recommendations today for States and counties to make their decisions that best serves them, it's going to be a variety of things, and it would be, the counties that know how to, mail now, commit to, all, mail now. This identifies a -- how many resources we have to complete the jobs that you're asking us to do.

Smaller counties that have a lower risk of COVID-19 going right now, I would recommend stick with what you know. It's very hard to train people to do new things in a short amount of time, and frankly, as Secretary Wyman pointed out earlier, a lot of the volunteers that do these processing in the past have been retired folk who will probably choose not to help in this cycle, so getting that temporary labor pool set up ahead of time is going to be critical.

Now, the States and counties that have a higher risk for COVID and maybe higher volumes, they're going to have to aggressively pursue vote-by-mail either as a countywide event or as a hybrid event. Many counties right now have vote centers which they open up the weeks before. Florida has been doing that for many years. We've worked with them on vote centers. California has introduced vote centers along with vote-by-mail. The idea is to spread out the voters, and to do that, you have to give them more time to vote in the weeks before the election. And the goal here would be to have most of the voters cast their ballot

before Election Day, to be successful. So, whatever the States and counties choose to do, these decisions need to be now and, well, won't be there for you later in the year.

With that, I offer up questions as needed.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Runbeck. And thank you to all the panelists for those comments.

Now, I'd like to start the question-and-answer portion of the panel. I will start off.

Secretary Wyman, you have been kind enough to do one of the first Zoom videos we did at the EAC on ramping up the vote-by-mail. Then, you had talked about when you were a local election official how -- you know, one particular election you highlighted you wanted -- I believe you had a 10 percent jump in your mail absentee ballots and just the impact of that. I was hoping you could talk a little bit more about that and some of the pieces that the jurisdictions can implement, some of the automation equipment again or some of the pieces that people can implement to, again, be able to learn lessons from your previous experience.

SECRETARY WYMAN:

Sure. In Washington, in 1991, the legislature enabled any voter to become a permanent absentee voter, and in '93 was when voters have that option available to them. So, we kind of rolled

along. In the county I worked in we were embracing this, and we had the opportunity to do vote-by-mail special elections in 1994, and so we did our primary, which was in September, and our general election by mail that year. And in the primary we inserted a little -- what we thought was going to be just a nice little service for our voters, if you'd like to be a permanent absentee voter, fill out this form and we'll get you on the rolls.

And at that time, to give you scope and perspective, we had about 135,000 registered voters and probably, oh, I don't know, it was a few thousand that were permanent absentee. And when we did that mailing, between those two elections we saw an increase of 10,000 people requesting that permanent absentee status for the general. And this was something we did not anticipate. We did not expect it to be that big of a jump. And it was all of the cascading things. And you heard the speakers talk about it already. Just having the envelopes and the materials to be able to mail out to those voters, having the capacity in your processing to mail out to those voters.

We were fortunate because we had a mailing service that we used to help us do our absentee ballots, but they had to ramp up tenfold to what they'd been doing prior, again, in a very short period of time, in a matter of days, you know, and having the envelopes

and all those materials already preapproved and ready to go, so all that capacity.

And then, on the backend, once we actually got those ballots in the mail, you had to have the processing capacity in place for your ballots to come in. And, unfortunately, as much as we're going to work very hard to try to get people to vote early and space out the voting, our experience in Washington has been, by and large half of the voters wait until the Sunday before Election Day to vote, and they put their ballots in the mail on their way to work and election officials get half of the ballots in election week. And in our State we have a postmark for the cutoff. And so, what that means is we get as many ballots in Wednesday as we do Tuesday. And so, these are capacity issues you need to start factoring in.

Look at the last Presidential election in your State. What was your turnout? And then, I would say you should, at a minimum, probably be looking at 30 percent of your voters returning a ballot by absentee ballot. Regardless of what your laws are now, just, you know, 16 percent of our population is over 65. You can guarantee that those people are going to want to vote by mail somehow and are going to use even an excuse to do this. So build out and have plans for 30 percent, 50 percent of your ballots coming back by mail, even if you're a polling place State or county

because -- or local jurisdiction, because you're going to have to deal with that volume.

And then, do you have the signatures digitized? That is a really critical element. That speeds the processing up. If you have to go and look up individual voter registration cards, it slows the processing time down.

Finally, the thing you really want to look at is your certification window, particularly for your primary election, because our State has an August primary, and I can tell you that we -- with recount potential, we are pushing it to get our mailing materials ready and mailed out for a general election mailing cutoffs, especially UOCAVA voters. So, if your certification window is too short, you may not have enough time to process all of those absentee ballots. So, really, really take that comprehensive look and use some of the numbers that you have in your past history to be able to determine whether or not you've got the capacity built in.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Secretary Wyman.

Commissioner Albence, a couple things quickly. You had -- certainly, you had mentioned that Delaware is traditionally about a 5 percent absentee, so as you ramp that up, you know, you mentioned that you serve on the Postal Committee for the Election Center, so I'd be interested to know -- you've mentioned a number

of things, but those things that stand out from that experience that you're particularly looking at using, as you consider ramping up, and also some of the costs associated with that or your concerns around the costs associated with ramping up.

MR. ALBENCE:

Sure. In reference to with the Postal Committee at the Election Center, you know, we -- that's a -- just to reiterate, that's a really great resource because we have -- we really have the connections through that organization, through that body directly to the USPS, a direct ear in to the senior leadership. And the senior leadership is really committed to getting the message down and out to the local level, you know, their commitment organization-wide. And it really is a true commitment. You know, I think that's something we can leverage.

You know, we have leveraged, here in Delaware, for example, in our -- with our regional contacts here with our postal official we have a great relationship, and it's year-round, on-season, off-season. And I just think, you know, that's really helpful for -- as we locally consider these things.

And you also mentioned cost. I think that's a very important consideration, especially if you are -- and really, any jurisdiction, you know, would be in a position where at least for, you know, the time being, you know, you're going to potentially, depending on how

things go, you know, running, you know, a couple parallel elections, and I like to say you will have, you know, perhaps a polling place type of set up or a vote center set up, as well as a vote-by-mail. And that certainly costs, you know, significant funds, a significant increase. And that's what's going to be key, I think, going forward, especially as we we go into really uncertain financial times.

You know, it's great to see the influx of Federal funding now, this year, which is great, but it's going to need to be an ongoing commitment, and that's what's going to be the challenge because I think there's a lot of focus, as there, you know, often is when there are crises that happen. Just like with cybersecurity, you have, you know, the influx of funding around that, that's an ongoing issue. And this could certainly be an ongoing issue, and this could certainly be -- you know, hopefully, when this current situation subsides, once behaviors have changed and voters have shifted to the new model, they're not going to shift back, so that ongoing commitment, especially if you are in a jurisdiction when you're going to be committed to maintaining delivery -- a couple different delivery systems, then that funding is going to have to be committed and ongoing, because it's going to be challenging for the financial picture we're going to face for the next, you know, possibly several years. Who knows? So that's, I think, a key consideration, ongoing funding and the needed level of funding for quality.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Commissioner. I appreciate those comments. I want to be respectful of our time. I've got more questions, but I'll see if my colleagues have questions they want to ask now.

Vice Chairman Palmer, do you have questions you'd like to ask of the panelists?

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Yes, Mr. Chair.

Secretary Wyman, what are -- in your statement you talked a little bit about compensatory controls in an absentee or a vote-by-mail process. Could you talk a little bit about the importance of accurate addresses on a voter list, how you -- how that is controlled with your process, and as well as signature comparison, how -- what advice would you give on that sort of control for those counties or the counties that are sort of anticipating, you know, going from 5 percent to even a quarter or even 50 percent? How can they manage those controls to make sure the integrity of the process is maintained?

SECRETARY WYMAN:

What we found in -- when we started doing vote-by-mail elections in the mid-'90s, you know, when we did our first ones, we had a 10-percent undeliverable rate, meaning one in 10 envelopes came back as undeliverable. Now, over time, that number dropped

down because we were doing an annual mailing, especially since we moved completely to vote-by-mail. So, that number now stays about -- for our State stays about, I'd say, 3 to 6 percent depending on the county and usually way lower than that. And part of that is just the maintenance we've done with the ERIC project and being one of the ERIC States. So, our rolls are pretty clean, and even so, we're still getting a large number of ballots that come back as undeliverable.

DRAFT

I think one of the things you could do is -- especially those States that are looking at sending out requests, applications, if you're going to maintain that system, that mailing itself will help you update your rolls, so that's a good thing, but you're -- anticipate you're going to get a lot of those requests back, and also be building in the time it's going to take to enter all of those requests into your system.

As far as one of the real linchpin security measures we have here in Washington, it is the use of the signatures, so we have all of our signatures imaged in our voter registration system, which is a Statewide system that the counties are checking signatures of every returned ballot against the one on file. Now, a bigger jurisdiction -- like in our State, it's King County with Seattle -- the volume of those signature-checking -- you know, that signature-checking apparatus right now is all manual. It is all individual

people looking at each one of those signatures. So, we digitize them on the first pass as those ballots come in. As Kevin was talking about, that's one of the things you capture on the front end, and so it's all done electronically. You're not moving around trays of envelopes. It makes it much more efficient and verifiable.

And then, lastly, if you don't have your signatures digitized, you're going to have to figure out those processes. I'm sorry, going back to the signature verification electronically, some States are looking at -- our -- I have a couple counties right now requesting to do a check where the computer would do that first pass of checks for all of the easy matches to, again, speed up that timing. So, you know, there's ways to make it efficient and try to look for those, but also make sure you build those controls in, because they really will serve you well when people start making allegations of ballot stuffing and tampering and fraud. You want to be able to be able to instill confidence in your harshest critics.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Thank you. Commissioner Albence, one of the things I noticed in Delaware was that you're an excuse absentee, but I did notice that there was one line application, as well as the Governor had modified the sort of definition of disabled and sick. And so you are undoubtedly going to have a number of increases in absentee. How do you anticipate, you know -- even in every Presidential

election you're going to have an avalanche of requests of absentee ballots. Now, it's going to be even more, and how -- what sort of direction are you giving your localities on how to manage what is undoubtedly going to be even more requests and individuals looking to get their ballot and get it back in time? So, when we go from -- was the regular 5 percent to what could be 50 percent, what are -- what advice are you giving your localities on how to handle that change?

DRAFT

MR. ALBENCE:

Sure. Sure, thank you. We are fortunate in the sense that we've got -- we've had for some time but we've enhanced them recently with some of our system conversions and upgrades, some additional tools that help with some of the more labor-intensive parts of the process, and we're really encouraging everyone to use those tools. So, for example, the ability to either complete applications online, a fillable form, or to our voter portal that is a completely automated way to complete the application and for it to be directly sent to the elections office prefilled, so that saves a huge amount of time in terms of the data entry and also the accuracy, as well, certainly with -- you're not having to decipher handwriting and things like that. So, that's a big -- that's been a big plus, and that does save a ton of time.

We're also encouraging the local offices to make sure that they are enhancing their staffing earlier than normal, their temporary staff or seasonal staff, get them in earlier, get them acclimated and oriented earlier so that they're available, and they are oriented to the process. And they've been doing that, and it's actually been very helpful because with this increase in volume that we've seen because of the extension of -- the reasons that you mention related to COVID-19, they're getting a lot of real-world experience instead of the traditional cycle where it's a very slow ramp-up and, you know, maybe they're not -- especially the temporary folks would not be as busy. You know, everybody's busy from the start right now with a lot of volume. And it's great for, you know, getting familiar with the process. But I'd just say, yeah, it's the -- you know, automation tools would be key and then also your staffing, getting that early, getting folks trained.

And, you know, we're advising the offices here, you know, we -- you know, again, it would be prudent with your expenditures but, you know, err on the side of more staff. It's always better to have more than not enough, and make sure you get people in there and -- who are reliable and people that you can count on. So, that would be kind of my advice to them.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Thank you, Commissioner.

One last quick question. Mr. Runbeck, are you still onboarding counties that may anticipate increased absentee or mail voting? And sort of what is your timeline for that? Is it -- I know you mentioned like today would be a great day to do it, but would you say the next couple months we have or the -- that may have anticipated increased mail voting?

MR. RUNBECK:

Well, we in anticipating some of the challenges of the process for making decisions, we have actually staffed up and purchased more inserting equipment without orders to justify it. Historically, we've had a lot of counties come to us at the last minute, after a year or two of talking about it, and say, okay, now we have to move. So, we do know that that's part of the reality of this situation.

That being said, we have -- our existing customers are anticipating increased demand on their own. Additional voters are registering, and States that are -- have permanent voting lists are anticipating those numbers going up, too. So we factor that all in, and we do have some excess capacity, but it really is -- we're down to a first-come, first-served, and we are going to have to say no. And I suspect in the next six weeks from the November election, unless you guys can open up the front end -- and I stress this -- you know, there are so many laws that require you to wait to certain

days before the election for candidate filings, for petitions, for court challenges, all those things that limit the amount of time that we can produce. Every day you buy on the front end increases capacity across the Nation. All the vendors that know how to do this can do more if you can buy minutes down to days.

So, that's an area where the government can help by making the decisions earlier and by looking at the laws that constrain when we can start actually printing, when we receive files from the counties, when we receive the list. So, all those things impact capacity, and it's a very fluid situation. So, the short answer is, yes, we have more capacity, but I expect that to be complete soon.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Thank you, Mr. Runbeck.

Mr. Chair?

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Vice Chairman Palmer.

Commissioner Hicks, do you have questions?

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

Yes, I do, thank you.

Secretary Wyman and -- I have a quick question for you. In terms of -- and you both have talked about older poll workers being a part of this or, older election officials being a part of the counting process and the process overall. Has there been talk of using --

and especially with the high unemployment rate that we have right now, and hopefully will be gone in November, but for the present time, using people who may be unemployed right now in some sort of capacity and hopefully giving them some sort of waiver so that this doesn't affect their unemployment benefits? I'm thinking mostly like, you know, bartenders or restaurant workers or even high school students who may be driving their parents crazy right now. So -- but just those folks, in general, who may be at home and may have a higher immunity to this if it all possible?

SECRETARY WYMAN:

Yeah, absolutely. I think that that's going to vary by State. In a State like mine where we don't really have -- we have an active election right now, but it's a very small one in only 10 of our counties, so we're able to do it with in-house staff by and large. But the counties and the States that you're looking at coming up on the calendar as we move closer to the summer, yes, absolutely. I think they're going to be doing a lot of recruitment efforts.

And in fact, I was just on a call with Business for America, and we were talking through this. And I suggested -- and I'm stealing this, full disclosure, from Ohio Secretary of State LaRose, but the idea of an elective service. I think that, as a nation, we are going to need to do the biggest recruitment effort, probably since World War II, in terms of personnel, to staff polling places and

voting centers and election processing warehouses. And in -- I'm hoping that we, in the elections community, can partner with businesses across the country to do that, as some sort of civil service or, you know, civic engagement or whatever process we can hook people into.

And I agree with you, Commissioner, that getting those younger workers has got a twofold bonus. One, it gets them out of their parents' hair. Two, it gets them civically actively engaged and will, hopefully, make them lifelong voters. But, yes, we're going to have to do a major outreach program.

MR. ALBENCE:

If I could offer just a couple comments on that as well. The -- especially -- I'll focus on the younger population. We have been fortunate in Delaware the last several election cycles that we've had the opportunity to do a lot of outreach to our high school and college students. And it's been especially helpful even before this current situation, as we've kind of migrated towards an environment with additional technology in the field, not that -- you know, that's not certainly an age-related factor, but certainly some of the younger folks may be more inclined or maybe have some -- less anxiety around some of the technology. So, that's also been a plus in that realm, so we're going to keep focusing on that, too, and that's going to be very important from a staffing perspective,

especially because our -- as was mentioned, a lot of our usual workers will be anxious and will be hesitant to be out there.

SECRETARY WYMAN:

And if I could add two thoughts to that. I -- as I was listening to the Commissioner, it hit me as well, one, these are -- we're talking about paid positions, by and large, I think, across the country. I'll speak for my State, that the people that work in my State are paid positions at the county level. But remember, those of you who are moving from a low absentee environment to a more robust one, you now not only have to have a more robust workforce, probably equal to what your poll site Election Day workforce is in those environments, but that workforce is going to be available 30 to 60 days. So, these are paid positions, but they are for a period of time, and that's going to be part of the challenge is ramping those up. And, you know, right now it's too early in my State, but come about late June, early July, all the counties will be fully staffed and running 100 percent, so --

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

Mr. Runbeck, I had the opportunity when I was out last year at the African-American Disability Conference to visit your new facility, and it's very impressive. One question I have -- and maybe you might not know this, but as folks look to build new high-speed scanners across the country, who's building that, since folks are

home, and I'm wondering, are these U.S.-built, basically? So, if, you know, four or five jurisdictions need three or four, where are these coming from, and who is building them, basically?

MR. RUNBECK:

Well, there's a combination. There certainly is American manufacturers that are doing this, and we do buy technology locally. But we also do buy from Europe. Our high-speed intelligent inserters come from Germany. You know, Japanese provide a lot of the scanners, the high-speed scanners. And I can't speak for the tabulation systems, so -- because we don't do that part of the business. So, for us, it is an international effort, but it is a heavy lift, and a lot of it is local.

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

Great. Well, Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time, I'm not going to ask any more questions.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Commissioner Hicks.

Commissioner McCormick?

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

Thank you, Chairman.

Secretary Wyman, can -- you described the length of time that it's taken to ramp up to vote-by-mail. Can you tell me if there's

a difference between small jurisdictions and large jurisdictions on the implementation process?

SECRETARY WYMAN:

Ironically, it's counterintuitive. In our State, our experience in 2005, when we started moving, the majority of our counties moved, and most of those were small counties. And they were able to make that transition pretty seamlessly because their volumes are smaller. It was the large jurisdictions, particularly King County, where Seattle is, and Pierce County where Tacoma is, and those were actually two different things. King County, it was just building out the capacity and building in all the controls. In Pierce County, it was political. They had had an auditor who had forced vote-by-mail kind of down the voters' throats, and they actually had to move to vote-by-mail because the legislature changed the law. So, it can be political, it can be administrative, but the bigger the jurisdiction, the more moving parts.

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

Mr. Runbeck, you know, we have -- on many of our trips out to election offices and warehouses, we've seen convoys of trucks that are necessary to transport ballots and ballot packages and -- you know, in and out of election offices. I'm not sure people understand the magnitude of paper we're describing when we talk about voting by mail. Could you describe a ballot packet, what it

consists of, and the need for so many trucks when dealing with this, and, if possible, the average cost of sending out a ballot packet?

MR. RUNBECK:

Well, there are a lot of variables there. The paper involved is -- I mean, we're buying, you know, millions of dollars' worth of paper, just raw paper that needs to be converted both to the envelopes and to the ballots themselves, plus the instruction inserts. Once they're all inserted in the mail packets, we're looking at -- depending on -- I've got my backup crew to give me numbers on the side. We're -- approximately 250,000 mail packets per truck, so a full semi can carry that much.

So, in a large jurisdiction, you know, at -- for Maricopa, which has over 2 million, you know, on the first day we're sending 7 to 10 trucks to the post office. And because of those time constraints, again, we have to hold them. So, warehousing is a huge problem, you know, because we have to produce those ahead of time and then sit on them until it's mail time.

But we also -- you know, it comes back to that chain of custody. You know, we are -- have all mail approved by the USPS in our facility, and all our trucks, if we're moving out of State, are GPS tracked. And so, we can tag exactly where a truck is at any moment in time and if there are any issues around that. But I don't want -- I think I've answered your question. I apologize.

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

Yes. Paper management and I guess an environmental impact study would be in order, right?

Kevin, just another quick question. You mentioned that you had a capacity of 30 million? I think --

MR. RUNBECK:

For the general election, yes.

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

For the general election. We had 138 million, approximately, voters in the Presidential election in 2016. Are there enough vendors to meet that need across the country do you think?

MR. RUNBECK:

The --

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

Nationally?

MR. RUNBECK:

There is for printing of ballots. That's already being done now, and that is more decentralized. A lot of small counties, rural counties will have their local printer do their ballots, so that a large organization like ours, we don't need to be involved in that.

The vote-by-mail packets, that's more constrained. That is our chokepoint. The insertion, the intelligent insertion that is required to make sure that each voter gets the correct information

and the correct ballot and all the processes of mail have been met is literally our chokepoint there. So, as I mentioned, we can do 30 million ballots, but we can only do between 18 and 20 million packets in the same amount of time.

That being said, small -- some small counties can brute force the mail packets. And you can put -- you know, if you've got 5,000 or 10,000 put together, you put a bunch of people in a room and you put a process together, and you can brute force it out the door.

So, I think what's going to be happening here is, again, at some point the capacity of the organizations and the vendors that can do vote-by-mail will be met. They'll all be full. And then we'll be looking for secondary sources, and then you're going to be looking at how can we do that ourselves.

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

So, it's --

MR. RUNBECK:

Yeah, it's going to be a huge challenge. You know, just -- we actually purchased every single intelligent inserter that our manufacturer can make this year in time. And that won't fill, you know, 10 percent of the need of the Nation, so -- I can't speak for the rest of the country, but it's going to be a challenge.

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

Yeah. And then I know we're running out of time, but one quick question for Commissioner Albence. Thank you for joining us. It's been mentioned about Intelligent Mail barcoding through the USPS. That's a tool that they offer. Can you just give us a very brief description on how that works for ballot tracking?

MR. ALBENCE:

Sure. Sure. And the benefit of that and how it works is if you can construct the Intelligent Mail barcode and work with the Postal Service initially to set up the accounts that you will need, it can really leverage a lot of data for you. So, just in essence, you will -- you would need to have the proper software to create the Intelligent Mail barcode and to structure it properly. And, ideally, in the best environment you would like it what they call serialized, you know, down to the piece level, so you can track it individually and provide that level of accuracy both inbound and outbound.

So, it does require the, you know, appropriate equipment and software, setting up your accounts with your -- with the Postal Service, making sure you have that level of -- that registration completed, but then also, you know, you're needing to have ideally, you know, someone dedicated, at least part-time or part of their responsibilities, to utilizing that data, because there's a lot of data that can come out, but there is -- it's much easier than it was previously, but there's a little bit of a learning curve just to be sure

that you can leverage that data and use it and deliver it to your voters through whatever interface you have, whether a tracking system or such.

The IMb, you know, can be -- you can have IMb's that are a little more generic that aren't serialized to the piece level, but if you're going to do it, I would recommend, you know, go for the serialized, as they say, piece by piece. It's a lot less daunting than it used to be.

One other quick comment on that, the USPS has put together the election mail kit, and that is something that is mailed to every election jurisdiction that has -- it's a hard copy, but it has also an online supplement that walks you through. There's a great piece in there that walks you through A to Z, setting up Intelligent Mail barcode, how it works, how to do it, who to call if you need help. It's a -- and the -- it's on the USPS website, the election mail kit. I believe it's publication 600. That will give you everything you need to get you started on that.

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

Thank you, Commissioner Albence.

Chairman Hovland, thank you for extending the courtesy of time to me to ask questions.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Commissioner McCormick.

And, Mr. Runbeck, I didn't get a chance to ask you a question. In the interest of time, I won't, but I will thank you for -- your team has been a great service on the Sector Coordinating Council and as part of the joint working group efforts to produce some of the documents that you mentioned earlier, so thank you for that. And certainly, those documents I'll flag again are on our website at EAC.gov, under COVID-19 resources, under absentee mail voting, have addressed a number of issues that we've heard about today.

But I want to thank all of our speakers from this panel for joining us today in this discussion. And I'll now turn things over to Vice Chairman Don Palmer as we begin Panel 2. Thank you.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Thank you, Chairman.

Our second panel today will discuss considerations for in-person voting. Americans have expectations of a safe and secure in-person voting experience, including early voting in-person, absentee, and Election Day voting. While election officials are preparing for potential increases in absentee and mail voting, they are still arranging for polling locations and vote centers to be open and safe for ballots to be cast in person. In fact, two of our panelists successfully conducted Presidential primaries in March.

Given the current circumstances, the safety of voters and staff is a priority in the planning, recruitment and training of poll workers and making sure voting is accessible to all voters, including voters with disabilities. And these are factors to consider. I look forward to hearing what our panelists have to say.

With that, I'd like to briefly introduce our second panel. We have Steve Sandvoss, Executive Director of the Illinois State Board of Elections. We also have with us Mark Andersen, the Supervisor of Elections in Bay County, Florida. We also have Kelly Buckland, Executive Director of the National Council on Independent Living, and Jasen Kunz, who is with the WASH Team Lead, which stands for Water Sanitation and Hygiene, Center for Disease Control's Community Mitigation Task Force.

With that, I'd like to turn over the floor to Steve Sandvoss, the Executive Director of the Illinois State Board of Elections. And we'll just go in that order with the statements. Thank you for being here today.

MR. SANDVOSS:

Thank you, and I want to just thank all the members of the EAC for this opportunity to speak before you on this panel.

I just want to begin by giving you a brief synopsis of our experience in Illinois with the general primary election. The general primary was held on the 17th of March, which was right at the

runup to this whole response to the pandemic. I remember the week before I was on my way to Chicago and I got a call from our chairman, and he had heard that there was some talk about possibly postponing the primary, which, my first reaction is, you know, that would be unprecedented, unheard-of, and I just thought it was just beyond the scope of possibility. And, you know, in the discussion I think there was some agreement that at this point, the week before, it would be too late to do that considering that, you know, early voting had already started, the vote-by-mail had already started.

And then, a series of meetings were held with different stakeholders. I know the representatives from the Chicago Board of Elections, the Cook County clerk's office, obviously the two most populous election authorities in the State. We had conversations with the Governor's office. And, again, I wasn't privy to that, but my understanding was there was talk about possibly postponing. Ultimately, the Governor concluded that the authority wasn't there to order an election suspended or postponed absent some sort of court action. And also, you know, given that the, you know, voting process had already begun and there was no certainty as to what date would be a safe date to be scheduled to, the decision was made to proceed as planned with the election.

We, in the office here, got a lot of feedback from election judges, from election authorities, from voters very concerned about, you know, what they were supposed to do. Nobody wanted to -- or I shouldn't say nobody wanted to, but they were all reluctant to go out in public for obvious reasons. The best we could do is pass along guidance that we had gotten from the Department of Public Health and the Center for Disease Control with respect to hygiene and doing -- and taking precautions. This applies both to election judges and to voters and to poll workers in the precincts.

I know that there was some concern with the nursing home voters and being exposed to people from the outside. So, the decision was made by the election authorities in those jurisdictions to relocate those polling places from -- you know, to other locations where, you know, people would not have to be subject to outsiders coming in and possibly bringing the infection in as well. And they went to an all vote-by-mail system within the assisted care facilities.

We were fortunate in Illinois, in the sense that the election went off without any major problems other than the -- you know, some of the judges not showing up caused the election authorities to scramble at the last minute to try to approve new judges, so polling places had to be relocated because, you know, the judges, you know, didn't show up at some of them. Others didn't open until later, and the officials went to court to get a judge to order the

polling hours extended, although that does happen in the elections in other years too, this type of situation.

We had a couple of instances of attempted cyber attack, but our -- we were able to thwart that through identifying the offending IP addresses. So, the one item that we were probably most concerned about before the pandemic kind of took a backseat to the preparations that went into effect as a result of the pandemic.

The -- we sent out a survey afterwards to the election authorities, you know, asking the different questions about preparations for the upcoming November election, but one of the questions dealt with the -- how did they respond or how did they prepare for a shortage of judges. And most of them, I have to say, came up with a solution of communication with existing judges. Phone calls were made. They called it word-of-mouth emails, asking current judges to contact family, contact friends, that you have some assistance from elected precinct committee persons. They recruited voters themselves, which is permissible under the statute. Some even responded that they had gotten on their hands and knees and pleaded and begged.

But, you know, like I said before, the election went off. The turnout was probably lower, but not -- certainly not the lowest we've ever had. So, I think in retrospect, we were fortunate, in Illinois,

that this -- that we got through it. But, you know, clearly there's a challenge ahead for the upcoming election in November.

And there's been talk about what to do as far as, you know, the approach. Can we go to a more robust vote-by-mail program? I know that there's some, you know, disagreement amongst legislators with respect to how far you go with expanded vote-by-mail. I know some, you know, people, you know, firmly believe that, you know, the voting the way it's always been done, you know, in the precinct, in the polling place, so, I -- if I had to guess, I'm guessing that we'd have some sort of a combination of both in-precinct polling places, but maybe perhaps fewer judges take into account that many judges would be reluctant to serve and, you know, maybe consolidating some of the polling places. I think that might be a solution, preparing for increased vote-by-mail, perhaps some more -- encouraging people to take advantage of voting early and things like that.

We're eligible to receive approximately \$13.9 million in CARES Act funds, and in addition with the State match of \$2.78 million, that provides a substantial amount of money to assist the election jurisdictions in preparing for the upcoming general election in light of this current pandemic crisis. Obviously, we're hoping that things, you know, get better as the months go on, but from what I've heard in the news, they're worried about wave two, and so I think

we have to prepare as if this pandemic is still going to be around in September and October, the months leading up to the election, you know, and of course the election date itself on the 3rd.

So, that's kind of Illinois' position right now. We're kind of in a hold, in a wait-and-see if the legislature changes anything with respect to the voting process, but, you know, we have our, you know, plans in place so that, you know, whatever the legislature does we'll be ready for, and we'll assist the local election authorities the best we can in preparations for the November election. Thank you.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Thank you.

Mr. Andersen?

MR. ANDERSEN:

Thank you, Commissioner.

In Bay County, we have a little over 116,000 voters, and I'll address my county's experience with the pandemic, Presidential Preference Primary, and the public perception. Our condition's for all of our 20 county elections are under emergency order, and from the Governor of the State of Florida, due to category 5 Hurricane Michael. I made this request to ensure successful elections are possible.

Currently, we have -- half of our precinct polling locations are available. Destroyed buildings and community emergency use limit use greatly. I used the emergency plan that worked in 2018 general election with some slight upgrades. I created full and two day super voting sites open through Election Day and with equal and geographical balance in the county using what buildings we had left and what -- those that are coming back online. This is in partnership with the vote-by-mail was successful for the Presidential Preference Primary.

Initially, we were very fortunate that my office had all the sanitation cleaning materials on hand because we had already gone through a major flu season where we lost over, you know, close to 25 percent of our workforce and did not have the materials to meet the massive need for the overall public. Due to that event, as we -- we always have sanitation and cleaning materials for all elections, regardless of status, to be prepared, so that helped us greatly.

Overall, our process went very well from the operational side. However, from the national media I will say that some areas of the confusion caused by the media and the invalidated considerations created conditions that enhanced worry, and this just simply wasn't warranted. One specific issue is that election workers or election office was not considered essential personnel.

Statements were made that we would be putting people's lives at risk if we held the election. Well, we held the election. All of our workers showed up with only two notified ahead of time that they would withdraw. We opened all of our super sites on time with staffing. The turnout was low at 23 percent, which I believe was due to the candidates withdrawing just before our voting began, which greatly affected our voter interest.

A specific deep concern began after the election when statements started flying regarding all vote-by-mail. I can say, in 2018, because of the experience during the Hurricane Michael and our very limited postal access, that became a high level failure point condition. My office would and could never support a single election process given the experience in the prior environment could, you know, create conditions due to the weather.

So, those are some of my remarks. And the concerns that, just in general, are very specific that when you lose the use of your Postal Service system and you're relying on your Postal Service system, how do you communicate with your voters? And that resulted in 131 people working with E-ballots or whatever condition that we did in emergency conditions back in 2018. Well, now here we are again moving forward with other considerations and concerns that if you focus just on one possibility, you're putting yourself at risk.

And I will say that the fact that we had equipment to do things, as well as do the vote-by-mail and the other pieces is why we were so successful to pull this election off.

So, I thank you for your time to share, and I look forward to your questions.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Thank you.

Mr. Buckland? Mr. Buckland, you need to unmute yourself.

MR. BUCKLAND:

Yeah, sorry about that. I started talking then noticed it.

Sorry about that. Thank you, everybody. And it's an honor for me to be here with you today.

My name is Kelly Buckland. I am the Executive Director of the National Council on Independent Living. We can go by NCIL, organization, Centers for Independent Living, and Statewide Independent Living Councils, which are nonprofit, nonresidential organizations that are run by and staffed by people with disabilities serving people with disabilities.

Basically, I have been using a wheelchair for about 50 years, and I have voted in every election since I was 18 years old. But a lot of that time trying to cast my ballot has been a problem because the process itself just simply hasn't been accessible. And we believe that all voting must be accessible. Our votes are not

expendable. People cannot be forced to choose between accessible, secure, or safe.

One size -- as was said before, one size does not fit all. So, we believe that the more options, the better. Vote by mail, no-excuse absentee ballots, curbside voting, voting centers, and voting in your regular polling places are all options that should be out there, and we should be talking about all of the options, not a single option for people. But any option that we do talk about needs to be accessible. People should -- again, should not be forced to choose one method over another because that's the only accessible method for them.

And what I'm talking about here is the discussion around vote-by-mail for everybody else, and then people with disabilities have to go vote at a voting center. That means that we have to choose to go to the voting center simply because we have a disability, and that's not acceptable in our minds.

What we really need to do -- and I've said this before -- is we need to find common ground, and we need to move ahead. There are laws and the Constitution that protect the right of an accessible and independent vote, and those laws are still in effect and need to be followed and enforced.

The other thing that's always true and it's even more true today I think because of the pandemic is that poll workers really need to be trained on how to assist people with disabilities to vote.

And with that, Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission, we stand ready to assist in this matter, and I'll stand ready to answer any questions as well.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Thank you.

Mr. Kunz. Mr. Kunz, I'm sorry. Mr. Kunz, are you there?

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Mr. Kunz appears to be frozen. We can potentially move to question-and-answer for our first panelists until --

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. We'll get him back online once we do.

So, I'll start off with a question. Mr. Sandvoss, you've had the opportunity to go through the primary, as Mr. Andersen has, and you obviously had a number of things that you put in place for the primary. With the lessons learned from that, sort of the -- what will you take to November as lessons learned for additional safety and security measures within the polling place or within the early voting sites?

MR. SANDVOSS:

Well, I think one advantage we're going to have is obviously the knowledge and the experience that we have in -- from going through the primary but also time. That was the big factor, is that, you know, this all happened within a few days before the election in terms of the shortage of judges, and the polling places having to be relocated at the last minute so, you know, not given enough time to advise the voters. So, I think that's going to be very helpful that, you know, the -- you know, a month, two months before the election, you know, we're going to be able to identify issues that the election authorities are having and try to address them.

I think that having adequate supplies, along with regular voting supplies -- and when I say that, I mean sanitation-type supplies, I think that's going to be critical because a lot of people are going to be very nervous when they get to the polling place. And, you know, they might, you know, not want to go in if they feel that it's -- their health is in any way in jeopardy.

And I know that that was -- some of the complaints we got was even though the -- it was advertised that all the polling places would have hand sanitizer and wipes and that kind of thing, but, you know, some of the voters, you know, complained that the -- there wasn't anything like that. And that's not to cast, you know, everything in a negative light. I think most of the jurisdictions had

the materials and some may have just ran out, but I think that that's going to be something that we can certainly prepare for.

Also, we'll have a lot more time to make sure that the polling places are all -- that are supposed to be functional voting sites are indeed going to be able to handle the voting. We'll hopefully identify issues ahead of time that might prevent a polling location from being used or from opening.

I think the recruitment of judges, we'll be a lot more -- better prepared for that, and I'm hoping that maybe the requirement of five judges could be reduced to three, especially if it looks like there's not going to be quite as many voters going to the polling places. It's just easier to get, you know, three judges per precinct as opposed to five. And I think that the election authorities will, you know, have plenty of time to prepare recruitment policies to bring onboard additional judges, and I think that's going to, you know, go ahead and go a long way toward alleviating all the problems that they face.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Mr. Sandvoss, just a quick follow-up. One of the issues that I sort of think came out of the primaries, thus far, has been sort of we all sort of tried to control for lines and anticipate lines and processing of voters efficiently. And now, we have social distancing, so it adds to -- another twist to how we process voters in

an efficient way inside the polling place. Is that something that Illinois may be looking at?

MR. SANDVOSS:

I would say yes. I think that's going to be part of the election judge training. Our office assists the local election officials with training the election judges, and I think that's going to be a big focus is, you know, social distancing and general adherence to the guidelines that have been established to, you know, protect the people from being infected. And if it means requiring masks before you go into the polling place, that might be, you know, something we'd look at, although, you know, the supply of masks I think is going to be a problem, so, you know, that -- you know, good thing we have several months between now and the beginning of early voting to address that.

But I -- yeah, in answer to your question, I think that's definitely going to be a very important consideration in the -- in talk about the planning and preparation on Election Day.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Thank you, Mr. Sandvoss. I noticed that we have Mr. Kunz available. Welcome. Welcome back. If you're prepared to give a -- are you prepared to give a few minutes of comments?

MR. KUNZ:

Yes, I am. And my apologies for that. The server dropped there for a minute, and I tried to get back on as quickly as I could.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Well, welcome.

MR. KUNZ:

Yeah. Yeah. Hello. Hi. My name is Commander Jasen Kunz, and I am a United States Public Health Service commissioned officer, and I work at the Centers for Disease Control and prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, out of the National Center for Environmental Health. And I currently serve as the Water Sanitation and Hygiene Team Lead for the COVID-19 response.

And I first wanted to remind everyone of some steps to protect yourself and others during a COVID outbreak. And I think these steps transcend now and to Election Day. And, first, it would be washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you've been in a public place like an election polling location and also after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. And if that's not available, of course use hand sanitizer. Also avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands and cover coughs and sneezes.

And remember, CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures

are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant transmission.

And, in addition to everyday steps to prevent COVID-19, keeping space between you and others is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to this virus.

So, the steps, amongst others, that I just discussed, are contained within the CDC recommendations for polling locations, which were released, you know, early on in this response. The CDC guidance has recommendations on the routine cleaning, disinfection of polling locations, areas, and associated voting equipment. This guidance suggests actions that polling station workers can take to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 by limiting the survival of the virus in the environment.

I want to focus on two aspects of the voting guidance today, and that's preventative actions polling stations or workers can take to protect themselves and preventative actions polling station workers can take to protect the general public. So, first focusing on preventative actions polling workers can take include of course staying at home if you believe you're sick. That is critical. Practicing hand hygiene frequently, practicing routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces, and that would include in polling locations such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, pens, sinks, you know, et cetera.

And cleaning refers to the removal of the debris and the reduction in germs on surface. It's that disinfection step, that final step following cleaning that actually kills those germs on those surfaces.

Another option is cleaning and disinfecting voting-associated equipment, and that would be routinely, you know, as appropriate or feasible. And that would include in voting machines, laptops, tablets, and keyboards. And it's important that you follow manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection protocols. I understand that that is critically important for these voting machines and devices, so make sure to look for those very specific cleaning protocols.

On considering the use of a wipeable cover for electronics if available, and if no manufacturing guidance is available, CDC has some steps for cleaning this equipment on our website.

And then, moving here to preventative action that polling worker stations can take to protect the general public, based on our best available data, the most important measures to prevent transmission of the virus in crowded places in areas includes careful and consistent cleaning of one's hands. So, therefore, in these polling locations, ensure bathrooms are well-supplied with soap, water, and drying materials so visitors and staff can wash their hands. I think we need to plan for a surge in the use of these bathrooms during -- at these polling locations, so keep that in

consideration as you're, you know, planning, you know, for Election Day.

Also provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol for use before or after using the voting machine or the final step in the voting process. And another consideration could be placing these hand sanitizers in visible, frequently used locations such as at registration desks or at exits of the polling locations. And, where feasible, incorporate social distancing strategies to increase the space between individuals and decrease the frequency of contact among individuals. And keeping at least six feet apart is ideal based on what we know about COVID-19. And if this is not feasible, efforts should be made to keep individuals as far apart as practical. Feasibility of strategies would depend on space available in the polling station and the number of voters who arrive at one time.

And then, finally, polling station workers can increase distance between voting booths as an option, limit nonessential visitors. For example, poll workers should be discouraged not to bring children and grandchildren with them as they work at the polling locations. And remind voters that, upon arrival, to try to leave space between themselves and others and discourage greetings with handshakes.

And in parting here, it is important to understand that we all play a role, whether it's the public or at polling, you know, locations to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19.

This concludes my prepared remarks, and I'm happy to take questions.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Thank you, Mr. Kunz. I have a question for you. I just talked a little bit about how the CDC makes a determination and guidance on the number of individuals in a building or a polling place. We've seen that go from like 50 to 25 and even down to 10. As we prepare for November, can you explain how that process works and what sort of time advanced notice will election officials have if it starts to go below 50 or 25?

MR. KUNZ:

And I think you're referring to what has kind of been defined as a crowd and the limitations put on that crowding. You know, I haven't actually been involved in those specific questions at the site upon those numbers, and I think if you kind of go back to our polling guidance here that we're looking towards here is that we very much want to ensure that folks have the ability to vote but try to do it safely. So I think we need to go back to encouraging at least six feet of separation if we can, you know, in these locations.

And I would have to get back with you in terms of does those actual 10 or 50 actually apply to polling locations. But the guidance that I was describing today I think are some reasonable risk-reduction measures that we can take and still vote, you know, in person.

And then, of course I think continued collaboration, you know, with this group moving forward and open communication is going to be key, you know, so we can share information as it becomes available.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Thank you.

Mr. Buckland, a question for you is you've had an opportunity to observe the primaries in a number of States, both by mail and in person in a number of States. Do you have any lessons learned from those that you wish other election officials can take on board as they prepare for their primaries or November election?

MR. BUCKLAND:

Well, I'm not so familiar with what's actually happened this way as I am concerned about where States are moving, and that is if they move to all vote-by-mail -- and we've heard actually two scenarios, all vote-by-mail or vote-by-mail and election stations. And the vote-by-mail there's been no consideration of making that accessible, so that leaves people displaced to go to vote stations.

So that's has been a thing that we've been seeing out there in the field and the thing that we're concerned about.

I think obviously the latest elections, the standing in line, the one thing I would bring up along the lines with the social distancing, the one thing that's been a concern for people with disabilities is a lot of people with disabilities can't stand in line for a long time, so asking them to do that has been problematic, or at least we've heard some concerns around that, so --

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Thank you.

Mr. Andersen, could you briefly talk about some of the procedures in your polling places that you implemented in Florida? And you also talked a little bit about options for voters and why that's important in an emergency. I'll give you an opportunity to expand a little bit on that. But could you talk a little bit about the particular procedures in place, as well as the decision to remove polling places from assisted living and nursing home sites and how that process works and was it effective?

MR. ANDERSEN:

Well, in Bay County we didn't have any locations in assisted living. We did individually as they were requested on each issue. But moving forward on the other issues of what we did to learn lessons was, number one, having already gone through a hurricane

is your voters are used to a little bit of adversity and disarray. Maybe that helped us here in Bay County get through this election because we did well as a team effort going through and doing these elections.

We provided a clean table at the entrance of every polling location that we set up. We had hand sanitizer. We had wipes there at that location prior to the voters going into those locations. I actually went out and solicited the media to talk about how it's important for -- not for us just to have all the materials needed to help the voter, but for the voter to help us do what they're required to do before they enter the polling location, which is, you know, wash your hands before you arrive. Keep your hands clean before you arrive. If you have a mask, put it on. Leave it on. Don't touch your face, all those things that were mentioned by the other gentleman not too long ago.

But I think it's very important that when you come in to the polling location -- we had yellow -- or blue tape on the floor every six feet. We had identified the booths that were six feet apart. We had large arrays and everything spread out. We didn't allow anyone to use but a stylus to do their check-in on our system, and after that stylus is we put it in a dirty stylus bucket that had to be washed before it could be put back on cycle where we would allow

the voter to pick up the stylus in front of each one of the voting stations.

Just that view, in itself, got discussion leaving the polling locations, that we were making a real effort to get things done and give comfort to voters that we were doing everything we could do and in turn -- and, again, I have to go back to the hurricane condition that our voters are trained to listen and know that we have had bumps in the road in the past. And I think they were prepared for this one, and they did very well going through the Presidential Preference Primary.

I think that's the biggest thing I've learned, that voters who go through adversity tend to remember a little bit more, and they have a little bit more flexibility and a little more concern, having just gone through, you know, adversity in a prior election. So, I think that really helped our county, along with, again, I want to stress the cleaning tables when you enter. It said cleaning right on the table. They saw it. It was visible. It spread the word as people left the polling locations. And I think that's -- you know, word-of-mouth of people that are going in to vote, that they get the comfort and confidence that when they leave that polling location, they go out, and, in partnership, we all worked to get this election done. So, I think that's some of the lessons I learned in this last election.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I'm going to hand it back to you for additional questions by yourself or others.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Vice Chair Palmer.

Mr. Sandvoss and Mr. Andersen, you both hit on a lot of the great lessons learned or opportunities for both your States or jurisdictions included who have not run an election yet. Can you touch again on sort of with the benefit of hindsight things that you may improve upon going forward or that you would do differently here or recommend to your colleagues around the country who have not yet administered an election in this environment?

MR. SANDVOSS:

Well, I mean, if you'd like me to go first, I can certainly do that. I think that communication to the voters is going to be very important, especially if there's any significant change in what they've been used to in the past elections. I noticed that if voters know ahead of time, you know, where they're supposed to go and vote or if there's certain times or if there's -- you know, a type of machine is different or anything out of the ordinary they're not expecting, I think it's critical that they be alerted to that.

And then, I think the election authorities know and they do a very good job of that, but I think we can also -- with our expanded

media capabilities, we could do some sort of a public service announcement. We have, you know, a Twitter account. We have Facebook. A lot of voters, you know, now rely on social media for information, so we can access them through those channels. We can also, you know, better prepare through our communication with our local election officials, identify what their, you know, needs and wants are.

Like I indicated before, the Federal Government was very generous in terms of the CARES Act money that they gave to the States, and, you know, Illinois is planning on putting that to good use as well to assist the local authorities in their efforts.

So, I think that, you know, based on our experience -- our own experience and the experience of other States and listening to some of the, you know, critique out there, I think that's going to help us better prepare for this upcoming election.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Sandvoss.

Mr. Andersen?

MR. ANDERSEN:

I think in this environment one of the most important things that I realized quickly on, even in the hurricane zone, is that you have to lead with some aggression, but you have to maintain positive environment while you're doing that. I -- again, I go back to

the condition in the hurricane and even the epidemic issue -- the pandemic I now call an epidemic because we've now gone through two issues -- that when you get into those environments that, number one, you have to keep your staff positive, because if you lose them, you've really got a problem.

And, number two, realize what staff is going through because at times I didn't realize -- I'm an old Navy frogman, so sometimes I forget that you got to slow the roll a little bit and bring everybody else on to get them charging where you need to get to go. But I think that's one of the most important parts is bring your team with you as you go along because, you know, a sole-source leader is going to be all by themselves.

And the same thing is going to happen with your precinct election officials or your poll workers or anyone that's working on your team that may have lost their house. I know there's people in our county right now still don't have their houses. That's why we're still under Executive Order. They still don't have the same address. Their address is different. We -- they're worried about mailing a ballot. Will it get to the right address or will the address change before we get to the election?

So, all those things you really want to tie in to positive leadership, getting your voters involved. I know that when we were making decisions on how to do these super sites, we pulled

everyone in from the public, the political party leaders, the community leaders. We pulled everybody we could in to get a consensus on how are we going to do this together and how are we going to make this happen. And, again, I think that is the single sole most important thing in any election. To give advice to anyone getting ready to do their first election is you can be their leader, but if they're not willing to follow you and be by your side and support you, you're not going to get there.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you for that. Commander Kunz, you -- one, thank you for the CDC guidance on these issues. You know, actually one of Mr. Andersen's colleagues in Florida, David Stafford, is fond of saying he's got the, you know, election officials do a lot of things, but they're not health officials, and so, I certainly appreciate what the CDC has done so far and being on calls with election officials.

One question I specifically wanted to ask related to sort of guidance around the lifespan of COVID-19 or the coronavirus on paper, whether that's ballots in the polling place or mail, and I wanted to see if you had any commentary on that.

MR. KUNZ:

Yeah, that's a fantastic question. And the short answer -- and I'll go into details -- is is that the coronavirus or SARS-CoV-2 can live on surfaces ranging from hours to days, and that's going to

depend on the type of surface. And some of the laboratory data that we have available that allows us to make -- at this point in time, indicates like, for example, printing and tissue paper, three hours or so; treated wood and cloth, two days; glass and banknotes, four days; stainless steel and plastic, it could be up to seven days. So that's why it's real critical for disinfection, this routine of those frequently touched surfaces.

So, I -- so CDC was asked about what about people handling -- or poll workers handling paper-based ballots in the mail. And I think no additional precautions are needed outside of routine handwashing and what you would normally do to handle those paper-based ballots, understanding that, you know, the virus does live for a limited amount of time in that environment, and the environmental conditions can influence it as well.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, sir.

And recognizing our time limitation, I'll turn it over to Commissioner Hicks for any questions.

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

Thank you, Chairman.

For election officials on the panel, thank you both for what you're doing. Particularly, I wanted to know how are you directly informing voters of changes that are going on in the process,

particularly if their addresses that have not been updated or changed or so forth?

MR. SANDVOSS:

Well, in Illinois the election authorities are the ones that are responsible for communicating to the voters anything that affects them as individuals in terms of their voting. If there's a change in, for instance, their polling place, the election authorities are required to notify the voter that the polling place location has changed.

With respect to more broad communication, I think -- in Illinois anyway, we're still waiting to see if there's going to be any change in legislation that would impact the method by which voters would vote. And when I say that, I mean primarily the expanded vote-by-mail. I think that that seems to have generated the most discussion. By no means is it a given that that's what's going to happen. They may just decide to let, you know, voting continue the way it always has and let the voter decide what option they want to use, whether it's early voting, vote-by-mail, or even voting at the polling place.

But if there's any changes that are made with respect to the law, I think the State Board of Elections would take it upon themselves to engage in some sort of a campaign to educate the voters and to alert the voters of these changes and in coordination with the local election officials who can -- who know their voters and

know how to contact them more directly. I think the responsibility for that would fall on the local officials.

MR. ANDERSEN:

In Bay County, we do have the requirement we deal with the Postal Service, the yellow stickies and notices and the address confirmation, the NCOA. All those things are put into place. But what we did in the adverse conditions that we've been in the hurricane and then also kind of pushed in this last election is, you know, we did 15-second commercials. Very expensive to do a piece of paper, mail it. Nothing against the Postal Service because they do an awesome job, but once you start adding those costs in and you compare it to a 15-second commercial with a phone number or a little piece of information you can run in all of the different channels within -- you can -- that are out there, because I discovered that they actually need commercials of that length to fill spots when they're doing TV or other communications on radio and other areas, so it was very cost-effective for us to get out there and go, look, we need your address. If it's changed, you need to call 784-6100, get that number, pushed it out there, communicated it over and over and over again. And that really helped in the environment that we were in given the fact that, again, the Postal Service, they may not be going to the right address until they

actually called us and say, hey, here's my correct address, oh, there you are, we found you.

We also have our notice on our webpage. If you're -- you've lost your house from the hurricane, you know, call us. We want to make sure where you're at. So we've kind of pushed those envelopes as aggressive as we can to get that message out to the voters.

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

Great. Mr. Buckland, as election officials consider different options for voting in person and vote-by-mail, what sort of things should they particularly address for voters with disabilities?

MR. BUCKLAND:

Well, as I -- thank you, Commissioner. As I mentioned in my remarks, they need to make sure that those are accessible, whatever options they're provided. So, for an example, vote-by-mail, they need to provide an electronic alternative to that so that you can receive your ballot by email, mark your ballot, mail it in, or fax it or some other way of delivering it. But if you force people to do it on a paper ballot, you're going to deny the right to vote to a bunch of people with disabilities, so there need to be accessible alternatives to each method of voting.

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

Great.

MR. BUCKLAND:

I hope that answers it.

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

Nope, it's perfect.

Mr. Kunz, with the -- thank you for being here today. I guess my one question would be for you is the -- as we look towards expanding vote-by-mail and there still needs to be in-person voting, what's the number-one thing -- or I guess number-two thing because number-one thing is basically washing your hands. What's the second-most important thing that people should consider when they either vote by mail or vote in person?

MR. KUNZ:

Well, I think voting by mail would assume, you know, the person is voting from home. I have to make that assumption, and that would be following CDC's standard guidelines for, you know, reducing your risk of COVID-19 spread and contact being -- or contracting it, and that would be through frequent handwashing, the use of a facemask, social distancing, following those measures, staying home when sick.

I think that, as you move in to the polling locations, that it's really multifactorial. I don't think there's one thing that -- you know, that second-most important and first-most important other than probably the handwashing, and then it's all in combination I think

after that point. That's that routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces, providing a safe environment for people to vote and polling station workers. Social distancing is incredibly important, especially if you're in a crowded place, and that reduces the risk if somebody is sick from contracting that. And then wearing a cloth facemask to protect others, you know, if you may be sick. I think all those combinations together, as I referred to, you know, in my prior remarks, I think will reduce the risk, you know, for voting.

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

Thank you.

With that, I want to yield back, but I wanted to say one other thing, thanking Supervisor Andersen again for all his work with the Election Assistance Commission and doing videos last year for disaster relief. In visiting your jurisdiction, I had limited touching with a combat zone, but this -- the hurricane that came through there was just like a nuclear bomb had gone off, so I implore everyone who's watching this video now to go and see the videos that we did on disaster preparedness with your county and with Puerto Rico to see some of the challenges that you've faced and some of the things that are still going on with your county.

And with that I would yield back to the Chair or Vice Chair, whoever --

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you.

Commissioner McCormick?

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

Yes, I have great questions to ask each of you, but in the interest of time, I'm going to do a lightning round, 15 seconds or less, what's your one best piece of advice for election officials during this -- dealing with the pandemic? And we'll start with Mr. Sandvoss, followed by Mr. Andersen, Mr. Buckland, and Commander Kunz. Thank you.

MR. SANDVOSS:

Yeah, I would say the one thing -- the advice I would give is be prepared. There's several months now between now and November, and any -- anything you can do by way of anticipating a different type of voting, I would encourage you to get as much information as possible on that. Talk to us. There's lots of resources out there. We're all in this together, so that's what I would say.

MR. ANDERSEN:

And I would echo those comments specifically along the lines that if you gain the confidence of your voters and you -- they gain the positive environment that you're both trying to go to, that you have a better chance of reaching that goal. So, reaching the goal together, reaching those accessibilities and getting everyone

working wherever there may be a bump, that voters will let you know as soon as possible that there's a concern or worry or anyone out there making sure that we're all identifying as far out as we can what we need to cure and get ready for. And then when it does happen, not to go into a panic mode.

And I'll caveat it with this. Be very careful and -- which we've had to do in the pandemic. I ordered my office to shut off the TV because just listening to that absolute negative message on the TV -- and they don't mean any harm, but that over and over and over again into a person's mind nonstop into a day makes it tough to stay positive. So, that's one -- another one of the recommendations.

MR. BUCKLAND:

I will stick with the same thing. Be prepared. I think that's a good theme. I would reach out to your local disability rights or local disability-led organizations and find out how to make your elections accessible. They can help you do that. And we stand as a national organization ready to help connect you with your local Center for Independent Living or disability rights organization that can help you figure out how to make the -- make sure that the election is going to be accessible to everybody.

MR. KUNZ:

Yeah, hi, this is Jasen here. I would also echo about being prepared in advance, and then, consider the recommendations that the CDC has put out for voting, and also, any instructions or guidance coming out in your State and local jurisdictions, but ultimately, be prepared and plan in advance.

COMMISSIONER MCCORMICK:

Thank you so much.

Chairman?

DRAFT

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Commissioner McCormick.

Vice Chair Palmer, do you want to --

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Sure. Sure.

I want to thank our panelists once again for joining us and providing your ideas on in-person voting. I'd like to ask EAC Executive Director -- Acting Executive Director Mona Harrington to join us and give us a brief update on the CARES Act funding and the EAC's effort to distribute the grants. Hi, Mona.

MS. HARRINGTON:

Hello. Thank you, Vice Chair Palmer.

As Chairman Palmer -- Vice Chairman Palmer said, my name is Mona Harrington, and I'm serving as the Acting Executive

Director at the EAC. I'll be providing you with an update on the CARES grant.

The United States Election Assistance Commission is pleased to report that we were awarded all 56 CARES Act grants on April 6. As of today, 49 States and territories had a request to disbursement of the funds and submitted the descriptions of their anticipated activities. The few remaining States have been in communication with the EAC and will submit their request letters after approval from their state legislator or their election board.

In a few cases, the State requires legislative vote on the required 20 percent match or other authorization before they can submit their request. In almost all of these remaining cases, States expect their internal processes to be complete by June. Regardless of the actual disbursement date of the funds, States have the authority to obligate funds under the grants as of March 28, 2020.

The EAC is currently reviewing the description of requests that States are anticipating as a result of the pandemic. A few States are still gathering data across their voting jurisdictions and did not provide specific descriptions of their needs. However, over 75 percent of the States are anticipating increased printing costs due to accommodate expanded absentee mail voting activities.

Postage costs are expected to significantly increase in order to cover the cost of prepaid postage on returns.

Also, additional voting equipment such as high-speed scanners will need to be purchased.

Some States will conduct upcoming primaries completely by mail, and all States expect to spend funds for various cleaning and sanitizing functions.

Many States are preparing for in-person voting and will hire additional poll workers to ensure physical distancing and to control the number of voters in polling places at any one time. These States are planning on deep cleaning and disinfecting efforts, as well as implementing safeguards to protect voters and election workers.

Communication to voters of changes in the voting processes is also a major area of planned expenditures. To meet reporting requirements under the CARES Act, EAC requested emergency approval under the Paperwork Reduction Act for the reports that must be submitted to Congress within 23 days of each upcoming primary and the general election. The first report is due April 30th from Wisconsin. A few more reports will be due in rapid succession in May from Alaska, Wyoming, Ohio, and Kansas, followed by 11 State reports due in late June for States that moved their primaries to June 2nd.

EAC has also held two webinars for States about the CARES Act and two more to provide guidance on meeting the 20 percent match requirement. Some States may be struggling to meet the match requirement as they experience budget decreases across the board as a result of the pandemic. EAC is working with the States to provide as much flexibility as we can to help them meet the requirement. EAC posted the State disbursement request letters on the EAC website.

Finally, we update our CARES grant FAQs as we get additional questions, and this week we will post information related to promoting a climate of accessibility for voters with disabilities. While officials prepare for increased mail voting, modified polling place locations, and other new costs, accessibility must be a priority. The right to a private and independent vote for those with disabilities is protected both by the Help America Vote Act and the equal access provisions in the Americans with Disabilities Act. HAVA and CARES Act funds are available to assist officials with achieving accessible elections for all voters during this crisis.

For further information on allocating grant resources in this area, please visit the EAC's FAQs regarding grant funding and voters with disabilities. We are committed to serving election officials and upholding the rights of HAVA and ADA.

Chairman Hovland, I'll turn this over to you for closing remarks.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you, Acting Executive Director Harrington.

And thank you to everyone who has watched today's hearing and especially to our panelists who spoke today. This is a very busy and stressful time, but we discussed some very important issues.

I'd also like to thank the EAC staff for all their hard work, both in putting together today's event and responding to the challenges of this pandemic in such an impressive way. Their efforts are clearly reflected in our agency's ability to continue serving the elections community.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge again the hard work of State and local election officials and what they're doing in their communities. The EAC Commissioners and EAC staff are committed to offering whatever support we can at the Federal level to help State and local officials administer safe, secure, accessible, and accurate elections. Thank you all for joining us.

And with that, I would take a motion to adjourn today's hearing.

VICE CHAIR PALMER:

Move to adjourn.

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

I second.

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Thank you.

All in favor?

[Chorus of ayes]

CHAIRMAN HOVLAND:

Opposed?

Hearing none, the hearing is now adjourned. Thank you,

and have a good day.

COMMISSIONER HICKS:

Thank you.

[The Virtual Public Hearing of the United States Election Assistance Commission
adjourned at 3:03 p.m.]

bw/cms