

Hearing Minutes
United States Election Assistance Commission
Election Response to COVID-19: Administering Elections
During the Coronavirus Crisis
Virtual Public Hearing
April 22, 2020

1335 East West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

The following are the Minutes of the Public Hearing of the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) held April 22, 2020. The virtual hearing convened at 1:05 p.m. via Zoom web conference on Wednesday, April 22, 2020 and adjourned at 3:03 p.m.

PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

Chairman Ben Hovland called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

Roll Call

Chairman Hovland called roll and found present Vice Chair Donald Palmer, Commissioner Thomas Hicks, and Commissioner Christy McCormick and declared a quorum present.

Adoption of Minutes from Previous Meetings

Chairman Hovland called for a motion to adopt the minutes from the May 20, 2019, public meeting of the EAC. Commissioner McCormick moved to adopt, and after being seconded by Commissioner Hicks the minutes were adopted unanimously.

Chairman Hovland called for a motion to approve the minutes from the March 27, 2020, VVSG 2.0 public hearing. Commissioner McCormick moved to adopt, and after being seconded by Vice Chair Palmer the minutes were adopted unanimously.

Adoption of the Agenda

Chairman Hovland called for a motion to approve the agenda, as submitted. Vice Chair Palmer moved to approve the agenda, and after being seconded by Commissioner Hicks the meeting agenda was approved unanimously.

Welcoming Remarks and Opening Statements of Commissioners

Chairman Hovland thanked those joining, viewing, and participating in the EAC's virtual meeting to discuss administering elections in the coronavirus pandemic. He discussed the pandemic's disruption of typical election management procedures and how each State's response to the crisis will vary and applauded election officials' hard work to keep their voters and election workers safe while keeping elections secure and accessible. Chairman Hovland noted that videos bringing together election experts to discuss particular topics, along with COVID-19 and CARES Act funding guidance, are available on the EAC website and are being distributed to States.

Vice Chair Palmer highlighted the challenges and uncertainty created by the pandemic and assured that state and local election officials are doing all they can to accommodate the right to vote. He emphasized state and local officials' need to offer voters different options and pathways to successfully cast a ballot, and how the election community is working to adapt and be flexible to meet their community's needs. Vice Chair Palmer noted the real challenge is educating the public on options, deadlines, and rules prior to the election so Americans will do what they need to do.

Commissioner Hicks stated that election officials are doing a good job working with their State health departments, State officials, and Federal partners. He discussed Wisconsin's primary held two weeks earlier and reports that election workers and voters there have been showing signs of coronavirus, which has a two-week incubation period and emphasized the importance of upcoming elections being safe for voters and workers. Commissioner Hicks pledged that the EAC will continue to provide its stakeholders with tools for an effective elections process.

Commissioner McCormick first advised all voters to make sure their voter registration information is up to date, explained the different ways to update that information, and noted this was important to ensure voters are not disenfranchised and that election officials know they are sending ballots to the correct voter. She then discussed the importance of options for voters, especially those with disabilities, so that they can vote privately and independently. Commissioner McCormick thanked election officials for working so hard and diligently to address these issues and emphasized how crucial communication and voter education are in this confusing time.

Opening Testimony from 1st Group of Panelists

1:14 p.m.

Commissioner Hovland explained the first panel will focus on considerations for absentee and mail voting, and invited Washington Secretary of State Kim Wyman to share her opening remarks.

Secretary Wyman characterized herself as one of the biggest advocates for absentee voting and vote-by-mail and expressed concerns about jurisdictions only having six-months to implement either of these programs since any implementation issues will harm public confidence in the results of the election. She also noted her worries regarding States being at very different places in terms of their readiness to implement vote by mail or absentee voting, and explained that those States where only a small percent of their ballots in each election are cast by mail will have the most challenges to overcome. Secretary Wyman stated they should have three main areas of focus in the coming months:

1. First, the need to build in compensating controls and security for all of the accessibility that vote by mail or expanded absentees can allow to instill confidence, such as checking signatures on each return ballot against the signature on file to verify the person issued the ballot voted and was eligible to do so.
2. Second, the supply chain's capacity needs to be able to accommodate state and local jurisdictions' increased absentee or mail-in ballots, which could reach additional amounts in the hundreds of thousands. They will need high-speed envelope sorters and faster tabulation equipment to count ballots, and the questions of whether these exist and whether they can be implemented in time for the election is a concern.
3. Finally, election officials need to have the capacity to retool their operations, obtain the facility space necessary to process ballots in accordance with social distancing, and the overall staffing issues that impact every election system. We anticipate losing between half and two-thirds of the workforce due to members of vulnerable populations opting out of serving as poll workers due to the coronavirus.

The Secretary thanked the EAC commissioners for hosting the hearing and noted the Secretaries of State Association and Election Directors Association have been working to share as much information as possible. She expressed her view that the critical infrastructure designation has been beneficial and allowed the sector to be built up in a way and with a speed that has enabled election officials to communicate like never before. The Secretary closed by thanking CISA for their work in this space and for sharing information between States and partners across the country.

1:18 p.m.

Chairman Hovland introduced Anthony Albence, the State Election Commissioner for Delaware.

Commissioner Albence thanked the Chairman for the invitation, and began by noting Delaware's history as an in-person polling-place voting State, a trait that the East Coast in general shares in contrast with the West Coast. He briefly overviewed Delaware's

ongoing process of upgrading and replacing their equipment and systems and how, given their traditional approach and mindset of only 5% absentee voting with reasons, they are not in a position where they could do vote-by-mail but they are considering it as an option nonetheless.

Commissioner Albence recommended the following:

1. Consider capacity of supply chain firms when making decisions regarding the management of inbound and outbound mailing processes and the feasibility of options
2. Consider your State's procurement requirements so that you are not caught in contracting and bidding procedures with only a few months available before the election.
3. Local election officials need to utilize all of the resources available with the Postal Service, such as mail piece design analysts when designing new mail products and reviewing existing mail products or looking into opportunities with Intelligent Mail Barcodes (IMB) that can better service voters and track their ballots.
4. Local officials should build relationships with postal officials at the national, state, and local levels and to ensure they are keeping postal officials informed on your election plans via a constant communication stream
5. Attend local postal events in your region to get face-to-face meetings with those experts and discuss what is going on.
6. In the same vein, relationships and data sharing practices with your Motor Vehicles Agencies are essential to ensure voter registration accuracy in an environment moving towards a majority vote-by-mail system.

Commissioner Albence closed his remarks by encouraging others to take full advantage of the experts in the community since it is far easier to prepare than to fix a problem on the backend.

1:28 p.m.

Chairman Hovland introduced Kevin Runbeck, CEO of Runbeck Election Services, Incorporated.

Mr. Runbeck gave a quick overview of his background working in the elections field, stated his election support company's focus is on building systems that are accurate, transparent, and auditable, and provided details regarding the size and scope of his company's operations. He discussed how election mail requires a lot of automation and how his firm spends a lot of time focused on ensuring the total accuracy of all materials and ballots before it leaves the building. Mr. Runbeck recommended that States determine whether their vendors can accommodate these aspects if they proceed with vote-by-mail and noted that the supply chain is limited in their capacity to manufacture materials so if jurisdictions wait until the last minute to place their orders, the

manufacturers won't be able to produce at the same time for everyone. Mr. Runbeck recommended the following:

1. Chain of custody for data and mail ballot packets, which need to be trackable through both UPS and IMB barcodes and the trucks' GPS.
2. The need for counties to secure physical space to house the inbound ballots.
3. States and counties who know how to do mail-in-voting commit to it now so that vendors are able to identify how many resources they have to complete the jobs they are asked to do.
4. For smaller counties with a lower risk of COVID-19, suggests they should stick to what they know given the difficulty in training people to do new things in a short amount of time.

Questions and Answers:

1:36 p.m.

Chairman Hovland asked Secretary Wyman to share the lessons that she learned from her previous experience as a local election official when she went through a 10% jump in mail absentee ballots. Secretary Wyman explained the circumstances of this unanticipated jump in absentee status requests her office received, and stressed the importance of having the envelopes and materials available to mail out, having the capacity in your processing to actually mail them, and having the processing capacity in place for ballots to come in. She explained that in Washington, half of voters wait until the Sunday before Election Day to vote and this needs to be factored into capacity considerations. States need to look at data from their last Presidential election and use demographics data to estimate the quantity of absentee ballots. Digitized signatures are a critical element to speed up processing. States also need to look at their election certification window to ensure they have ample time to prepare and send out their election mail materials and to process all of their absentee ballots.

Chairman Hovland asked Commissioner Albence to discuss his takeaways from his experience as a member on the Postal Committee for the Election Center in regard to ramping up absentee ballot processes, the costs associated with that, and any concerns around those ramping up costs. Commissioner Albence praised the Committee as a great resource that provides a direct ear to USPS leadership and facilitates information sharing to the local level. He noted that setting up polling places, vote centers, or vote-by-mail entails significant increases in funds and these need to be considered as we enter uncertain financial times.

Vice Chair Palmer asked Secretary Wyman to further discuss the compensatory controls in an absentee or vote-by-mail process that she previously mentioned and to give any advice regarding the use of these controls for counties that anticipate going from 5% to 25 or 50% in order to maintain the integrity of the process. Secretary Wyman responded by saying Washington's participation in the ERIC project has helped to

maintain the accuracy in their voter rolls and played a large part in reducing the rate of undeliverable ballots but added that even with fairly clean rolls they still get large number of ballots returned as undeliverable.

One option for States looking at sending out requests or applications for absentee voting is to use those mailings to update their rolls, but they need to build in the time it is going to take to enter all those requests into the system. A key security measure used in Washington is the use of signatures, which are all imaged into the statewide voter registration system so that counties can check signatures of every returned ballot against the one on file. For larger jurisdictions with large volumes of signature-checking, signatures should be digitized on the first pass as they come in to make the process more efficient and verifiable. If a state doesn't have their signatures digitized, they need to figure out those processes. These controls will serve States well when people start to make allegations of ballot stuffing and tapering and fraud.

Vice Chair Palmer asked Commissioner Albence what directions and advice he is giving to localities in his state on how to manage the inevitable increase in absentee ballot requests. Albence responded by saying they were fortunate to already have tools in place that can help with some of the more labor-intensive parts of the process, such as online applications or fillable forms so that information is directly sent to the elections office prefilled, and they have encouraged people to use those tools. Additionally, they are encouraging local offices to enhance their staffing earlier than normal so that they can be sufficiently trained and oriented to the process, and to budget for more staff rather than less since it is always better to have more than not enough.

Vice Chair Palmer asked Mr. Runbeck whether they were still onboarding counties that may anticipate increased absentee or mail voting, and what their timeline for that was. Mr. Runbeck stated that in anticipation of these decision-making challenges and the historically last-minute timing for counties' decisions, they have increased staff and purchased more equipment without orders to justify it. Their existing customers are anticipating increased demand on their own as well.

Commissioner Hicks asked Secretary Wyman and Commissioner Albence if there has been any discussion about using people who may be unemployed right now to replace the reduced number of election officials expected to be available, and whether those individuals could receive some sort of waiver so that the temporary employment doesn't affect their unemployment benefits? Wyman responded that this will vary by state, but those individuals will certainly make up a large part of the recruitment efforts. She discussed how the nation will likely need to do the biggest recruitment since World War II to staff polling places, voting centers, and election processing warehouses, and there have been discussions and hopes that the elections community can partner with businesses across the country to do some sort of civil service or civic engagement. Targeting younger workers will have the benefit of getting them engaged in civics and, hopefully, make them lifelong voters. Commissioner Albence responded that Delaware

has been, and will continue to, perform outreach to high school and college students who often are more adept or comfortable dealing with technology which has continued to grow in prevalence in elections.

Commissioner Hicks asked Mr. Runbeck about the sources of high-speed scanners being used in the country, specifically whether they are built in the U.S. and who is building them. Mr. Runbeck responded that they come from a combination of American, European, German, and Japanese manufacturers that provide different types of equipment. Runbeck was unable to speak for the tabulation systems.

Commissioner McCormick asked Secretary Wyman whether there was a difference between small jurisdictions and large jurisdictions in implementing a vote-by-mail system. Wyman responded that smaller jurisdictions are able to make the transition more easily given their smaller volumes. Larger jurisdictions face more difficulties due to there being more moving parts, which can range from administrative issues like building out their capacity and instituting the controls to political issues.

Commissioner McCormick asked Mr. Runbeck to explain what a ballot packet consists of, the need for so many trucks when dealing with these materials, and the average cost of sending out a ballot packet, if possible. Runbeck responded that his firm buys millions of dollars' worth of paper that is converted into envelopes, ballots, and instruction inserts. After those are inserted into mail packets, each truck can carry approximately 250,000 mail packets, and larger jurisdictions will need to warehouse the large number of required trucks since the packets are produced ahead of time and held until it is time to mail them. Commissioner McCormick remarked that a paper management and environmental impact study would be in order.

Commissioner McCormick stated that in the 2016 Presidential election there were approximately 138 million voters, and asked Mr. Runbeck if he thought there were enough vendors to meet that need across the country. Runbeck responded that there is for printing of ballots, since a lot of small counties already do that locally and the national supply chain is not involved. As to the vote-by-mail packets, the supply chain is more constrained, specifically at the point where intelligent insertion is required to make sure each voter gets the correct information and ballot and the mail processes have been met.

Commissioner McCormick asked Commissioner Albence to give a brief description of the USPS's IMB tool and how it works for ballot tracking. Albence responded that the tool can really leverage a lot of data for officials. It essentially just needs the proper software to create the IMB and to structure it properly, and ideally you would like it to be serialized down to the piece level so that you can track it individually and provide that level of accuracy both inbound and outbound. He recommended the USPS's election mail kit as a resource fully explaining and detailing how IMB work and how they can be set up.

Chairman Hovland thanked all of the speakers for their participation and recognized Vice Chair Palmer to begin the second Panel.

Opening Testimony from 2nd Group of Panelists

2:08 p.m.

Vice Chair Palmer stated that the second panel would be discussing considerations for in-person voting and introduced Steve Sandvoss, Executive Director of the Illinois State Board of Elections.

Executive Director Sandvoss thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to speak, and gave a brief synopsis of Illinois's experience holding their general primary election on March 17th. After deciding that postponing the election was not possible, the office got a lot of feedback and questions from election judges, election authorities and voters who were concerned about what they were supposed to do. Department of Public Health and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance for hygiene were shared, polling places that were in nursing homes were relocated, and assisted care facilities went to an all vote-by-mail system. The only major problems were instances of election judges not showing up, which required new judges to be approved, polling places to be relocated, or opening of polling places to be delayed. Approaching November, there is some disagreement regarding how far to expand vote-by-mail but it will likely be used to a degree in combination with in-precinct polling places, perhaps with fewer judges, and encouraging voters to utilize early voting. The CARES Act funding and State match funds provides a substantial amount of assistance to election jurisdictions as they prepare for the upcoming general election, but Illinois is currently waiting on the legislature to see if they make any changes to the voting process.

2:16 p.m.

Vice Chair Palmer introduced Mark Andersen, Supervisor of Elections in Bay County, Florida.

Mr. Andersen began by explaining that in 2018 when all of his county elections were under emergency order due to category 5 Hurricane Michael, it left only half of their precinct polling locations available. The Presidential Preference Primary was successfully done using full, two day super voting sites in partnership with vote-by-mail procedures, and the office was fortunate to have sanitation and cleaning materials on hand after having gone through a major flu season. Ultimately, the election was successful because they had the equipment on hand and election procedures in place from the 2018 emergency condition that could be relied on.

2:20 p.m.

Vice Chair Palmer introduced Kelly Buckland, Executive Director of the National Council on Independent Living.

Mr. Buckland gave an overview of the National Council on Independent Living's structure and his own personal experiences and challenges as a voter with a disability, stating that all voting must be accessible and people cannot be forced to choose between accessible, secure, or safe. He emphasized that more options for voters are better, which include vote by mail, no-excuse absentee ballots, curbside voting, voting centers, and voting in regular polling places, and discussion of all of these options needs to include how to make them accessible. There should not be a system where everyone else can vote by mail but people with disabilities have to go vote at a voting center. He stressed the need to find common ground and move ahead, noting there are laws and the Constitution that protect the right of an accessible and independent vote and these must be followed and enforced. Finally, now more than ever poll workers need to be trained on how to assist people with disabilities to vote.

2:23 p.m.

Vice Chair Palmer introduced Jasen Kunz, the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Team Lead on the CDC's Community Mitigation Task Force. Technical issues made Mr. Kunz unavailable at that time so the Vice Chair proceeded to allow questions for the panelists until Mr. Kunz's connection was restored.

Questions and Answers:

2:24 p.m.

Vice Chair Palmer asked Mr. Sandvoss what lessons he learned from the primary election for additional safety and security measures within the polling place or early voting sites that he would take to November. Sandvoss responded that one large advantage to November's election will be more time to identify issues and prepare for them because the primary was held in the early stages of the pandemic response and that caused many last minute issues.

Vice Chair Palmer asked Mr. Sandvoss a follow up question if Illinois was looking into how to anticipate and control lines at polling places and process voters efficiently while following social distancing guidelines. Sandvoss stated this would be a major part of the election judge training, and they would look at additional measures such as requiring masks before entering a polling place, absent any problems in the supply of masks.

Opening Testimony of Panelists, cont.:

2:28 p.m.

Vice Chair Palmer reintroduced Mr. Kunz and invited him to give his opening comments.

Mr. Kunz gave a brief summary of his background and current position, and then reminded everyone of steps to protect themselves and others from the virus currently and through election day, including:

- Washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after being in a public place, blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- If handwashing is unavailable, use hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, mouth with unwashed hands
- Cover coughs and sneezed
- Wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in high transmission areas
- Generally keep space between yourself and others to avoid exposure to the virus

The CDC has released guidance with recommendations for polling places and polling station workers to reduce the risk of exposure by limiting the survival of the virus in the environment, including the routine cleaning and disinfection of polling locations and voting equipment. Described preventative actions polling stations or workers can take to protect themselves, such as:

- Staying home if you believe you are sick
- Practice hand hygiene frequently
- Practice routine cleaning, removal of debris, and disinfection to reduce the amount of germs on frequently touched surfaces in polling places, including tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, pens, sinks, etc.
- Routine cleaning and disinfecting voting-associated equipment as appropriate or feasible, including voting machines, laptops, tablets, and keyboards
- Remember to follow manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection protocols to protect the equipment. If there is no guidance from the manufacturer, the CDC has steps for cleaning this equipment on their website

Described preventative actions polling station workers can take to protect the general public, including:

- Careful and consistent cleaning of one's hands is the most important, so ensure bathrooms are well supplied with soap, water and drying materials. Plan for a surge in the use of these bathrooms at polling locations.
- Provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for use before or after using the voting machine or the final step in the voting process. Place these hand sanitizers in visible, frequently used locations such as registration desks or exits.
- Where feasible, incorporate social distancing strategies to increase the space between individuals and decrease the frequency of contact among individuals. Six feet apart is ideal, but if this is not feasible than as far apart as is practical.
- Increase distance between voting booths and limit nonessential visitors. Discourage poll workers to bring children and grandchildren with them, remind voters upon arrival to leave space between themselves and others and discourage handshakes.

Questions and Answers, cont.:

2:35 p.m.

Vice Chair Palmer asked Mr. Kunz to explain the process by which the CDC determines and issues guidance on how many individuals can be in a building or a polling place, and what sort of time advanced notice election officials will have if it starts to go below 50 or 25. Mr. Kunz clarified that these are defined as limits on crowding, but he has not been involved in those specific questions. He stated he would have to follow up regarding whether the specific numbers of 10 or 50 actually apply to polling locations, but their polling guidance is aimed towards ensuring folks have the ability to vote but to do so safely. Moving forward, continued collaboration and open communication is going to be key and information will be shared when it becomes available.

Vice Chair Palmer asked Mr. Buckland if he had any lessons for election officials or boards preparing for their primaries or November based on the primaries, both by mail and in person, that he has been able to observe in a number of States. Buckland stated he is more familiar on and concerned about where States are going, as to which he has heard of two options: all vote by mail or vote by mail and election stations. The vote-by-mail option has had no consideration of making that accessible, so that leaves people displaced to go to vote stations which he is concerned about. As to the latest elections, the standing in line in accordance with social distancing has been a concern for people with disabilities since a lot of those individuals cannot stand in line for a long time.

Vice Chair Palmer asked Mr. Andersen to talk about some of the polling place procedures he implemented in Florida and about options for voters and why they are important in an emergency. Palmer also asked Andersen to talk about their decision to remove polling places from assisted living and nursing home sites, how that process works and whether it was effective. Andersen responded by first saying Bay County did not have any locations in assisted living facilities and went on to say that they implemented procedures individually as they were requested on each issue. Some specific procedures implemented included:

- Providing a clean table at every polling location entrance;
- Having hand sanitizer and wipes at the location prior to voters going inside;
- Soliciting the media to talk about the importance of polling locations having materials needed to help the voter and for the voters to do what they need to do before entering the polling location, such as washing their hands, wearing a mask, not touching your face, etc.
- Polling locations had yellow or blue tape every six feet, identified booths that were six feet apart, and generally spread everything out
- Only allowing voters to use a stylus to do their check-in on the system, and afterwards placing that stylus in a dirty bucket that had to be washed before it was put back into the cycle of use

He added that the biggest lesson learned, especially from the hurricane, is that voters are used to a little bit of adversity and disarray, and their voters were prepared for these bumps in the road for the Presidential Preference Primary. Voters remember these precautions, and they spread awareness through word of mouth to people that are going to vote, which instills comfort and confidence in going to the polling location.

Chairman Hovland asked Mr. Sandvoss and Mr. Andersen to discuss with the benefit of hindsight things that they could improve on going forward or that they would do differently or recommend to their colleagues who have not yet administered an election in this environment. Sandvoss began by noting the importance of communication to voters ahead of time, especially if there have been any significant changes in what they are used to such as when or where they are supposed to go vote.

Chairman Hovland thanks Mr. Kunz for the CDC's guidance, and asked if there was any guidance on the lifespan of COVID-19 on paper, such as ballots in the polling place of mail. Mr. Kunz said that the virus can live on surfaces ranging from hours to days depending on the type of surface, so disinfection is critical. Lab data available now indicates:

- for printing and tissue paper, 3 hours or so;
- treated wood and cloth, 2 days;
- glass and banknotes, 4 days;
- stainless steel and plastic, up to 7 days.

The CDC has said that people handling paper-based ballots in the mail do not need any additional precautions outside of routine handwashing and what normally is done to handle those paper-based ballots, while understanding that the virus does live for a limited amount of time in that environment and other environmental conditions can influence it as well.

Commissioner Hicks asked the panel's election officials how they are directly informing voters of changes that are going on in the process, particularly if their addresses have not been updated or changed or so forth. Sandvoss responded that in Illinois, election authorities are responsible for communicating any changes to voters that would affect their voting. Andersen responded that in Bay County they are required to deal with the Postal Service, but given the adverse conditions in recent elections they began to use 15-second commercials that include a phone number or a piece of information as a cheaper, more cost-efficient alternative to mass paper-based communication. They also post notices on their webpage informing displaced voters to contact them and inform them of where they located now.

Commissioner Hicks asked Mr. Buckland what sorts of things election officials should address for voters with disabilities as they consider different options for voting in person

and vote-by-mail. Buckland responded that they need to ensure whatever options they provide are accessible. For example, vote-by-mail needs to provide an electronic alternative so that voters can receive their ballot by email, mark it, mail it or fax it or deliver it in some way. If you force people to do it on a paper ballot, you will deny the right to vote to a bunch of people with disabilities, so there needs to be accessible alternatives to each voting method.

Commissioner Hicks asked Mr. Kunz what the second most important thing people should consider when they vote by mail or vote in person, with the first being washing their hands. Mr. Kunz responded that as to voting by mail, it is assumed a person will be voting from home which follows the CDC's standard guidelines for reducing their risk of spreading or contracting the virus, and so beyond that would be frequent handwashing, use of a facemask, social distancing, staying home when sick. As to in-person polling locations, the answer is multi-factorial and a combination of cleaning frequently touched surfaces, providing a safe environment for voters and polling station workers, social distancing, and wearing a cloth facemask.

Commissioner Hicks commended Mr. Andersen for his work with the EAC and doing videos last year for disaster relief, recommending they be watched to see what his county and Puerto Rico did on disaster preparedness and the challenges they have faced and continue to face.

Commissioner McCormick asked all of the panelists that the one best piece of advice they have for election officials dealing with this pandemic. Sandvoss responded be prepared, anticipate any different types of voting and get as much information as possible, and use each other and the resources available. Andersen e noted that maintaining a positive environment and informing your voters as soon as possible will ensure no one panics when a problem arises. Buckland responded be prepared, reach out to local disability rights or disability-led organizations to find out how to make your elections more accessible. Kunz added considering the CDC's recommendations on voting and any instructions or guidance released by your State and local jurisdictions.

Vice Chair Palmer thanked the panelists for joining them and invited EAC Acting Executive Director Mona Harrington to give a brief update on the CARES Act funding and the EAC's efforts to distribute the grants

EAC Acting Executive Director Testimony on CARES Act Funding

2:58 p.m.

EAC Acting Executive Director Mona Harrington reported the following information on the CARES Act funding. As of April 6, 2020, the EAC was awarded all 56 CARES Act grants. As of today, 49 States and territories requested disbursement of the funds and submitted descriptions of their anticipated activities. The remaining States have been in communication with the EAC and will submit their request letters after approval from

their state legislator or election board. 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 voting jurisdictions and did not provide specific descriptions of their needs. Some specific uses of the funds include:

- Over 75% of States anticipate increased printing costs to accommodate expanded absentee mail voting activities. Postage costs are expected to significant increase in order to cover the cost of prepaid postage on return.
- 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 control the number of voters in polling places at any one time. These States plan on deep cleaning and disinfection efforts, and on implementing safeguards to protect voters and election workers.
- Communicating to voters any changed in voting processes is a major area of planned expenditures.

To comply with CARES Act reporting requirements, the 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, and 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 held two CARES Act webinars for States and two more providing guidance on meeting the 20% match requirement. State disbursement request letters have been posted on the EAC Website and the CARES grant FAQs will be updated as the EAC receives additional questions. The EAC will also post information related to promoting accessibility for voters with disabilities which must be a priority as officials prepare for increased mail voting, modified polling place locations, and other new costs.

Closing Remarks

3:02 p.m.

Chairman Hovland thanked all participants and viewers of the hearing and thanked EAC staff for their hard work both in organizing today's event and responding to the pandemic's challenges. Chairman Hovland also acknowledged State and local election officials for their work in their communities and reaffirmed that EAC Commissioners and staff are committing to offering whatever support they can at the Federal level to aid State and local officials administer safe, secure, accessible, and accurate elections.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Palmer moved to adjourn the meeting, which after being seconded by Commissioner Hicks was approved unanimously.

The Public Hearing of the Election Assistance Commission adjourned at 3:03 p.m.