



U.S. Election Assistance Commission  
1225 New York Ave. NW – Suite 1100  
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## U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Committee on House Administration, Sub-committee on Elections

“The 2008 Election: What went right and wrong.”

### ORAL TESTIMONY

Commissioner Gracia Hillman

U.S. Election Assistance Commission

March 26, 2009

Good Morning Chair Lofgren, Ranking Member McCarthy and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Gracia Hillman. I serve as the 2009 Vice Chair of the Election Assistance Commission. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the historic election of November 2008.

The 2008 election cycle energized American voters in ways that we have not seen since the 1960s. By all accounts, most things went right on Election Day. This is supported by a survey of 10,000 American voters. According to that survey, 83 percent said their polling place was very well run and 75 percent said they were “very confident” their vote was counted as cast.

We need to remember that there is no other activity in the United States like voting on a Presidential Election Day. To put that in perspective, over 100 million people voted within an 18 hour window on November 4, 2008. Approximately 2 million people provided customer service to those voters. At least two-thirds of those

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workers were temporary, one day employees, who we commonly refer to as poll workers. There are well over 100,000 polling places scattered in all fifty states. I have yet to hear of any other same-day activity remotely similar to this exercise.

And as you know, Madame Chair, there are no “do overs” with elections. NASA can scrub a launch if need be. Manufacturers can delay a roll out if the product is deemed not ready. But election administrators must be ready for Election Day, irrespective of any and all unanticipated circumstances.

There were random problems on Election Day. But we should not be unduly troubled by these revelations. Voting is mostly a human exercise and humans make mistakes. Nonetheless, all perceived or real problems need attention. Let me take a moment to address a few of the most common complaints.

Long lines at the polls: I witnessed early voting lines in Florida that exceeded 2 or more hours. Conversely, on Election Day, the longest wait I observed in Florida was about 30 minutes. The problem of long wait lines might be episodic in some jurisdictions and chronic in others. Nonetheless, election officials are keenly aware that long waits to vote are a problem for the communities and voters they serve.

Confusing voter registration and identification requirements: Voter registration and identification procedures get quite complex when varying state laws are layered on top of federal requirements. Missed deadlines result in disenfranchisement, so it is no wonder that there are calls from the community to

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streamline these procedures. Perhaps the citizens most affected are college and university students and our UOCAVA voters.

Accurate counts: Earlier I noted that 75 percent of survey respondents felt very confident that their vote was counted as cast. But that means that 25 percent had doubts. Voters deserve accurate and reassuring information about the current state of voting systems. Since the passage of the Help America Vote Act, America has undergone a major transition with the technology of our voting systems. EAC continues to develop Federal voting system standards to assure accuracy. Election officials need to continue to encourage interested voters to observe and participate in the logic and accuracy testing of the voting systems that will be used in their communities.

Provisional Voting: On the one hand, provisional voting is understood as fail safe voting so that no voter is turned away from the polls. Our 2006 Election Day survey reported that one percent of voters cast provisional ballots. In real numbers, that means approximately 850,000 provisional voters. Based on that, there is growing concern that provisional voting is being used as a substitute for Election Day lists that should be accurate and complete. More over, voters do not understand why the provisional voting process is not uniform across the country.

In summary, Madam Chair, election officials are to be commended for their excellent work. At the same time, voters should be encouraged to register complaints; election officials should be vigilant about identifying problems; and

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together, they should develop reasonable remedies that can be adopted as quickly as possible.

Thank you for this time and I look forward to answering your questions

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