

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS
TESTIMONY OF CURTIS CRIDER
INSPECTOR GENERAL
U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION**

MARCH 2008



Chairwoman Lofgren, Ranking Member McCarthy, and members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the activities of the Office of Inspector General (IG), U.S. Election Assistance Commission. In its year and one half of existence, the IG Office, which currently consists of me and a contractor, has concentrated on two areas – use of Help America Vote Act funds by states and internal administrative operations of the Commission. In addition, the Office of Inspector General has completed one investigation and has one investigation in process. The investigations were performed for EAC by the Office of Inspector General for the Department of the Interior.

The focus of my testimony is on the internal operations the Commission. Pertinent audits covered Commission travel and Commission program and financial controls.

Audit of Travel

The objective of the audit was to determine whether (1) travel was performed in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), (2) travel cards were properly controlled and used for only official purposes and, (3) travelers paid their travel card bills in a timely manner.

The audit found that the Commission did not follow the Federal Travel Regulations in performance of travel. The audit identified

errors in 91 percent of the travel packages, that is authorizations and vouchers, examined. While the majority of the errors were minor, such as claiming taxes as part of the lodging rate, some were more significant, such as traveling to a location that was not authorized or claiming a lodging rate that exceeded the authorized rate. Overall, the mistakes demonstrated a need for independent controls and clear instructions on the preparation and approval of authorizations and vouchers, and for effective reviews of the accuracy of the travel claims.

We also noted a need for procedures to ensure that international travel is essential to the EAC mission and that employees receive compensatory time when traveling on their own time.

Finally, we concluded that travel cards were adequately controlled and used for official purposes and that travelers generally paid their travel card bills on time.

On July 5, 2007, we recommend that the Executive Director:

1. Implement written procedures for conducting temporary duty travel.
2. Implement written procedures for approving only international travel that is essential to accomplishing the mission of EAC.

3. Modify the procedures for approval of travel funded by non-Federal sources to provide for an independent determination of whether the travel is desired and practical.
4. Implement written procedures for authorizing and tracking of compensatory time for official travel outside of regular working hours.

None of the recommendations have been implemented. On March 6, 2008, the Executive Director indicated that the EAC is in process of reviewing draft internal policies and procedures for the control of travel.

Assessment of the Commission's Program and Financial Operations

The purpose of the review was to identify the programs and administrative activities performed by the Election Assistance Commission and to assess the vulnerability of those programs and activities to adverse impacts such as mismanagement, waste, and fraud.

This assessment identified a need to immediately address long-standing and over-arching weaknesses related to Commission operations. Specifically, the assessment disclosed that the Commission lacked:

- Short and long-term strategic plans, performance goals and measurements to guide the organization and its staff.
- An organizational structure that clearly defines areas of responsibility and an effective hierarchy for reporting, especially between the Commissioners and the Executive Director. The staff needs to know who is in charge.
- Appropriate and effective internal controls established on the basis of risk assessments.
- Policies and procedures in all programs areas to document governance and accountability structure and practices in place.

The report made 29 recommendations to address the issues identified in the report.

In response, the Executive Director developed an action plan with milestones to address the issues identified in the report. The OIG will meet with the Executive Director on a monthly basis, to monitor the status of the corrective actions.

Conclusion

The Commission lacks an effective management and organization structure. What it has been able to accomplish, in my opinion, is due to the drive of individuals not the organization.

The Commission needs to make substantial improvements in its operations. The basic components for a sound organization - - goals, objectives, plans, policies and procedures still do not exist despite 3 years of operations. Furthermore, it is imperative that the Commissioner's define their roles and responsibilities and those of the Executive Director to ensure that management decisions are made, in a consistent, timely and non partisan fashion.

That concludes my written testimony and I will be happy to respond to any question that the Subcommittee may have.