



## **“Priorities, Policy and Strategy: Next Steps for the EAC”**

### ***EAC Roundtable Discussion***

**Thursday, March 19, 2015**

EAC Offices  
First Floor Conference Room  
1335 East West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

#### **Participate**

Live webcast at [www.eac.gov](http://www.eac.gov)

Twitter: @EACgov #EACvote

Submit questions & comments via Twitter and webcast

#### **Agenda**

**9:30 am - Opening Remarks**

**10:00 am -12:00 Noon - Morning Session**

**1:00 - 3:00 pm - Afternoon Session**

#### **Participants**

Opening Remarks ( 9:30 am. )

- Christy A. McCormick, EAC Commission Chairwoman
- Robert F. Bauer, Former Co-Chair, President’s Commission on Election Administration
- Benjamin L. Ginsberg, Former Co-Chair, President’s Commission on Election Administration
- Merle King, Roundtable Moderator; Executive Director, Georgia’s Center for Election Systems, Kennesaw State University

EAC Staff

- Alice P. Miller, EAC Chief Operating Officer and Acting Executive Director
- Brian J. Hancock, EAC Director of Testing & Certification
- Karen Lynn-Dyson, EAC Director of Research, Policy & Programs

**Panel: Morning Session ( 10:00 am. -12:00 Noon )**

- Mary Brady, Manager, NIST Voting Program, National Institute of Standards and Technology
- AJ Cole, Registrar of Voters, James City County, Virginia
- Doug Lewis, Former Executive Director, The Election Center
- Katy Owens Hubler, Elections Policy Specialist, National Conference of State Legislatures
- Lee Page, Associate Advocacy Director, Paralyzed Veterans of America
- Christopher M. Thomas, Michigan Director of Elections
- Steve Trout, Director of Election Innovation , Clear Ballot Group
- Honorable Wayne Williams, Colorado Secretary of State
- Michael Winn, Travis County Director of Elections

**Panel: Afternoon Session ( 1:00 - 3:00 pm. )**

- AJ Cole, Registrar of Voters, James City County, Virginia
- Bill Cowles, Supervisor of Elections, Orange County, Florida
- Doug Lewis, Former Executive Director, The Election Center
- Lawrence Norden, Deputy Director, Democracy Program, Brennan Center for Justice
- Lee Page, Associate Advocacy Director, Paralyzed Veterans of America
- Tammy Patrick, Democracy Project Senior Advisor, Bipartisan Policy Center
- Christopher M. Thomas, Michigan Director of Elections
- Michael Winn, Travis County Director of Elections

**Background**

The elections environment is dynamic. Each election teaches new lessons and reinforces old ones. Every state and every local jurisdiction is its own “laboratory of democracy”, experimenting with procedural and technological election innovations. Change is the single constant in elections.

For the first time in four years, the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) has a quorum of commissioners. The agency is moving rapidly to prepare for the 2016 elections, update voluntary voting systems standards, reconstitute the standards and advisory boards, enhance the information clearing house function, and numerous other tasks to fulfill their mission as specified by the Help American Vote Act (HAVA). Establishing short-term goals, long-term strategies and prioritizing the EAC’s focus in the coming months, are critical operational goals for the agency.

Identifying and vetting these priorities and associated policy decisions cannot be done without input from the constituencies served by the EAC. This round table will explore the election administration issues and challenges faced by many of the institutions and constituencies who share the EAC’s mission of improving election administration in the U.S.

Each member of the roundtable will be invited to make an introductory statement. This statement should be no more than 2 – 3 minutes in length and should identify the issues and concerns of the speaker’s organization and constituents in regard to election administration. Roundtable members are encouraged to discuss ways in which their organization’s mission intersects the EAC and to identify common concerns as well as those that may be unique to their organization/constituents. In the 10 years since the formation of the EAC, has your organization’s areas of emphasis on elections issues evolved? Reflections on this evolution can help other members of the roundtable (and the online audience) better understand how all organizations, including the EAC, must periodically evaluate the changing environment they find themselves in and refocus on their mission in light of ever changing challenges and opportunities.

**Here is a list of potential follow-up questions that may be asked:**

### **Potential Discussion Questions**

1. The elections community in the U.S. is dealing with voting system infrastructure that may be outdated or obsolete, deteriorating due to a lack of maintenance, spare parts and consumables, inflexible in its ability to adapt to new ways of voting or managing voter information, and incompatible with emerging and innovative election systems beyond the scope of traditional voting systems. Is this issue overstated? Are we measuring the extent to which voting systems are deteriorating? Do you see effective strategies at the local or state level to mitigate these issues? What leadership, facilitation and coordination is needed at the national level to address this issue? At the state level? At the local level?
2. A critical, HAVA mandated function of the EAC, is to manage the development of the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG), ensure there are sufficient and qualified labs to do the testing of voting systems, and manage a certification program to ensure that fielded voting systems are of high and sustainable quality. The EAC Testing and Certification Program has made improvements and the certification process has become stable and reliable over the past 5-6 years. The Federal certification process is only part of a multi-layer testing and certification process for voting systems that includes State certification testing and local acceptance testing. How can the EAC work not only to make federal certification more efficient, but to make the entire process more predictable, reliable and efficient? How could the Testing and Certification Program and its work products be improved to better meet existing and emerging needs of States and local election jurisdictions?
3. Our awareness of the kind and quantity of information we need to improve election administration grows with each election cycle. Are the research programs currently in place in the election community sufficient to inform the evolution of election administration policy and practice? Where are the gaps? Can you identify examples where research and/or better data is needed to inform decision making in the elections community?

4. The acquisition of better voting systems is a complicated issue involving vendors who must design the systems, standards setting organizations that must develop methods to test the systems, labs who must do the testing, poll workers and voters who have evolving needs for usability and accessibility, and finally jurisdictions who must find a way to pay for new systems. How can the EAC facilitate this process? Will the development and adoption of new voting system standards improve this process? If so, in what ways? Does the agency need to consider incremental changes or broader, more systemic changes in the standards, testing and certification process? How can the EAC work more effectively with states to improve this process?
5. The effective sharing of information is a key component to leveraging prior art, current research and emerging best practices. Additionally, shared information can prevent jurisdictions from touching “hot stoves” that have impacted the elections in other jurisdictions. The EAC has served as a clearinghouse of information for state and election officials as well as researchers and policy makers. A policy of continuous improvement requires the agency to consider needed changes in scope, level of detail and dissemination technologies. What information is the agency not facilitating an exchange of, that would be beneficial to election officials? Is more detail/less detail needed? Are the technologies for collection and dissemination of information well-suited to contemporary and future requirements? Are there partnerships for the collection and dissemination of information that would have a synergistic effect on both the EAC and other organizations? How could the EAC make data and research findings more useable to the broader elections community?
6. The Standards Board, Advisory Board, and the Technical Guidelines Development Committee (TGDC) are mandated by HAVA. Their role is to provide input and advice to the agency, and in the case of the boards, to function as a conduit between the agency and states, localities, and organizations. This conduit accelerates the movement of relevant information between the agency and constituents, reducing the time required to develop informed policy and procedures as well as a listening post for issues and concerns. While the input from these boards is invaluable to the processes they support, the HAVA mandated size and structure of the boards can add considerable time and cost to VVSG development and other efforts. How can the EAC use the boards in a more efficient and cost effective fashion? How can the agency better support the work of the boards and TGDC?
7. Earlier iterations of the VVSG did not demonstrate a contemporary understanding of accessibility and usability issues in regards to voters, poll workers and IT support staff within the elections office. New voting systems and supporting election systems, must demonstrate an effective balance of accessibility, usability, and security – all while meeting the functionality requirements of the jurisdiction. Is the current process of identifying accessibility/usability/security (AUS) requirements effective? How can the process

and resulting work products be improved? What do you see as the EAC's role in this process? How can we measure our progress and effectiveness in meeting AUS goals? Are there other partnerships or strategies the agency could pursue?

8. Poll workers are the lynch pin of elections. Increasingly complex systems, increased visibility when errors are made, decreasing numbers of baby boomers, longer elections (election month as opposed to Election Day), and increased expectations of competence and accountability, make the recruitment, training, retention and supervision of poll workers an ongoing challenge. What should our strategies be for mitigating poll worker – related issues in elections? Are best practices truly transferrable between jurisdictions? What role does the EAC play? Could the EAC play?
9. Professionalizing election administration means different things to different people. It can generally be said that professionalizing means establishing standards of knowledge, performance and conduct, creating a pathway and measurement for the attainment of the standards, and elevating the responsibility, accountability and compensation in a balanced way. Is professionalizing election administration a worthwhile goal? Is it an attainable goal? What do you think are the core competencies that election officials should possess? What is the current state of the practice? Can the EAC assist in this endeavor? How?
10. Reflecting on what you have heard here today, what are the critical election-related issues you see either emerging in the run-up to 2016 or converging to form a critical mass of challenges for election officials, voters, poll workers or state or local governments?
11. Given these concerns, which of these issues can be addressed in some way by the EAC? How should the EAC prioritize its short-term (prior to 2016) and long-term (through 2016 and beyond) goals and initiatives?