

Minutes of the Public Meeting United States Election Assistance Commission

University of Missouri, St. Louis
St. Louis, MO
September 21, 2006

The following are the Minutes of the Public Meeting of the United States Election Assistance Commission ("EAC") held on September 21, 2006, at the University of Missouri, St. Louis in the Millennium Student Center, One University Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63121. The meeting convened at 9:30 a.m. and adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order:

Chairman Paul DeGregorio called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Chairman DeGregorio led all present in a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

EAC Commissioners

EAC General Counsel Juliet Hodgkins called roll of the members of the Commission and found present: Chairman Paul DeGregorio, Commissioner Donetta Davidson, and Commissioner Gracia Hillman

Senior Staff

Executive Director Tom Wilkey and General Counsel Juliet Hodgkins

Presenters

Vince Keenan, Publius; Leslie Reynolds, National Association of Secretaries of State; Lance Gough, Board of Election Commissioners for the City of Chicago; Sharon Turner-Buie, Board of Election Commissioners for Kansas City, MO

Adoption of Agenda:

Chairman DeGregorio asked for a motion to adopt the agenda. This was done with the change of deleting Marci Andino's testimony, as she was

unable to attend. Commissioner Hillman moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Davidson seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Welcoming Remarks from Secretary of State Robin Carnahan

Secretary Carnahan stated that this past primary was the first election Missouri had held since the Help America Vote Act was put into effect. She noted that the election was very successful and went well with the new equipment purchased with HAVA funds.

There was also an excellent response from the disabled community on the accessible machines.

Secretary Carnahan also noted that it is her goal to make sure that military personnel serving overseas have access to voting while deployed. Missouri has created a system where service members can obtain their ballots by fax or email and then mail them back to their respective counties.

Welcoming Remarks from Chancellor Thomas George, University of Missouri, St. Louis

The Chancellor welcomed the EAC and Chairman DeGregorio, a distinguished alumnus to the University.

The University of Missouri, St. Louis (UMSL), is a very young campus; just 43 years old. It officially joined the University of Missouri system in 1963. Now the campus has expanded to about 16,000 students, but probably closer to 70,000 with the continuing education and outreach programs.

UMSL has been working with Secretary Carnahan to get the faculty and student population to help at the polls. A new center for citizen education has just been created at the College of Education to focus on civic responsibility on voting and election issues.

Chancellor George concluded by thanking Chairman DeGregorio for his service and for allowing UMSL to host the Public Meeting.

Correction and Adoption of the Minutes from 7/13/06

Chairman DeGregorio asked for a motion to adopt the minutes of the previous meeting. Commissioner Davidson moved to adopt the minutes as presented. Commissioner Hillman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Report of the Executive Director

The Quick Start Guide for New Voting Systems was completed and distributed in June 2006. Three additional Quick Start Guides are in the process of completion: Management Guide for Poll Workers, Management Guide for Ballot Design, and Management Guide for Voting Security. The Quick Start Guide for New Voting Systems proved to be very popular with election officials. Connie Schmidt and Brit Williams worked with EAC staffers to get these ready before the November elections.

EAC is also working on the HAVA College Program where 19 schools received a share of \$300,000. The original grant was \$250,000, but when additional funds were made available in the budget, four more schools were selected for the program.

EAC is contracting for the following studies:

- Free absentee ballot postage
- Social security study
- Voter hotlines
- Alternative voting methods (vote by mail, changing the day of elections, etc)

EAC's Interim Certification Program began this summer. Sys Test Labs and Wyle Laboratories, two labs previously under the NASED qualification program, have been accredited under the interim program. The permanent program has been developed and will be entered into the Federal Register and put on the EAC website in October for a 30-day public comment period.

The EAC welcomed Curtis Crider as EAC's Inspector General. Mr. Crider will handle HAVA funding audits.

EAC's monthly newsletter, *EAC Newslines*, is on the agency's website and features the events and activities of the Commission.

Presentations:

Voter Information Websites

Presenter: Vince Keenan, Publius

Mr. Keenan discussed how the internet, as a resource tool, has exponentially increased the availability of information that previously had

been difficult to access. The two top questions that voters ask are “Am I registered to vote?” and “Where do I vote?”

There are different audiences looking for different types of information, whether it’s election officials, first time voters, or advocacy groups.

Questions regarding privacy of information and how much information to be disclosed were presented. The real concerns are identity theft and how to protect personal information from unauthorized parties.

Mr. Keenan noted that technology has made it impossible to localize data on the Internet and as a result, personal information can be available for everyone. Full disclosure of public information is a difficult endeavor; therefore, parameters must be established when setting up a website to prevent exposing too much personal information and while ensuring voters receive the information they need. Additionally, literacy is a problem for many voters and websites should use pictures and simple language when possible.

Presenter: Leslie Reynolds, National Association of Secretaries of State

Ms. Reynolds began her testimony with an introduction to a new voter education campaign called Can I Vote, with the website cited as www.canivote.org. The campaign was designed to address registration and polling place questions. The website is a one-stop shop that provides voters with step-by-step instructions for voting no matter where in the United States they live.

There is limited funding for the program; no toll-free number and only two staffers maintaining the site. However, under these circumstances it has been very successful.

The website gives voter registration deadlines with the actual deadline, rather than the deadline legalese that can sometimes be found on state websites. It also gives the state identification requirement updates, polling place hours, early voting information, and state and county information on becoming a poll worker.

Presenter: Lance Gough, Executive Director, Board of Election Commissioners for the City of Chicago, IL

Mr. Gough found that the Chicago voter information website launched 10 years ago had received a great deal of interest and the number of recent hits had increased given the upcoming local elections and issues on the ballot.

Mr. Gough also noted that there are now multilingual hotlines available for the public and direct mailings going out to let the general public know about the election and how to use the new voting equipment.

There are regular TV and radio spots and on public access TV, the air “Democracy in action” every Thursday. Voters can also get more information on www.chicagoelections.com.

Presenter: Sharon Turner-Buie, Director, Board of Election Commissioners, Kansas City, MO

Ms. Buie discussed the challenges and successes of creating the voter information website for Kansas City. It was designed to be an educational tool for voters interested in a variety of topics and developed according to a list of frequently asked questions. The search function allows a voter to find their precinct and lets them know whether or not they are registered. The website is www.kceb.org.

The positive impact from downloading forms, posting instructional materials, and a newsletter signaled a need to generate these items more frequently. The IT staff has been tracking data to help them redesign and change the website according to the demand for particular information. Updating the website with the new policies and legislation is a challenging task but very important.

Afternoon Presentations: Military and Overseas Voting

Presenter: J. Scott Weidmann, Deputy Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), Washington, DC

Mr. Weidmann was the representative for the federal program assisting with military and overseas voters. The post election UOCAVA (Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Voting Act) has been very helpful. One issue is that some ballots are not making it back to the US on time. In order to remedy that, FVAP is working with the states to get legislation off the books which may hinder the expeditious return of the ballot.

In the 2004 election, an FVAP survey showed that 79% of the uniformed services voters participated in the election. Only 20% voted at a polling site, 52% voted absentee, and the rest attempted to vote but, for whatever reason, their ballot was not received on time.

Mr. Weidmann provided the following recommendations that he felt would be helpful in the process. First, increase the 45 day transit time. Secondly, allow faxing, using a toll free fax line, and direct emails. He noted that although electronic transmission is becoming a good tool, and must be looked into with regards to security.

FVAP also holds events such as "Overseas Citizens Voting Week" with picnics and registration tables around Labor Day or July 4th. In October, the Pentagon hosts Absentee Voting Week.

Even though voting materials forward to deployed areas are taped up and marked for first-on/first-off transit, there is still work to be done on getting the ballots back in time for them to be counted.

Mr. Weidmann also touched on the future of internet voting. FVAP is working with the EAC on creating standards for the process to facilitate electronic voting for those areas where postal service is an issue. There are from 3.7 to 4.5 million voters who fall under UOCAVA. More information can be obtained by going to www.fvap.gov.

Presenter: Robert Carey, Senior Fellow with the National Defense Committee

Mr. Carey speaks from a career life in the military and experience voting around the world. He has witnessed the disenfranchisement of fellow military members and their families deployed overseas; however, little has been done to facilitate the process and very few ballots ever arrive on time. Mr. Carey proposed that the government take advantage of the internet and create a secure way for military voters to send emails or vote online in order for their votes to get back to their home counties, rather than depending on the US Postal Service.

Because of the sometimes sudden deployment and little notice with departure dates, military personnel often do not have enough time to request an absentee ballot or forward an address to the proper authorities. Additionally, some states have very little time between their primaries, run-off primaries and general elections to send all the ballots to overseas voters.

In conclusion, Mr. Carey offered a request for the federal government to mandate some type of electronic voting for military personnel.

Presenter: Susan Dzieduszycka-Suinat, Overseas Vote Foundation (OVF)

Ms. Suinat testifies from the perspective on an American citizen living overseas in Munich, Germany, and working for an advocacy group looking to find solutions for other citizens who live abroad who need voting assistance. OVF is a non-

partisan, non-governmental organization (NGO) run by volunteers and a few staff members.

Ms. Suinat noted that geography, distance, time zone changes, and access to information are all challenges that election officials and UOCAVA voters face. OVF is focusing on voter registration, creating a local election official directory, and showcasing their voter help desk which offers interactive services.

She reported that the Local Election Official (LEO) search is the most active search and about 30% of users of their site are first-time UOCAVA voters.

Second panel of afternoon panelists: State and Local Officials

Presenter: Betsy Byers, Co-Director of Elections, Secretary of State, MO

Ms. Byers noted that since Secretary Carnahan's tenure began, she has put extra emphasis on UOCAVA voters and wants the process to be safe and secure. Missouri statutes pertaining to elections have been changed to comply with federal law, including the recent changes mandated by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). Missouri law provides for the electronic transmission of a ballot by persons in federal service if the voter is casting a ballot from a location determined by the Secretary of State to be inaccessible on Election Day. There are currently 54 locations declared inaccessible. However, state law allows that only voted ballots may be submitted under this declaration. Missouri law also allows for a special write in absentee ballot in case the ballot does not make it to the voter who is deployed.

Ms. Byers noted that all information can be obtained at www.sos.mo.gov. Also federal postcard applications/write in ballots have special procedures. In extreme circumstances, some federal service voters are eligible to fax or e-mail their voted ballot directly to their election authority.

Presenter: Pat Hollarn, Supervisor of Elections, Okaloosa County, FL

Ms. Hollarn serves in Okaloosa County, FL, where there is a large population of military families. Based on their strong bond, they contact voters to make sure that they are getting the appropriate information and service. As soon as they receive a federal post card application, the voter is registered. Under no circumstances do FPCAs go unanswered. People who register under military members in the country do not necessarily receive an absentee ballot because they are not absent. However, when address changes are received with an out of country address, the voter is contacted to make sure that his/her registration is up to date and to verify they are UOCAVA voters.

The high mobility rate of the military results in many of these voters not being at the same address after two years. In an effort to mitigate this consequence, voter education and up-to-date voter information is disseminated on their website. Okaloosa County also has an emergency rule, where all overseas citizens may be given fax or email ballots and they can use a digitized signature; however, ballots must be returned by fax or by the US postal service.

Ms. Hollarn is also involved in the Kids Vote Too and Teens Vote Too Programs. They are working with private sector companies to hold internet (unofficial) elections.

Presenter: Joni Ernst, Montgomery County Auditor, IA

Ms. Ernst is the Country Auditor and the Commissioner of Elections for Montgomery County, Iowa. She has also served as an officer in the United States Army and has been deployed several times.

Although she made reference to the possibility of expanding the availability of email and fax ballots, she reported one problem she encountered on one of her deployments. A service member stationed in a highly populated camp may not always have access to a computer or fax terminal — especially the lower ranked who may be in remote locations.

Since the service member is not guaranteed privacy when submitting a ballot by fax or email; s/he must sign a secrecy waiver. It is the responsibility of the election officials to maintain the secrecy of that ballot. As a secondary measure of security, the voter is required to mail the original ballot, as well, to his or her election commissioner.

Ms. Ernst concluded her testimony with the note that they just received their first email request from a young active duty Marine on a ship en route to the Middle East and that will be the first for Montgomery County, IA.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.