

# TESTIMONY BEFORE THE U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

Public Meeting on Management Guidelines

June 15, 2006

Submitted by Connie Schmidt, CERA

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the development of the EAC's Election Management Guidelines. My name is Connie Schmidt, and in December 2004 I retired as the Election Commissioner of Johnson County, Kansas, which is located in the Greater Kansas City Metropolitan Area.

I must begin my testimony by telling you how honored I am to be working on this important project with Dr. Brit Williams. It is one that is near and dear to my heart and to the hearts of election administrators nationwide.

In May 2001, I had the opportunity to testify before the U.S. House Administration Committee regarding the importance of funding for election offices. Fast forward five years later, and many of those words still ring true...

"If we, as election administrators, could live in a perfect world, the voter registration records would be accurate, complete and always up to date, but the reality is that the voter registration files are inflated due to mandatory compliance with the NVRA.

In the perfect world, there would be an abundance of accessible voting locations, but the reality is that it is difficult to find voting locations and it is often not possible to find accessible locations in every precinct.

In the perfect world, elections would be easy to program and the voting equipment would always work, but the reality is that elections are complicated and machines break down.

In the perfect world, there would be an abundant pool of trained election workers to choose from for every Election Day, but the

reality is that approximately 98% of election workers are senior citizens, and the pool is not being replenished.

In the perfect world, budget dollars would be available to educate the voters, purchase new voting equipment and increase election worker salaries, but the reality, again, is that elections are an unfunded mandate.

In the perfect world, election administrators would have access to an election resource library of best practices, but the reality is that it does not exist and will require federal funding.

In the perfect world, there would be uniform voluntary voting system standards and operating procedures maintained by election administrators at the state and local level, but the reality is that the voting system standards are not up to date, operational standards do not exist, and there is no clearinghouse for reporting problems with voting systems.

With federal funding, it is possible to address many of these issues. We must join together collectively - at the local, state, and federal level - to share resources and to find creative and innovative solutions.”

During the past 6-8 months, Brit and I have been working with state and local election administrators to collect examples of existing policies and procedures. When completed, the Election Management Guidelines will provide the first national “resource library of election practices” for use as operational standards and procedures at the state and local level...a project that is long overdue.

I would like to now bring you up to date on the status of this important project.

In mid-December 2005, Brit and I took the opportunity to ask county election officials in attendance at the Midwest Election Officials Conference in Kansas City, Missouri to provide input on the priority for the development of specific modules for the Guidelines. The majority of these election officials were from small counties in Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri and Kansas, ranging in size from 1,473 to 30,000 registered voters. Listening to their concerns emphasized the needs of the small election jurisdictions nationwide – the offices with 1-2 employees, small budgets, limited computer expertise, and little or no

storage space. Security, pre-election testing, and poll worker training were among their top-ranked issues.

In January 2006, a group of state and local election administrators agreed to serve as members of the Steering Committee for the Election Management Guidelines project. They include officials from small, medium and large jurisdictions; representing users of a variety of different vendor's voting systems.

The team developed an overall draft outline of topics/modules for the Election Management Guidelines, and further recommended that the first module to be developed should be the Voting Systems Module, and specifically the chapters on Certification, Security, and Pre-Election Testing. This recommendation was approved by the EAC.

Recognizing that the input of state and local election administrators is critical to the development of the guidelines, the Steering Committee also decided to periodically appoint Focus Groups to serve as advisors/subject matter experts on specific topics. Working with NASED, IACREOT, The Election Center, and the Election Administration Report, we have requested input from state and local election administrators. We are pleased with the response, but are continuing to spread the word about the project.

I can assure you that election administrators are anxious to receive the Guidelines...in fact; we know that we are not moving fast enough to meet the current demand as new systems are being deployed nationwide this year.

I am pleased to report that we have completed the draft chapter on Security. It has been reviewed by the Steering Committee and is currently being reviewed by the Focus Group members and a staff representative from NIST. Our goal is to submit the final draft copy to the EAC by the end of June, with a target distribution date of early September 2006. The chapter on Federal Certification will be distributed at the same time.

In the meantime, we read daily of the challenges experienced by election administrators as they deploy new voting systems in the

primary elections this year. It is important to note that many of these challenges are not voting system issues.

They can be placed in the “human factors” category and include:

Insufficient training of poll workers – this can include quality, length, and type of training.

Complicated procedures – for opening/closing voting equipment, processing voters, etc.

Lack of support when opening/closing the polls – they often arrive at 4:45 a.m. and don’t leave until 8:00 p.m.

Too many new things all at the same time – new equipment, provisional ballots, new affidavits to complete, new security procedures, voter identification procedures, etc.

Plus all of the usual issues – voters in the wrong polling place, poll workers that don’t show up on Election Day, etc.

And, some new ones – reliance on voting system vendors to program the election, print ballots, support the polling places, and tabulate the results.

To address that immediate need, we have prepared a Quick Start Management Guide for New Voting Systems. It is certainly not intended to be a comprehensive management guide, but instead provides a snapshot of priority items essential to managing elections with new voting systems.

The Quick Start Guide will be distributed immediately to NASED, IACREOT, Election Center, and NACo members. It will also be posted on the EAC web site, and [electionline.org](http://electionline.org).

In the meantime, work continues on the development of the remaining chapters of the Voting Systems module of the Guidelines. Our mission is to have the Guidelines be a desktop reference book for election administrators nationwide. A place where they can find

recommendations on how to develop procedures, manage operations, improve work flow, etc.

Ultimately, we see the guidelines as the beginning of a bigger project – one that eventually connects users of the same equipment across the country...sharing ideas and innovations...building on each other's expertise in elections...leading all users from the smallest to the largest jurisdictions to a place where they can all excel using policies, procedures and solutions that they have developed together.

In closing, I want to again express my appreciation for the opportunity to work on this project and to thank each of you for recognizing the importance of, and most especially, the need for Election Management Guidelines.

From the smallest county of less than 2,000 voters to the largest jurisdiction of several million voters...the Management Guidelines will serve as a national resource manual on the administration of elections. An added benefit may be that it will also serve as an educational tool for candidates, elected officials, media, educators, and voters.