

## **Remarks on Proposed Voluntary Guidance on Implementation of Statewide Voter Registration Lists**

United States Election Assistance Commission  
Public Hearing  
April 26, 2005  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

**Doug Sanderson, Secretary, Oklahoma County Election Board  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**

Madam Chair and members of the Commission, it is an honor to address the Election Assistance Commission regarding proposed voluntary guidance on implementation of statewide voter registration lists. Speaking for myself and on behalf of my colleagues in the Oklahoma election management system, we appreciate the opportunity to participate in this hearing and to offer our experience and perspective on this subject.

We believe that any guidance on the subject of the statewide voter registration database requirement of HAVA should be flexible. It should not create restrictions or limit the range of possible solutions from which individual states may choose to meet their responsibility. In Oklahoma, our statewide voter registration database has been in place since 1990. At the time it was implemented, only two or three counties in Oklahoma had computerized voter registration lists, and it was not easy for those counties to give up their individual systems in favor of the state system. In many states, individual counties have invested large amounts of money in their own voter registration lists and do not want to abandon them. States should be free to adopt their own guidelines to create, where possible, a state database from the existing county databases.

We encourage interaction between states to evaluate and identify other systems and procedures that could be suitable for use in their state. When Oklahoma was developing a statewide voter registration database, our project team evaluated nine different voter registration systems and benefited greatly from that interaction. The project team learned what to do as well as what not to do.

We also encourage cooperation between county and state election officials. In the Oklahoma election management system, we have a long history of such cooperation. Local election officials are accustomed to following the lead of the State Election Board Secretary. One reason our system has been so successful, however, is that the State Election Board Secretary routinely seeks counsel from the 77 County Election Board Secretaries in our state. Our unified, uniform system serves us well, and most importantly, it serves our voters well.

Oklahoma's plans for 2006 seem to be in line with the recommendations contained in the Proposed Voluntary Guidance on Implementation of Statewide Voter Registration Lists document. We are pleased that our efforts do not seem to be in conflict with the EAC's voluntary guidance on this matter.

When our statewide voter registration system was created 15 years ago, the project was led by the State Election Board Secretary and staff. A consulting firm was employed to do the research, to develop the plan, to recommend and acquire the hardware, and to write or adapt the software. County Election Board representatives – the end users of the system – were involved at every stage of the design of the system that came to be known as the Oklahoma Election Management System.

The OEMS complies in many ways with the requirements of HAVA, but will require some significant upgrades to comply fully. At present, each County Election Board has access only to its own voter registration list. Only the State Election Board has access to the full statewide list.

As I understand our plans for complying with HAVA in 2006, the State Election Board will create a website on which the full statewide database will be available to authorized County Election Board personnel. It will be accessed with a password assigned to each county. The list will be updated daily. We do not envision a system wherein a county election official can enter or change data directly in the statewide list or in another county.

We do regularly receive information electronically from the State Health Department on deaths of Oklahoma residents and from the State Department of Public Safety on people who surrender an Oklahoma driver license in another state. Information on felony convictions is obtained manually in

each county from the Court Clerk. These procedures are not expected to change.

In conclusion, I believe the Commission's voluntary guidance proposals on implementation of statewide voter registration lists are on the right track. The guidance will be helpful to those charged with the responsibility of implementing the statewide registered voter list provisions of the Help America Vote Act of 2002.