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Testimony of Karen Long
Adams County, Colorado Clerk & Recorder
Before the US Election Assistance Commission
Washington, DC

Regarding Voter Registration Databases: Initial Discussion on Reviewing HAVA Mandated Guidance
March 17, 2009

Chairwoman Beach, Commissioners Hillman and Davidson, Executive Director Wilkey, and members of the Election Assistance Commission staff:

Thank you for the invitation to appear before the Election Assistance Commission regarding Voter Registration Databases: Initial Discussion on Reviewing HAVA Mandated Guidance, including a discussion about how the database has impacted voter registration in Adams County, Colorado (as well as other Colorado counties) and how the county coordinates database management with the state of Colorado.

The statewide voter registration system implemented in Colorado during the 2008 Presidential election year is commonly referred to as SCORE, **S**tate of **C**olorado **R**egistration and **E**lection. This is a "top down" system.

The new SCORE voter registration system in use in Colorado includes both a voter registration system and an election management system, which will be extremely useful and beneficial into the future for voters and the counties for numerous reasons.

Impacts from SCORE put on Adams County and others in Colorado during the original implementation in late 2007 and early 2008 include:

- Downside: Unfortunate circumstances surrounding the 1st system contract in Colorado, which lead to eventual cancellation of the contract and then significant delays before the 2nd statewide voter registration system was eventually contracted and successfully implemented.
- Downside: Not all Counties started on SCORE at same time, incremental installations, few at a time. Many of us encountered steep learning curves. Large \$\$ investments by Counties to hire extra staff to implement.
- Downside: SCORE could be an unfunded mandate to Counties for ongoing support.
- Upside: We are proud to tell you, as 64 determined County election officials working closely with our Secretary of State's office, we successfully implemented the system, but not without bumps and bruises to all.

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Testimony submitted by Karen Long
March 17, 2009
Page 2

- Other comments, in general: Very large, aggressive and successful Voter Registration Drives started working in Colorado very early 2008 to register voters. Their efforts kept us very busy while still learning to use a new system.
- Adams County Elections office was engaged in determining if 2 different recall elections were to be conducted at the same time as the implementation of SCORE. Should we stay on our legacy voter registration system as long as we could to conduct a recall election on a system we knew would work, or would we attempt to conduct on a new, nearly unproven statewide voter registration/election management system?
- Should we run “dual systems”, so we could prove our legacy system to SCORE? 4 of Colorado’s largest Counties were the last to implement SCORE. Many were reluctant to turn loose of legacy systems—“change”. Lost some system functionality from legacy to SCORE.
- How would we conduct a Mock Election in SCORE, 2 weeks after going on the system?

The Colorado SCORE system is fully real time, which is beneficial for any and all Counties who access voter registration records, update records, etc. This is a voter registration system built into an election management system, since these processes are closely tied together in Colorado.

The positive impact SCORE has made is a standardization and uniformity of process and procedures for all Counties in the state, which is exactly what the voters will benefit from. This system has changed the way we work our processes in the Counties.

For efficiency purposes, we are now bringing our Colorado election laws in line with the processes used in SCORE. We soon expect to see online voter registration become a reality in Colorado, made possible by a statewide voter registration database.

Very soon, we will begin consolidating voter records because of the efficiencies created by SCORE. Prior to implementing SCORE, we had several different stand-alone voter registration databases around Colorado. As SCORE was implemented, voter records from 64 counties were dumped into the new SCORE database—as a result, Colorado now has 5.8 million voter records, but only 3.2 million active/inactive voters. By virtue of the late deployment of the SCORE system, those records still must be addressed.

Because of the mobility of the voting public, we have many, many, many duplicate records of voters—the same person may have registrations in numerous counties. Our efforts in 2009 to consolidate these records, NOT REMOVE, but consolidate, will prove to be another challenge for counties, but it is a necessary piece of

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Testimony submitted by Karen Long
March 17, 2009
Page 3

realizing the efficiency of a statewide voter registration database. We will be gaining the uniform use of technology around Colorado, from the smallest to the largest of counties.

Specific Processes:

- ID verification continues as discussions among many are ongoing, our voters are not penalized or denied registration; they simply must provide ID to the election official for completion of their voter registration.
- Our agency interfaces work fairly well, 2 are efficient, CDOC and CDPHE, 1, CDOR, is dealing with a very antiquated computer system which does not interface satisfactorily (with no hope of funding to improve the system) and the SSA has no direct connect, this is virtually a batch process and is NOT efficient for any of us. We would appreciate a look at this.
- NVRA—SCORE aids Colorado counties to be more efficient and visible, standardizing codes for NVRA reporting. This will provide better data as to how and where voters are registering.

Pre-election policy decisions by our Colorado Secretary of State were often quick and far-reaching decisions. SCORE has definitely pushed us to uniformity and some of these policy decisions will be reviewed, with County input, for future impacts. A few of these include document retention, undeliverable ballots, unaffiliated voters, permanent mail-in voters' inability to surrender ballot and vote on electronic voting equipment and voter moves. Some of these will be addressed in 2009 legislation.

A late lawsuit filed in Colorado is challenging the cancellation of duplicate voter records from SCORE, removed within 90 days leading up to a Federal (Primary) election, cancellation of felon voters and the cancellation of deceased voters. This resulted in post-election procedures which drastically impacted the counties' ability to proceed with routine post-election timelines set in Colorado law. We had to review certain, segregated Provisional voter information and send letters to the voters included in the lawsuit by 2 days after the election. Some counties encountered hundreds of the lawsuit Provisional voters to confirm. These were subject to different standards for review than our routine, law-driven Provisional processes in Colorado. Eventually, after using SCORE to confirm Provisional voters' registration records (or lack thereof), we were ordered to count some and then audited on that process. This is still lingering in Colorado, but the process for completion was somewhat simplified by our ability to see voter records in SCORE and if our voters were registered elsewhere in the State.

We do acknowledge that the Provisional ballot process worked well to protect voters whose cancellations were challenged in the lawsuit.

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Testimony of Karen Long
March 17, 2009
Page 4

We believe SCORE will broaden voter confidence simply because of the many mailings being sent to voters in Colorado, generated from SCORE, including the confirmation of the voter's recent registration or requested change.

Counties strongly believe that integrity reigns as a result of the SCORE statewide voter registration database, it is a vital tool on an *intrastate* basis for confirmation of voter records, changes to records, and voter history, and we believe it will bring integrity on an *interstate* basis as well, even if it is into the future. We are able to provide more accurate information to other states regarding our voters, if requested, and believe we are receiving more accurate information from those states, as well.

We know, in Colorado, that our SCORE system is not quite "there" yet. We deployed the system in 2008 and successfully completed the primary and general elections. However, the vision is now focused on 2010 and upgrading the system with even more mechanisms to allow more efficiencies and options. In the Voter Registration System, many voter registration records, as mentioned earlier, will be consolidated. The Election Management System has several modules that were not totally functional and will have further development to provide a system which fully responds to our needs; for instance, election worker module will include interface for payroll purposes, reports module will be refined to provide more accurate and user-friendly reports, petition module will be tweaked and the batch scanning module will undergo revision.

As one of our County Clerk's in Colorado noted: "when we are able to complete all of the processes vital to the success of SCORE, following NVRA, HAVA and our own Colorado state laws, the design of SCORE will bring intrastate integrity into the statewide voter registration system process".

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share impacts, issues and successes of our Colorado SCORE statewide voter registration system from a county standpoint and our look into the near future.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.