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Testimony  
EAC Public Meeting  
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**Presentation and acceptance of the Election Center's Free or Reduced Postage for the Return of Voted Absentee Ballots Postage Study**

Commissioners, General Counsel Hodgkins and Executive Director Wilkey, I am pleased to come before you today with the results of an eighteen-month study on the topic of Free or Reduced Postage for the Return of Voted Absentee Ballots which has been conducted by the Election Center and several of its subcontractors, Braun Research and IFES.

EAC research staff has reviewed this final report, along with the findings from the national voter survey and the focus groups that were conducted, and have found the studies to be methodologically sound. We have also determined that the findings and conclusions that are presented in the report are accurate to the best of our knowledge.

The random sample of 1,200 voters and the series of focus groups conducted in seven different locations have provided us with a good "read" of the attitudes and opinions of select groups of voters on the topic of free postage for absentee ballots. Furthermore, the contractors have done a good job of identifying and framing a series of policy issues and key concerns related to making a free absentee ballot postage voting program operational.

The Election Center has provided EAC with a beginning set of questions for the Commission to consider as it performs a more in-depth inquiry into the various financial costs that would be incurred by the USPS and by local election jurisdictions who might be responsible for implementing a free absentee ballot postage program.

The results of this qualitative research into the topic of free postage for absentee ballots provides us with valuable information from the voters' perspective; it also provides EAC with a backdrop against which the Commission can frame its next stage of inquiry.

The results of the national survey also provide interesting insight into voters' overall understanding of the voting process and their voting behavior during the past two general elections. These insights are of interest to EAC as it considers future research studies and projects, namely, initiatives the Commission might undertake to educate voters about the absentee voting process.

In order to fulfill our statutory requirements under HAVA regarding study of this matter I anticipate that EAC will, as a next step, perform an in-depth assessment of the risks, cost and benefits, along with a detailed policy analysis that will examine the advisability and feasibility of implementing a free absentee postage policy.

I conclude my remarks by recommending to the Commissioners that the EAC accept the study and its findings as they have been presented by the Election Center, in a final draft report submitted to EAC on January 26, 2008.

Thank you.

