**U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION**
**1225 New York Ave. NW – Suite 1100**
**Washington, DC 20005**

July 20, 2005

**EAC Advisory 2005-004: How to determine if a voting system is compliant with Section 301(a) – a gap analysis between 2002 Voting System Standards and the requirements of Section 301(a)**

The United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) has received a number of inquiries from several states as to whether one or more particular voting systems comply with Section 301(a) of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). In addition, in one of its recent public meetings, EAC was asked to conduct an analysis to identify the gaps between the 2002 Voting System Standards adopted by the Federal Election Commission (FEC) and the requirements for voting systems under Section 301(a) of HAVA. EAC is not required by HAVA to preclear or approve voting systems purchased by states and local election jurisdictions. Furthermore, EAC does not believe that it was the intention of Congress or HAVA for EAC to assume this role. However, it is evident that states and local election jurisdictions as well as testing laboratories are in need of information that will help in determining whether a voting system meets the threshold requirements of Section 301(a). Thus, EAC offers the following analysis of Section 301(a) in light of the 2002 Voting System Standards.

Title III of HAVA, entitled "Uniform and Nondiscriminatory Election Technology and Administration Requirements," imposes certain requirements upon states and local jurisdictions conducting federal elections. Section 301(a) sets forth the standards that voting systems must meet after January 1, 2006. Those requirements include functions and features that, among other things: (1) allow the voter to review his or her selections privately and independently prior to casting a ballot; (2) allow the voter to change his or her selections privately and independently prior to casting a ballot; (3) notify the voter when he or she has made more selections in a single race than are permitted (overvote); (4) provide for the production of a permanent paper record suitable to be used in a manual recount; (5) provide voters with disabilities, including visual disabilities, the same opportunity for access and participation (including privacy and independence) as for other voters; (6) provide accessibility in minority languages for voters with limited English proficiency as required by the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and (7) provide for

an error rate in operating the voting system that is no greater than the error rate set forth in Section 3.2.1 of the 2002 Voting System Standards adopted by the Federal Election Commission (FEC).

Although the 2002 Voting System Standards set forth measurable standards that predict compliance with some of the Section 301(a) requirements, those standards do not provide sufficient and adequate guidance as to what is required to meet the accessibility requirements of Section 301(a)(3); do not prescribe testable measures for language accessibility required by Section 301(a)(4) of HAVA; and do not prescribe standards that adequately explain the requirements for overvote notification required by Section 301(a)(1) of HAVA. As such, EAC issues the following policy statement to identify the gaps between the 2002 Voting System Standards and the requirements set forth under Section 301(a) of HAVA and to explain what is needed to meet the requirements of Section 301(a) above and beyond the testing requirements established in the 2002 Voting System Standards.

Section 301(a)(1):

The requirements of Section 301(a)(1) of HAVA are met if the voting system (1) conforms and complies with Section 2.4.3.3 of the 2002 Voting System Standards and (2) notifies the voter through a visual and/or audio message prior to casting the ballot when the voter makes more selections than are legally allowed in a single race or contest (overvote):

(a) that an overvote has occurred and
(b) the effect of overvoting.

Following that notification, the voting system must allow the voter to change his or her selection(s), if so desired. Voting systems that preclude and prohibit overvoting meet this requirement. Notwithstanding the above, certain paper ballot voting systems may meet the overvote requirements of Section 301(a)(1)(A)(iii) of HAVA by meeting the requirements set forth in Section 301(a)(1)(B).

Section 301(a)(2):

The requirements of Section 301(a)(2) of HAVA are met if the voting system conforms and complies with Sections 2.2.5.2.1 and 2.5.3.1 of the 2002 Voting System Standards.

Section 301(a)(3):

Section 301(a)(3) of HAVA requires that by January 1, 2006, at least one voting system in each polling place be accessible to persons with disabilities such that the voting system allows an individual with a disability the same access and

opportunity to vote privately and independently as is afforded a non-disabled voter. Compliance with Section 301(a)(3) requires that the voting system is accessible to persons with disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, including physical, visual, and cognitive disabilities, such that the disabled individual can privately and independently receive instruction, make selections, and cast a ballot. However, accessibility involves more than the technical features of the voting system. The accessible voting system also must be used in a manner that is consistent with providing access for disabled voters (e.g., the accessible voting system must be set up for use in a space that is accessible to a disabled voter who uses a wheelchair).

Conformance with Section 301(a)(3) is a complex matter, which must take into account the disability of the voter, the advancement of technology and its availability, and the efforts of the elections officials to make the voting process accessible to disabled voters in a private and independent manner. The following are some factors that must be considered in determining accessibility in conformance with Section 301(a)(3) of HAVA:

(1) Section 2.2.7 of the 2002 Voting System Standards;
(2) Section 2.4.3.1 (a) of the 2002 Voting System Standards;
(3) Section 3.4.9 (a-e) of the 2002 Voting System Standards;
(4) The voting system must afford a disabled voter the ability to perform the same functions (e.g., receiving and reading the ballot, making selections, reviewing selections, changing selections, and casting the final ballot) as are afforded to a non-disabled voter. These functions may be provided to the disabled voter through features of the voting system that are different than those used by non-disabled voters. The disabled voter need not and in many cases cannot have an identical voting experience as a non-disabled voter (e.g., a voter with a visual disability is afforded the same access to reading the ballot as a sighted voter when the ballot is read to the visually disabled voter using an audio component of the voting system).
(5) Accessibility of the voting system to the voter includes accessibility to all equipment needed to cast and count ballots. Many jurisdictions use a paper ballot voting system that requires the voter to submit his or her own ballot after casting for purposes of ballot counting. Where such voting systems are in use, such jurisdictions must to the extent reasonably and technologically possible afford a disabled voter the same ability to submit his or her own ballot, in a private and independent manner, as is afforded a non-disabled voter. In this example, visually disabled voters must be allowed to submit the ballot independently, as the disability is one that is capable of being accommodated, and technology and practice provide a means that can be used to allow the visually disabled voter to

submit a ballot with the same degree of privacy and independence afforded to a sighted voter (e.g., a privacy sleeve).

(6) There may be certain disabled voters whose disabilities prevent them from voting independently (i.e., without assistance from a person of their choosing or a poll worker). While HAVA requires voting systems to allow independence and privacy, it does not preclude a disabled voter from requesting and obtaining the assistance of another person as provided in Section 208 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

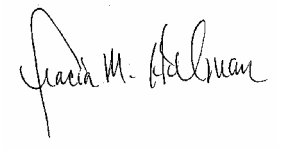
(7) Section 301(a)(3)(B) contemplates that an accessible voting system can include a direct recording electronic (DRE) voting system or other voting system equipped for individuals with disabilities. This advisory should not be read to preclude the innovation and use of accessible voting systems other than DREs for purposes of meeting this requirement.

Section 301(a)(4):

The minority language requirements of Section 301(a)(4) are met if the voting system complies with the minority language requirements of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (contained in Section 203 as well as Section 4(f)(4)) and the implementing regulations found at 28 C.F.R. Part 55 and 67 F.R. 48871 (July 26, 2002). The voting system must provide all information, excluding the names of the candidates, that would otherwise be provided by the voting system in English (whether written or oral) in the language(s) that the voting jurisdiction is required to provide materials pursuant to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and its regulations as referenced above.

Section 301(a)(5):

The requirements of Section 301(a)(5) are met if the voting system error rate does not exceed that established in Section 3.2.1 of the 2002 Voting System Standards.



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