A Review of the Research and Proceedings of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration

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Making Voting Work for Voters

Common Sense Non-Partisan Solutions

Election Administration as Customer Service

Review of the Goals Identified in the Executive Order

Promote the efficient administration of elections:

- o To ensure that eligible voters have the opportunity to cast their ballots without undue delay

- o To improve the experience of voters facing other obstacles in casting their ballots, such as members of the military, overseas voters, voters with disabilities, and voters with limited English proficiency.

How the Commission went about its work

- Public Meetings and Hearings
- Meetings with groups and organizations of election officials
- Submission of testimony and other material through website: www.supportthevoter.gov
- Subcommittee

Public Hearings

- Initial Public Meeting – Washington, DC, June 21
- Four public hearings
  - Miami, FL, June 28
  - Denver, CO, Aug. 8
  - Philadelphia, PA, Sept. 4
  - Cincinnati, OH, Sept. 19-20
- Format
  - Election Officials
  - Academics and other Experts
  - General Public

Meetings with groups and organizations of election officials

o Election organizations: IACREOT, NASS, NASED, FOCE, NCSL, Election Center, EAC

o Other groups:

The Heritage Foundation, the Brookings Institution, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, the Bipartisan Policy Center, the Republican National Lawyers Association, the PEW Voter Information Project, Alaska Federation of Natives, the Asian-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, LatinoJustice-PRLDEF, the Military Voter Protection Project, FVAP, Overseas Vote Foundation, the Brennan Center, the National Council on Disability, and the U.S. Postal Service

o Meetings discussed on public meeting conference call on November 14.

Assistance of Academics

- Leadership:
  - o Charles Stewart, Daron Shaw, Steve Ansolabehere.
  - o About a dozen who presented research to commission

- Conducted nationwide survey of local election officials

Specified Factors that Affect the Achievement of the Goals of the EO

Promote the efficient administration of elections:

- **To ensure that eligible voters have the opportunity to cast their ballots without undue delay**
    - Management of polling place, poll workers and voter rolls
    - Voting machine capacity and technology
    - Ballot simplicity and voter education
    - Provisional ballots
- **To improve the experience of voters facing other obstacles in casting their ballots**
    - Members of the military
    - Overseas voters
    - Voters with disabilities
    - Voters with limited English proficiency
    - Absentee voters
    - Victims of natural disasters or emergencies

Threshold Challenges for Commission's Report and Recommendations

- Scope of the Charge
- "One size does not fit all"
- Resources
- Data Vacuum
- Macro v. micro recommendations – e.g., reforms of voter registration v. ballot font size
- Gaps in enforcement of existing laws: NVRA, ADA, HAVA, VRA (section 203), UOCAVA, MOVE
- Wealth of material already out there
    - EAC – reports and quick start guides
    - Election Center – 2000 and 2004 Best Practices Reports
    - NASS/NASED – e.g, task force report on natural disasters
    - AIGA on ballot design

Election Day Lines

- Standard: How long is long? : 1 hour? Half hour? No standard?

- Factors that affect line length
    - Poor planning
    - Polling places, staff, machines
    - Resource misallocation
    - Voter's preparation
    - Ballot length and complexity

New challenges

- Technology –
  - Potentially widespread, simultaneous failure of HAVA-purchased machines
  - Market breakdown
  - Standards/Certification breakdown
  - Dissatisfaction from both vendors and clients

- Problem of Facilities
  - Scarcity and Accessibility
  - School Security Concerns

- Mail
  - Importance for increasing use of vote-by-mail
  - Reduction in service
  - Uniformity of postal service policy

Management of Voter Rolls

Problem:

- o Registration lists cannot keep up with mobility of American population
- o Millions of registrations out of date
- o Lack of integration of DMV and voter registration databases
- o Cost of maintaining voter rolls

Challenges faced by particular groups

- Military and Overseas voters

- Voters with disabilities

- Voters with limited English proficiency

- Absentee voters

- Victims of natural disasters or emergencies

Military and Overseas

Problem

- Improvement since MOVE
- But also confusion:
  - States vary: how long a ballot application through the Federal Postcard Application (FPCA) remains in effect
  - Whether a Federal Write-in Absentee ballot (FWAB) also counts as a voter registration application
- State Websites inadequate
- IVAOs inadequate
- Fear by military officials about getting involved in politics

Voters with disabilities

Problem

- Increase in size of population with accessibility needs
- Inaccessible polling places
- Untrained poll workers
- Technology with accessibility not "baked-in"
- Bans on voting for those with cognitive disabilities
- Need for training
- Usability testing

Limited English Proficiency Voters

Problem

- Lack of enforcement of Section 203 of VRA
- Shortage of bilingual poll workers
- Confusing ballots
- Longer voting times/lines
- Unwritten languages

Absentee Ballots

Problem

- Lost votes at multiple stages of process

- Mail problems

- Increase in provisionals due to permanent absentee voters voting in polling place

- Greater opportunity for fraud

Victims of Natural Disasters

Problem

- Lack of statutory guidance as to when elections can be rescheduled and who is in charge on Election Day in the event of a disaster

- Lack of planning

- Lack of process to protect voting rights of first responders

Survey Results