Testimony to the Presidential Commission on Election Administration

August 8, 2013

Dean C. Logan
Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

Esteemed members of the Commission I want to thank you for the opportunity to share my experiences and perspectives with you today. My name is Dean Logan, Registrar of Voters for Los Angeles County. I share these comments with you today with the intention of helping to further the Commission's mission and support the guiding principles it has set forth. More importantly, my comments are informed by more than 20 years of elections experience as both a statewide and local election official—the past seven serving one of the most complex and diverse jurisdictions in the nation.

The County of Los Angeles is the country's largest county election jurisdiction, covering an area of more than 4,000 square miles. Los Angeles County's electorate is larger than the electorates in 42 of the 50 states, serving 4.8 million registered voters and another two million unregistered adult citizens. In the November 2012 Presidential Election, we staffed and supported more than 4,800 polling locations, recruited and trained close to 25,000 poll workers, issued nearly two million Vote by Mail ballots, and centrally tabulated 2.8 million ballots on Election Night.

The size of the County is rivaled only by our complexity and diversity. Currently, we provide language assistance in more than a dozen different languages and serve multiple communities representing a broad spectrum of socioeconomic conditions; age, race and ethnicity and high rates of mobility and residential status.

Los Angeles County is not in a battleground state. In 2012, our voters did not experience long lines, wait times or intense media scrutiny. However, a well-run election is just as important in Los Angeles County as it is in Cuyahoga, Montgomery or Miami-Dade Counties – and voter experiences throughout the country impact the public's confidence and understanding of the elections process everywhere.

I firmly believe that good governance begins with good elections. The way an election is conducted in terms of voter access, process transparency and systems accuracy and integrity affects voter trust in government and sets the tone for the perceived legitimacy of incoming administrations and – more importantly – the legitimacy of our participatory democratic processes. I commend the members of this Commission for taking up the challenge of creating hopefully more than just a set of short term fixes but a true vision for the future of elections in the United States.

So, where does the path to improving elections in the United States go next? What are the best practices and policies that can get us there? Certainly, fundamental questions to the Commission's current pursuit.

Recently, I was asked by the CalTech/MIT Voting Technology Project to reflect on where we find ourselves more than a decade after the Help America Vote Act, one of our nation's most monumental election reform efforts. As I reflected on the impact of HAVA and the current state and trajectory of our elections, I came to a pivotal realization: looking beyond the boundaries of election administration, things are nothing like they were ten years ago.

The reforms put in place by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 undoubtedly helped to provide standardized and federally mandated provisions for voters; from fail safe voting to accessible voting requirements. In addition, the Act mandated centralized statewide voter databases and provided unprecedented funding for the replacement of voting equipment. HAVA was an important reaction to addressing a number of administrative and infrastructure related

deficiencies, inequalities and failures. The Act, however, has been quickly outpaced by demographic shifts and innovations in communications and technology – changes that are and will continue to affect voter expectations and behaviors going forward.

More than ten years after the 2000 Presidential election the biggest lesson learned is that elections ought to be recognized as a profession of constant innovation.   No single policy is absolute and no best practice stays fresh. Moving forward, election officials and policy makers must adopt new models that take a balanced voter-centered approach that considers voter needs and habits, plausible technologies and data as prime factors to election innovation and improvement. In my 20 years as an election official I am the first to admit that, as a profession – and as a government, we have often failed to put the voter experience at the center of our considerations and acted with little data, instead driven primarily by political pressure and operational convenience.

If we hope to improve the experience of voting for current and future voters, it is imperative that we avoid reacting solely to remedy inefficiencies and inadequacies of current "processes" but, instead seek to create the conditions and garner the resources to continuously improve the voter experience and therefore begin to remedy the broader issues of declining voter participation, a cumbersome voter registration system, and insufficient voter education. This will only be possible if the elections official of the 21st century manages elections through a voter-centric lens and data driven management and modernization initiatives.

To put this into context, let me suggest three priorities and some practical examples where we have experienced success:

1. **Data driven management**

    The richness and availability of data to help analyze and manage our processes is at an all-time high. Building the skills and tools to integrate the utilization of data into the organizational structure of elections administration is critical to innovation and continued

improvement. In Los Angeles County, doing so has assisted us in prioritizing and targeting multi-lingual services; developing formulas for the allocation of voting devices and poll workers; and meeting the demands of increased Vote by Mail activity.

2. **Collaborative model of elections administration.**

Elections are a public process that does not "belong" to the election administrator. Fair accessible, transparent and effective elections require citizen participation not just at the ballot box on Election Day but throughout the process. Los Angeles County has experienced great success in building partnerships with advocacy organizations, the elections integrity community and other governmental agencies to increase the transparency of the elections process through a poll monitoring program, initiatives to increase and maximize voter outreach and education activities in underserved communities and, most recently, to envision the modernization of our voting systems.

Los Angeles County is an excellent model for what voter centered innovation can look like. Plagued by a stalled voting systems market and an aging voting system, in 2009, we launched a voting systems project that set out to transform the market as we know it by implementing a process that seeks to redesign the voting experience in Los Angeles County through voter input and stakeholder participation and envisions the development and implementation of open voting systems that elicit public trust and encourage greater participation. To date, we've drafted guiding principles for our voting systems in collaboration with local stakeholders, have partnered with organizations like the Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Project and the human centered innovation firm of IDEO. Examples like these can help us identify new paths to better elections.

3. **Convergence of technology and process**

   Voter registration modernization is the most common denominator in looking at improving the voter experience – it drives the resources needs for elections and is vital to facilitating participation. Online registration has been a game changer, but it is not the end of modernization. We need to move ahead with efforts to securely match data across jurisdictions and agencies to improve the accuracy of our voting rolls, to identify eligible, unregistered citizens and to provide a seamless process for voters to ensure their eligibility and participation in elections.

   In a jurisdiction like Los Angeles County with an estimated two million unregistered adult citizens, a mobility rate of 1.2 years, and ongoing in-migration from neighboring counties and states, voter registration modernization is instrumental to strengthening and expanding local democracy.

Finally, I believe it is important in any discussion about the voting experience that we reflect on the sustainability and flexibility of our systems and processes. Much time and many resources have been devoted in recent years to looking back at past voting experiences to identify lessons learned and to make improvement, while little has been explored in terms of prospective issue identification and pro-active development for the future. It is incumbent upon us to look forward and to anticipate the impacts of evolving changes in demographics, technology and voter expectations. Any investment of time or resources in responding to the experiences of voting in 2012 must allow for the flexibility to anticipate the voting experience and expectations in 2014, 2016 and beyond.

As the dialogue and the drive to identify best practices continues, we should be guided by the dynamics of the voting public we serve – **seniors** whose needs include accessibility and readability of materials; **persons with disabilities** who have a reasonable expectation of fair

and respectful service that allows for a private and secure voting experience; **busy professionals** who seek options for voting that match their mobile lifestyles – before and on Election Day; **citizens with an array of cultural and ethnic backgrounds** who depend on increased language accessibility and voter assistance; and **future voters** whose expectations may include things not yet considered.

Based on 2010 census data, the two fastest growing populations in Los Angeles County are those over the age of 65 and those between the ages of 18 and 29. Recognizing that dynamic, we must be mindful of both the experiences and images of the senior waiting in line to vote in 2012 and of the young teen sitting in a classroom who will be a first-time voter in 2016.

Good governance begins with good elections – and, good elections begin and end with stability in governance, innovation in process and a commitment to the voter experience. This is the 21st Century challenge for election officials.

Thank you again for providing this forum and for your service to the President and to our country.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

1. Data driven management

   a. 2013 RR/CC Multilingual Report – Out for Comment
      http://www.lavote.net/GENERAL/PDFS/ml_report_7213.pdf

   b. 2011 Language Determinations in Los Angeles County: Understanding the New Requirements
      http://www.lavote.net/GENERAL/PDFS/BOARD_CORRESPONDENCE/0131201 2-053434.pdf

   c. November 6, 2012 Inspector Survey Analysis Report
      http://www.lavote.net/VOTER/PDFS/PUB/Inspector_Survey_Analysis_Report_11 062012.pdf

   d. November 6, 2012 General Election Media Kit
      http://www.lavote.net/Voter/PDFS/ELECTION_RELATED/11062012_MEDIA_KIT .pdf

   e. 2008-2009 Civil Grand Jury Report - The 2008 Presidential Election: A Look at Provisional Balloting
      http://www.lavote.net/VOTER/PDFS/POST_ELECTION_REPORTS/2008- 2009_Civil_Grand_Jury_Report.pdf

2. Collaborative mode of elections administration

   a. Community Voter Outreach Committee
      http://www.lavote.net/Voter/CVOC/About_CVOC.cfm

   b. Poll Monitoring Program (Best Practice submission)
      http://www.lavote.net/VOTER/PDFS/PUB/2010_nacrc_best_practice_submission _poll_monitoring.pdf

   c. Voter Empowerment Workshop (Best Practice submission)
      http://www.lavote.net/VOTER/PDFS/PUB/2011_nacrc_best_practice_city_of_bell .pdf

   d. Voting Systems Assessment Project Concept Paper
      http://www.lavote.net/Voter/VSAP/PDFS/VSAP_Concept_Document.pdf

   e. Voting Systems Assessment Project – General Voting Systems Principles
      http://www.lavote.net/Voter/VSAP/PDFS/VotingSystemPrinciples.pdf

3. Convergence of technology and process

   a. 2012 RR/CC Voter Registration Report
      http://www.lavote.net/GENERAL/PDFS/PRESS_RELEASES/10292012- 012609.pdf