Testimony before the U.S. Election Assistance Commission

**Briefing of Working Language Groups and Presentation of
2007 Glossary of Key Election Terminology in English/Spanish –
Spanish/English**

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Madame Chair and Commissioners, in 1979, the Federal Election Commission published a series of reports under The National Clearinghouse on Election Administration to assist election officials in their efforts to provide election services to groups identified by Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act as language minorities. The purpose of the reports was to provide guidance to state and local election officials for identifying their language minority populations, providing bilingual registration services, and providing bilingual balloting services. The three-volume series consisted of: *A Handbook of Ideas for Local Election Officials, A Glossary of Common Spanish Election Terminology, and A State of the Art Report*. The ideas and recommendations contained in these reports were not designed as legal guidelines for complying with the provisions of the VRA nor were election officials required to consider or adopt them.

Twenty-eight years have passed since the FEC publications, and since then significant changes have occurred in the administration of elections, including its terminology. To help the Commission identify the feasibility and advisability of updating the FEC glossary, the EAC put forth the idea to the two language working groups mentioned by Mr. Cortes during his testimony. Both groups saw updating of the glossary as something favorable and desirable. Therefore, EAC staff proceeded to update the list of terms and award a contract for translation and production of the glossary, of which you have a copy in front of you. The main purpose of this glossary remains the same as the FEC's 1979 version – to assist State and local election officials in providing translated election materials that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. These are not complete definitions and translations nor exclusive rules of usage. However, the establishment of uniform election terminology may prove beneficial for ensuring access to the electoral system regardless of a voter's country of origin or place of residence in the United States.

Commissioners, I would like to present to you today the blue lines of the EAC's Glossary of Key Election Terminology for adoption. "Blue lines" are a printing industry term for a preproduction copy of the final document. As you see from this draft, the glossary has been designed to allow readers to flip the glossary around to go from one language to the other. The document is bound by a spiral ring to ensure the durability of the document; this binding does not erode over time as a glue binding does. The covers and inside pages also fold back flat to make it more compact and easier to use. A brief guide has

also been provided on the third page of the English to Spanish section to assist non-Spanish speakers with the pronunciation of some of the more difficult letters to pronounce in Spanish.

New terms were identified by several methods. First, all of the terms that appear in the EAC's 2005 Voluntary Voting System Guidelines were automatically included in the glossary. Following, Los Angeles County (CA) provided the EAC a copy of the glossaries it had developed for translations into Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Tagalog. EAC staff reviewed these glossaries and adopted as many words as were applicable to the goal of the EAC glossary. To further identify terms for inclusion in the EAC glossary, the EAC tasked the translation contractor to perform a review of each States' voter information and education materials made available on their websites for key election words and phrases. The materials reviewed included, but was not limited to, voter guides/pamphlets; registration forms; voting systems and their components; Election Day forms and materials; sample ballots; and State/local election glossaries. As terms and phrases were considered for inclusion in the glossary, they were reviewed for their degree of usage, specificity to elections, and similarity to other phrases. The Glossary now includes approximately 1,843 terms that have been translated, and a Spanish-to-English section to further expand the utility of the glossary.

To ensure the translations were culturally and linguistically appropriate, terms were translated and reviewed by a multi-dialect team of translators representing four of the main regions of origin of the Hispanic population living in the United States – Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Central America. Translations were carefully reviewed by the translation team and EAC staff to make sure they were appropriate in the context of elections. At times, more than one translation was considered to be appropriate and widely accepted. In such cases, all of the possible translations were included in the glossary and are left to the user to decide which translation suits his or her needs and target population. However, the translation most commonly accepted and appropriate in the context of elections is listed first.

For each entry, the part of speech appears in italics immediately after the English term, and gender is indicated in italics at the end of the Spanish translation for each noun Adjectives are listed in their masculine form, except when part of a phrase that requires the singular or feminine forms. Relationships between the terms were established during the translation process and cross-references were included in the glossary for a substantial number of the terms to assist the user in identifying similar terms and phrases. Furthermore, there were glossary entries which were identified as requiring an example of the term or phrase used in context, and these appear at the end of the translation. In addition, the terms incorporated from the EAC's 2005 VVSG, appear along with their definition to further assist users of the glossary understand the context in which they were translated.

Once the glossary is adopted by the Commission, EAC staff will proceed with printing and distribution of the glossary through several means. The EAC will print 4,000 copies of the glossary and make it available online on the EAC website as a PDF file. A copy of

the Glossary and notice of its availability would be mailed out to all Congressional members; the States' chief election officials, election directors, and HAVA coordinators; members of the EAC language working groups; EAC's Standards and Advisory Boards; EAC college poll worker grant recipients; the U.S. Department of Justice; all Section 203 and Section 4 covered jurisdictions that have Spanish as the required language; U.S. Postal Service; election organizations such as: NASS, NASED, IACREOT, The Election Center, NCSL, and NACO; and election advocacy and registration groups. In addition to these recipients, EAC staff would work with the Federal Interagency Working Group on Limited English Proficiency, which includes members representing more than 35 federal agencies, to make the glossary available on their websites and to each of these agencies. A similar collaborative effort would be established with Webcontent.gov, which is managed by the Web Managers Advisory Council, an inter-agency group of about 40 web managers from every cabinet-level agency and many independent agencies. They have developed an online guide that contains information on grammar and style issues as well as glossaries to standardize the use of Spanish across government. In addition, EAC staff is also exploring the feasibility of having an online, interactive version of the glossary where users may type in a word and the accompanying translation would come up; users would have the ability to type the word in either language.

This document is a living document; it does not contain the entire world of elections, but it is start. The field of elections is dynamic by nature and as time passes it becomes more technical, necessitating common terminology across jurisdictions to ensure access to the election process. As such, future iterations of the glossary will be necessary. In the meantime, updates to the glossary may be accommodated through the interactive, online component mentioned before or through notices on the EAC website. Once the glossary has been released to the public, we would like to encourage users of the glossary to provide their feedback, comments, or suggestions on ways to improve the glossary and maintain it current and reflective of the Spanish-speaking voting population. In addition, this glossary will serve as a model for developing similar efforts in the other languages covered under the Voting Rights Act (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Tagalog).

As someone who was in charge of ensuring Section 203 compliance in a local jurisdiction, I cannot emphasize enough how useful and practical I feel these glossaries will be. Election resources can be difficult to locate and obtain, either by the formats they are created in or by a lack of time to devote to finding them. The utility of these glossaries is not limited to one group. The glossaries will serve state and local election officials, voters, election interest groups, academics, and media in the development of accurate election information in these languages. Effective communication is a critical component of many technical fields, and the field of elections is no exception.

Up next in the EAC's Language Accessibility Program, is the development of working groups to address the election needs of American Indians and Alaskan Natives. The EAC envisions these groups to be integral participants in the development of guidelines and resources for non-written languages. This work will be done in collaboration with the EAC's Election Management Guidelines Program. Through this partnership, the Election

Management Guidelines will dedicate a chapter in their guidelines and a Quick Start Management Guide to these topics.

Another upcoming task is the translation of the National Mail-In Voter Registration Form into the five Asian languages covered by the VRA; work was begun last year on this task, but revisions to the English form have been made that require further translation and review. The EAC expects that it will continue to work closely with members of the Asian languages working group to ensure the form is accurately and properly translated. These forms will be made available electronically on the EAC's website, which brings me to our last task. In the next several months, the EAC will offer its website in Spanish. A significant portion of the static content of the website has already been translated; however, changes are being done to the English text and these will need to be reflected in the Spanish translation as well. Two key documents that will be available in Spanish are the text of HAVA and the HAVA Funding FAQs. The text of HAVA was kindly provided by the Puerto Rico's State Election Commission and the Office of Legislative Services of the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico.

I sincerely thank you for your time and dedication to providing resources to State and local election officials to promote the effective administration of elections. I will gladly answer any questions you may have regarding the glossary or the LAP projects we have planned. Thank you.