



June 3, 2013

Oppose H.R. 1994, “The Election Assistance Commission Termination Act”

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Chairman Candace S. Miller
Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Robert Brady
Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Brady,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, and its Voting Rights task force, we urge you to oppose H.R. 1994, a bill designed to eliminate the Election Assistance Commission (“EAC” or “Commission”). As organizations that are committed to supporting and expanding the civil and voting rights of all Americans, we have devoted substantial resources to the passage of both the National Voter Registration Act and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). Terminating the EAC risks reducing the voting and civil rights of our citizens—rights for which many have given their lives.

In this climate of increased voter suppression efforts in the states, it is particularly alarming that this Congress would consider eliminating a vital institution whose primary purpose is to further the goals of HAVA, one of our nation’s major federal voting laws, and to protect the rights of those who are most frequently disenfranchised and least able to advocate for their right to vote. Further, as demonstrated by the experiences of those voters in the 2012 elections who endured long lines and were turned away at the polls due in part to inaccurate registration rolls, our current system of elections is highly inefficient. The need for the EAC could not be more critical and rather than undermining those institutions with primary voting rights enforcement responsibilities, Congress should focus its efforts on improving access to the franchise.

The EAC does valuable work to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of our nation’s election systems. The Commission plays a major role in collecting accurate and comparable election data. With our nation’s complex and diversified election administration system, central data collection is essential if we are going to improve our citizens’ trust and confidence in election results. In addition, the Commission develops and fosters the training and organization of our nation’s more than 8,000 election administrators. Through its many working committees and the work it does to foster robust dialogue among advocates,

manufacturers, and administrators, the Commission is improving the administration of elections. The EAC's award-winning web page has become the "go to" site for election administrators, advocates, and academics.

The Commission is charged with developing standards for voting systems, and this precedent setting work has been recognized by nations around the world. Several countries have been so impressed with our system that they have signed agreements with the EAC for technical assistance as they develop their own voting system standards and certification procedures. The EAC's certification program uses its oversight role to coordinate with manufacturers and local election officials to ensure that existing voting equipment meets durability and longevity standards. This saves state and local governments from the unnecessary expense of new voting equipment.

The EAC has also played a central role in improving the accessibility of voting for the country's more than 37 million voters with disabilities. We still have a long way to go to achieve HAVA's mandate to make voting accessible. The EAC's leadership is essential to continuing the effort to offer all Americans the right to vote "privately and independently."

As we look to the future and work to improve our system of elections, the EAC must continue to do its important work. Rather than eliminating the agency, we believe Congress should strengthen the Commission by broadening its data collection responsibilities and by giving it regulatory authority to ensure that persons with disabilities have full access to the polls.

We urge you to oppose H.R. 1994, Thank you for your consideration of our position. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Leadership Conference Senior Counsel Lisa Bornstein, at (202) 263-2856 or Bornstein@civilrights.org.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson
President & CEO



Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President