Testimony of Alisha L. Alexander
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Good Morning, my name is Alisha Alexander and I am the Elections Administrator for Prince George's County, MD. I want to thank the Committee for the opportunity to discuss some of the challenges that election officials face and some of the lessons that we've learned after the 2008 Presidential Primary Election and in previous elections.

First and foremost, I'd like to say that Boards of Elections across the country have been transformed from agencies whose tasks were largely clerical to one that is technologically advanced. Elections are no longer just biennial events, but have evolved into complex and interdependent systems that must be managed on a continuing basis.

In order to administer efficient elections in the 21st century, the board must attract and retain individuals who possess high levels of technical and administrative skills for both in-house staff and the Election Judges (volunteers who manage the polling places).

We as election officials have seen more change in elections during the past eight years than we have in the 30 years prior to the 2000 Presidential election. However, staff and resources have not changed. It is sad that something as important as elections is grossly underfunded and understaffed. But yet, we as election officials are expected to conduct flawless elections.

Having said that, I want to bring the following challenges to your attention:

Election Judges/Pollworkers
Every election we have a very difficult time recruiting technologically savvy election judges. One of the reasons is that in Maryland, recruitment efforts are geared to the general public and there is no formal testing or screening process to determine competency levels.   However, the overwhelming majority who serve as Election Judges are committed to ensuring fair and ethical elections. Legislators cannot continue to add layers of paperwork and technology and expect the volunteers who work at the polling places who receive four hours of training to understand it all. They work 17-18 hour days and many of them don't do it for the money, they volunteer to work because they are committed to making this great democracy work.

However, there are some pollworkers who do make mistakes and when they do, we as election officials want to know about it. That is one of the reasons why we welcome trained observers who truly understand federal, state and county

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processes. We also welcome feedback from the voters. If the voter encounters a problem, we want to be able to rectify it on Election-Day. Our goal is to ensure that voters are not disenfranchised. We want to keep the process as transparent as possible.

Implementing Technology
Elections officials are not opposed to implementing technology. However, we are opposed to implementing it too quickly. Doing so does not allow election officials adequate time to polish, deliver and refine the technological implementation. It also reduces the time that election officials have to educate pollworkers which could possibly lead to massive confusion for pollworkers and voters on Election Day. This was demonstrated in Maryland's 2006 Gubernatorial Primary Election where the local jurisdictions were required to implement electronic pollbooks within an approximate six month time span. It was very difficult to mitigate any glitches, train the Election Judges and educate the voters because of the short implementation time. As a result, there were statewide problems during the 2006 election. However, it's amazing that the pollworkers did as well as they did considering the amount of technological modifications.

There has not been consistency in elections administration. Every election since 2000, the local Boards of Elections in Maryland have either required to add new technology or new processes.
Any time technology is instituted, election officials must develop new business processes. When new business processes are developed, they must be tested prior to the election so that they can be refined. If election officials are not given adequate time to test, testing is conducted on Election Day. We've seen in many instances all over the Country, where the results were less than desirable.

Voter Education
We'd be interested in soliciting various radio and television venues such as Tom Joyner and others to assist us with recruiting pollworkers and with voter outreach and education efforts. We in Prince George's County, MD realized especially after the 2008 Presidential Primary election that we need to more in the area of educating voters. We as election officials have to come up with a strategy to get voters to think about elections (i.e. their voter registration status and polling place location) prior to Election – Day. Many voters went to the polls and didn't know their party affiliation nor were they aware of the closed primary laws in the state of Maryland. That forced the local Boards of Elections to issue unprecedented amounts of provisional ballots. This is one issue that was experienced nationally.

Conclusion
In conclusion, election officials are professionals who are deeply committed to conducting fair and accurate elections. We want voters to walk into a polling

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place and have a good voting experience and feel confident about the integrity of the process. Based on our experience in the 2008 Presidential Primary Election, we realize that there must be stabilization and consistency in the elections process. We cannot continue to change technology and processes every election cycle and expect positive results. We've learned that we need time, monetary and human resources to perfect the current systems.