

Opening Statement of  
Chairman Robert A. Brady of Pennsylvania  
Committee on House Administration

Hearing on the “2008 Presidential Primaries and  
Caucuses: What we’ve learned so far.”

Wednesday, April 9, 2008

The hearing will come to order. Good morning Members of the Committee, witnesses, and guests. Today’s hearing will focus on problems voters have had at the polls.

The presidential election of 2000 brought to light many troubles with our election process. The country and the world watched as Florida recounted its votes. More than 30 days later the Supreme Court decided the outcome of the Presidential race. The problems with that election led to the passage of the Help America Vote Act, crafted by this committee.

Today we sit just 30 weeks away from the next presidential election – an election which, based upon the turnout we have seen in the primaries to date, will test our system of election administration more than any election in this country’s history. Despite all the problems we learned about from recent elections, we are still hearing about long lines, machine failures, not enough ballots, and other problems at the polls. I am greatly concerned to learn about these repeated challenges. I hope this hearing will send a message to the states that America is coming to the polls in November and we need to be ready!

The other message that I hope this hearing offers is that election officials need enough trained poll workers to help them run elections. Most elections officials are dedicated public servants, or volunteers, who work long hours for very little or no pay. We are not here to blame these volunteers but to ask you how we can help voters who have had experienced problems at the polls. I hope that highlighting the important role poll workers play in helping people vote, other citizens will be inspired to volunteer.

Since 2004, the MYVOTE1 hotline has worked with media outlets such as NBC News and the Tom Joyner Morning Show to collect, archive, and analyze the audio recordings of real voters in real election settings confronting real problems. Tom Joyner’s leadership, as a national media partner, presents a model for other media outlets to educate and engage voters.

The NAACP National Voter Fund, The Reform Institute, and the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation have worked tirelessly with other civil rights and voting advocates in the area of election administration and reform. We recognize the list of

concerned citizens and advocates devoting incredible time and resources to improve the election process is growing each day and are glad to have a few of these groups represented here this morning.

The hotline run by today's witness, Mr. Joyner, allows his extensive listener base to share their polling place experiences. Mr. Joyner has been a strong advocate for voter enfranchisement on a national level. I applaud his work and share his goals.

The MYVOTE1 hotline has received over 40,000 calls in 2008. I would like to play for the Committee a tape provided by Mr. Joyner to give an idea of the problems his listeners have experienced. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses regarding these problems and proposed solutions to help ensure that the 2008 general election runs smoothly. America is the greatest democracy in the world, and our elections should reflect that fact.