

EAC Public Meeting- Washington, DC
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Status update on the National Academy of Sciences' Study on Statewide Voter
Registration Databases – Interim Report

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Testimony

Commissioners, Mr. Wilkey and General Counsel Hodgkins, I come before the Commission today to introduce Olene Walker, co-chair of the National Academies' State Voter Registration Databases Study working group, and Dr. Herbert Lin, Chief Scientist with the National Academies' Computer Science and Telecommunications Board. Together, they will describe their findings at the midpoint of this three-year inquiry related to the ongoing implementation of statewide voter registration databases. For its contract with the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, the National Academy of Sciences has been charged with organizing a series of workshops involving state election officials and information technology experts, and for using the information from these workshops to prepare an interim and final report.

The interim report is to highlight a series of immediate actions that states can take to improve the operation for their statewide databases for the 2008 election. The final report, that is to be issued approximately eighteen months from now, will detail ways to achieve interstate interoperability among state voter registration databases, along with advice on how to obtain systems that are accurate and secure.

Section 303 of HAVA required all states to implement a single, uniform, official, centralized, interactive and computerized statewide voter registration list as of January 1, 2006. In July 2005, EAC issued guidance designed to assist states with their implementation of statewide voter registration databases. As a follow-on to this guidance and, in accordance with Section 241 (b)3() of HAVA, EAC through its contract with the National Academy of Sciences, is continuing its study of voter registration methods, of how secure and accurate lists of registered voters are being maintained, and how states are ensuring that registered voters appear on the voter registration list at the appropriate polling site.

I am pleased to be able to present this interim report to the Commission. It contains several recommendations, many of which can be completed before the November election, related to educating the public about voter registration processes and procedures, along with suggested auditing procedures and matching protocol processes election officials can implement over the next several months. The report also provides some detail on longer-term actions election officials can take to improve the operation of their voter registration databases.

The work that the National Academies has accomplished, thus far, has been thoughtful and is useful for elections officials. I believe the research they have conducted and, the findings from the workshops they have held, have helped create a report with a number of very useful and practical ideas.

In the coming months the National Academies will convene several additional regional workshop meetings in which they will continue to gather information from local election officials, advocates, academics and policy makers, regarding the implementation of statewide voter registration databases. I look forward to learning more about what is gleaned from these conversations, to reviewing these findings and final National Academy of Sciences report, scheduled to be completed in late 2009.

Thank you.