

April 7, 2014

The Hon. Charles Schumer, Chairman
The Hon. Pat Roberts, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Rules and Administration
305 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Restore the Election Assistance Commission to its Full Strength

Dear Senate Rules and Administration Committee:

Sadly, the nation that most dearly embraces the principle of free and fair elections has let our election administration and technology languish, resulting in long lines at the voting booth, broken and outdated voting machines, and sometimes uncertainty in election outcomes. This is a travesty of everything American democracy represents.

Our organizations call upon congressional leaders to recommend names for the President to nominate four commissioners to take charge of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission – two Democrats (who have already been nominated) and two Republicans – and for the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration to move ahead with the confirmation process as these nominees are presented to the Senate.

Our organizations include: American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC); Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAAJ); Campaign Legal Center; Carlin Meyer, Prof. & Director, Diane Abbey Law Center for Children and Families, New York Law School; Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW); Common Cause; Communications Workers of America (CWA); Democracy 21; Demos; FairVote; Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF); NAACP; National Disability Rights Network; Prison Policy Initiative; Project Vote; and Public Citizen.

The Election Assistance Commission (EAC) was created by Congress under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 to help prevent meltdowns of our electoral process like the embarrassing episode experienced in the 2000 presidential election. The EAC is an independent, bipartisan federal commission charged with making our elections run smoothly. It is responsible for a number of important activities, including:

- Studying and creating guidelines for election administration.
- Testing and certifying voting equipment.
- Administering grants to the states to modernize election administration and technology.

- Serving as a clearinghouse among election officials of “best practices” in managing elections.

This important work is now being gravely undermined by the inability of congressional leaders in the House and Senate to agree on a full slate of nominees to the Commission and the reluctance of the Senate Rules and Administration Committee to move forward with the confirmation process. Two very capable Democratic nominees – Thomas Hicks and Myrna Perez – widely praised by Republicans and Democrats alike, have been awaiting confirmation since March 2010 and March 2011, respectively. Congressional Republican leaders must also nominate two equally capable nominees. And the Senate needs to move forward expeditiously with the confirmation process.

Former Congresswoman Mary Bono (R-CA) echoed the frustration of many Americans with our antiquated electoral system following the 2013 special elections when she said: “There should be no reason there should be long lines, ever. Why (can’t we) orchestrate and engineer a solution that you get to the polls, and there’s 15 minutes, guaranteed in and out, and you vote?”

We can end the long lines at the polls. We can develop modern voting machines that work. And we can learn from state and local election experiences how to make elections and voting an efficient part of our democracy. To do so, we need an Election Assistance Commission that is fully staffed and operational.

Our organizations call on congressional leaders, the Senate Rules and Administration Committee and the Senate to take all necessary steps to restore the Election Assistance Commission to its full strength.

Respectfully Submitted,

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAAJ)

Campaign Legal Center

Carlin Meyer, Prof. & Director, Diane Abbey Law Center for Children and Families,

New York Law School

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)

Common Cause

Communications Workers of America (CWA)

Democracy 21

Demos

FairVote

Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF)

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