

# NATIONAL TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

## Governance & Administration Recommendations

### 1. Issue: Standard Election Certification Schedule

- A. That every state review and modify its election laws to guarantee the orderly conduct of certification duties after each election. These duties include canvassing and certifying official election results. They may also include retabulations and recounts.
- B. That since each state must certify its presidential electors by a specific date, each state must provide sufficient time between election day and that statutory date to execute all duties in an orderly manner.
- C. That when a state provides for either judicial or administrative recounts, it must provide sufficient time to reasonably complete the recount, whether by hand or by machine.
- D. That each state amend any election laws requiring adjustment to meet these criteria.

### 2. Issue: Standardize Recount Components

- A. That each state have a recount process.
- B. That all states enact, or at least do not preclude, an administrative recount process as an addition to or replacement for a judicial recount.
- C. That each state enact laws specifying the vote margin that will trigger an automatic recount.

- D. That recounts for federal offices, statewide offices and other offices, as determined by each state, shall be conducted by the local election official with oversight by the state's chief election official.
- E. That hand recounts should be used to verify the accuracy of voting machine counts or to count votes unable to be counted by machines.
- F. That prior to a machine recount, each paper or punch card ballot be reviewed to insure that valid votes can be accurately read by the tabulating equipment. Such ballots, whether as a result of damage or voter error, shall either be hand counted or be duplicated (with adequate audit trail for original ballot) so that they may be processed by the tabulating equipment.
- G. That each state develop and publish a contingency plan that documents the requirement for conducting a recount for any office within the time frames and under the standards prescribed by law.

### **3. Issue: Bipartisan/Nonpartisan Canvassing Boards**

That each state examine the make up of canvassing boards and give consideration to restructuring them into bipartisan or nonpartisan bodies. These boards may take any number of forms and replace existing partisan canvassing boards, partisan recount boards or partisan officials.

### **4. Issue: Military and Overseas Ballots**

- A. That the Congress amend current law to require the states to provide absentee ballots for delivery no later than 30 days before an election. A statutory remedy should include the extension of ballot acceptance and counting for the requisite number of days necessary to provide overseas voters with 30 days transit time.
- B. That the Congress amend the law to allow military and overseas voters to vote by the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot regardless of whether the voters make application for an absentee ballot at least 30 days before an election.

- C. That the Congress amend the law to require the Department of Defense to use all available military and government mail delivery from overseas to the continental United States for the purpose of moving election mail back and forth for overseas and military voters.
- D. That each state enact laws or adopt procedures such as accepting facsimile applications and sending ballots by facsimile to voters to ensure that the 30-day deadline is complied with.
- E. That each state assess its election process to determine whether late primaries and/or runoff elections are detrimental to overseas voters in the following general election and whether administration of the general election and the post election certification functions are adversely affected by their current schedule.
- F. That each state enact laws dropping the 30-day close of registration for overseas and military voters. The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) should serve both as a voter registration application and an application for an absentee ballot.

**5. Issue: Valid Ballot Markings/Voter Intent**

- A. That each state establish uniform standards or rules for determining valid ballot markings and voter intent for each voting system in use in the state.
- B. That state law specifically state what a valid vote is for each voting system certified for tabulating ballots in the state.
- C. That all ballot instructions contain clear and concise instructions to the voter on how to cast a valid vote on the particular ballot and instructions regarding voter errors and mistakes.
- D. That ballot marking instructions be uniform within each state for each type of ballot.
- E. That standards for a valid vote, to the extent possible, be uniform across voting systems.
- F. That state law provide consistent standards for the discernment of voter

intent.

## **6. Issue: Ballot Preparation**

- A. That each state enact laws specifying the layout of all election ballots and the order of offices on those ballots.
- B. That the states determine ballot layout standards that minimize voter confusion.
- C. That states require uniform ballot instructions appropriate to each voting system used in each jurisdiction in the state

## **7. Issue: What Role for the Federal Government**

- A. That a supplemental appropriation be made to the Federal Election Commission's Office of Elections Administration (OEA) in the current fiscal year for the purposes of accelerating the update of the technical Federal Voting Systems Standards, and the development of operational standards and procedures.
- B. That the OEA (or a successor agency) be adequately funded and staffed on an ongoing basis consistent with its mission to provide support to elections administrators through the development and maintenance of technical and operational standards, studies, reports, statistical data collection and dissemination, technical assistance and the solicitation and collection of best practices from around the nation.
- C. That the OEA (or a successor agency) be specifically acknowledged in federal law along with the position of director of the OEA and the Advisory Panel of State and Local Election Officials.
- D. That the Federal Voter Assistance Program (FVAP) (or a successor agency) should be adequately funded and staffed to provide support and assistance to both voters and local elections officials in assuring the voting rights of military and overseas Americans are protected and exercised in a timely and complete manner. A formalized process for

input of local elections officials should be developed similar to the current process used with the OEA.

- E. That the issues of Campaign Finance Reform and Elections Administration Reform be considered separately in Congressional legislation.
- F. That any federal funds that may be appropriated for the election system be appropriated to the states with provisions for equitable treatment of all states. Such funds should be available on a matching basis of not more than 25% local match, with provisions for no match grants in areas of economic hardship.
- G. That any program that provides federal funds should recognize that funds can be used for purposes of improving the elections system for the benefit of America's voters including, but not limited to management and administrative improvements, training, operational improvements, voter registration improvements and equipment purchases and upgrades.
- H. That the Congress review the law governing the election of Presidential Electors. Specifically, it should be determined whether more time could be given to the states for certification of the Presidential Electors.
- I. That the transmittal method for certification of Presidential electors be updated to include overnight delivery service.

## **8. Issue: Poll Workers: Recruitment, Training and Certification**

- A. That state laws encourage and/or require state and local governments and private employers to permit employees to serve as poll workers in a paid status.
- B. That funding sources be developed from state and federal governments to increase pay and the quality of training and develop poll worker recognition programs for retention of quality and experienced workers.

**9. Issue: Extended Voting Period**

- A. That early voting and “No Excuse” absentee voting should be seriously considered by states.
- B. That 24 or 48 hour voting periods **not** be enacted.
- C. That Congress should study the costs and benefits of a national holiday for Presidential elections.

**10. Issue: Uniform Poll Closing and Exit Polls**

- A. That the news media refrain from projecting Presidential election night results until 11:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.
- B. That no legislation be enacted forcing uniform poll hours throughout the nation.

## **Voting Systems Recommendations**

**11. Issue: Statutory Authority & Funding for Voting System Standards**

That the Congress establish statutory authority, and sustained funding, for the maintenance of Federal Voting System Standards including both technical standards and operational guidelines.

**12. Issue: Relationship of Levels of Government to Voting System Standards**

That the Federal Voting System Standards and operational guidelines be developed and maintained by a federally funded intergovernmental authority principally comprised of state and local election officials.

**13. Issue: Voting Systems Performance Clearinghouse**

That the Congress enact statutes to provide for the voting systems standards authority to institute a clearinghouse, all housed within the Office of Election Administration, for monitoring the performance of voting systems in conformity with the Federal standards.

**14. Issue: State Compliance With Federal Standards**

That each state adopt the Federal Voting System Standards and operational guidelines consistent with the federal standards and guidelines.

**15. Issue: Valid Vote**

That federal standards include technical guidelines for each voting system as to what constitutes a valid vote.

**16. Issue: Recounts**

That federal standards include technical guidelines for each voting system as to how a recount of votes should be conducted with each system.

**17. Issue: Federal Funding**

A. That Congress provide immediate and ongoing funding for updating the Federal Voting System Standards and the development of federal voting system operational guidelines.

B. That federal funding be provided for state and local election officials to:

- Develop state level capabilities for implementing and monitoring appropriate uniform standards and guidelines.
- Provide continuing education for election officials.
- Develop and implement recruitment and training programs for poll workers.
- Develop and implement voter education materials and programs.
- Upgrade voting systems.

- Upgrade voter registration systems.

**18. Issue: Uniform National Voting**

That no uniform national voting system be established. We support the Federal Voting Systems Standards but do not recommend one national voting system.

**19. Issue: Receipt Showing Vote**

Against using any voting system that provides any voter a receipt to take from the polling site showing how they personally voted since such a receipt could be used for vote manipulation.

## **Voter Registration Recommendations**

**20. Issue: Required Acknowledgment Of Registration Application**

That at agencies designated by the National Voter Registration Act each applicant be given an acknowledgment of application with instructions for action if no official notice of registration is received from the elections/registration office.

**21. Issue: U. S. Citizenship/Residency Requirement**

That to vote, the requirement to be a United States citizen That to vote, the requirement to be a United States must be emphasized. The question, "Are you a United States Citizen?," and its response should be required on the voter registration application, preferably as the first question.

**22. Issue: Duplicate Registrations / Sharing Registration Data**

That states adopt procedures to identify duplicate voter registrations at an

administrative level through increased multi-jurisdictional communication within the state.

**23. Issue: Voting Rights For Former Convicted Felons**

- A. That state laws be changed to allow restoration of voting rights upon pardon or full completion of a sentence (incarceration, probation, parole, restitution, etc.)
- B. That the judicial and penal system should give written notice to the person when his or her voting eligibility is restored.

**24. Issue: Provisional Ballots**

That in the absence of Election Day registration or other solutions to address registration questions, provisional ballots be adopted by all jurisdictions.

**25. Issue: Enforcement of Registration/Voting Law Violations**

- A. That states adopt stricter penalties for voting law violations. Election and registration violations should be major felonies. Persons convicted of felony voting law violations should be treated as any other felon.
- B. That voting law violations be reported to the state election officials to provide accountability within the system and to ensure equal application of the law.

**26. Issue: Central Voter File Or Registry**

That all states have a statewide central voter file or registry.

**27. Issue: Postal Service Rates**

That special rates for election materials from the United States Postal Service be established at half the cost of First Class Mail. (See Resolution in

Appendix C.)

**28. Issue: Voter Registration Forms**

- A. That election officials be responsible for assuring that all state-mandated and optional agencies and locations have sufficient voter registration applications at all times and provide other information as much as possible.
- B. That registration application forms be easy to read and complete.
- C. That reasonable accommodation be made to accept registration applications that contain the required information and affirmations, regardless of the size or weight of the paper or stock.
- D. That the ability to actually register to vote on line should not be attempted until complicated security and identification measures are addressed.

**29. Issue: Education and Marketing**

- A. That election officials remove barriers, provide maximum opportunity to register and to vote, provide information, and persuade the funding bodies to provide those resources.
- B. That voter registration information be presented creatively to meet the needs of different demographics, using partnerships with corporations, agencies, and civic groups to disseminate voter registration information.
- C. That registration deadlines and polling site locations be emphasized in all voter registration communications.

**30. Issue: Poll Worker Education and Training**

- A. That education and training for poll worker include awareness of election/voter registration, laws and regulations

- B. That poll worker training include particular sensitivity to race, ethnicity, seniors, and persons with disabilities.
- C. That provisional voting process and qualifications be emphasized in poll worker training.

**31. Issue: Internet Registration Education**

- A. That websites containing voter registration information explain and emphasize state requirements about information requested, guidelines, deadlines, and restrictions; and non-government websites provide a link/address to state and local official election websites where appropriate information and forms are already available.
- B. That all voter registration services provide for verification and authentication of the registration information provided by the citizen.
- C. That election officials provide registration forms on the internet that permit the citizen to print the form, complete it, and return it to election officials.

**The following recommendations were adopted by the National Task Force as a whole but did not originate in a subcommittee.**

**32. Issue: Office of Election Administration**

- A. The Office of Election Administration (OEA), whether within the Federal Election Commission or some successor agency, should be adequately funded and staffed.
- B. That the duties of the OEA be specified in federal law and the duties should include best practices from around the nation; providing technical support to elections administrators through the development and maintenance of technical and operational voting systems standards; national voting studies; reports, and statistical data collection and dissemination including.

- C. That a supplemental appropriation be approved for the OEA in the current fiscal year for the purposes of accelerating the update of the Federal Voting Systems Standards.
- D. That the position of Director of the OEA be established in federal law along with the Advisory Panel of State and Local Election Officials.

**33. Issue: Federal Voting Assistance Program.**

- A. That the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), or a successor agency, should be adequately funded and staffed to provide support to both voters and local election officials to ensure the voting rights of the nation's military and overseas voters.
- B. That FVAP formalize a process for input of local election officials through federal law establishing an Advisory Panel of State and Local Election Officials.

**34. Issue: Separation of Campaign Finance and Election Reform Issues**

That election reform should not be a partisan issue and should be considered separately from the often bitter and contentious issues surrounding campaign finance reform.