



February 6, 2017

The Honorable Gregg Harper
2227 Rayburn HOB
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Brady
2004 Rayburn HOB
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Via Email Only

Honorable Chairman Gregg Harper and Honorable Ranking Member Robert Brady,

As the Director of the Elections Program at Democracy Fund Voice, I write in support of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC). I urge you to oppose House Resolution 634 -- Election Assistance Commission Termination Act.

Democracy Fund Voice is a bipartisan organization dedicated to building a stronger, healthier democracy. Democracy Fund Voice believes the American people deserve modern elections as part of a responsive political system in which the public comes first. We advocate for solutions and institutions that work to improve and support election administrators and processes. Building confidence in our election system remains an essential and much needed feature of our democracy. The EAC works tirelessly to ensure that states have the tools and support necessary to ensure the public's trust and confidence in our election system.

H. Res. 634 will put an end to the indispensable work of the EAC. The EAC acts as a liaison between the states and the federal government, provides federal agencies, states, and the public with national election data and trends, and serves a vital role in setting voting equipment standards.

Liaison within Federal Government. Because of its bipartisan make-up, the EAC is uniquely positioned to provide meaningful assistance to states, the public, the media, and other stakeholders. The Commissioners and their staff have the practical experience necessary to understand and think critically about solutions. The EAC is also uniquely positioned to alleviate concerns about the key problems states and localities face in election administration.

The EAC fundamentally recognizes that States and localities are responsible for administering elections. It has worked to express that view in its recent efforts to communicate with the Department of Homeland Security to fully and transparently define "critical infrastructure" for U.S. elections, a decision announced by outgoing DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson. The EAC is working with the National Association of Secretaries of State and many individual Secretaries who have supported the EAC's effort to find answers during this critical period of public uncertainty about our elections. EAC Commissioner Christy McCormick has shown leadership, questioning the actions and circumstances surrounding this decision:

“Serious questions still remain on the actual benefits of this designation, and the role of the other Federal agencies [...] such as the Department of Justice, the Commerce Department and the General Services Agency.” Statement by Commission Christy McCormick, January 7, 2017.

Throughout the 2016 election cycle, the EAC asserted its value by providing expert information and analysis, including and not limited to testimony before the Information Technology Subcommittee of the House of Representatives' Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. The fact that they are relied on by other House Committees for reliable information should answer any question as to their expertise.

Some Secretaries of State have expressed renewed support for the EAC's new leadership. In a USA Today article published in March 2016, Louisiana Secretary Tom Schedler opined that the EAC agency is doing good work and that he “like[s] what he sees now.” Critically, election officials acknowledge a growing need for sharing best practices, data, and information. The EAC provides this service as no other organization does.

Sharing National Data and Trends. Data provides us all with meaningful insights into each election cycle. Election officials are just some of the people that depend on the organized collection and management of election data. Presently, the EAC conducts the most comprehensive survey of election administration and provides the most complete report on election administration for all 55 states and territories. The Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) collects key data from election jurisdictions and makes the data publicly available.

The EAVS also includes valuable data about election administration for our Armed Services voters. The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) is the Department of Defense's component tasked with assisting military and overseas voters. Starting in 2014, FVAP partnered with the EAC to consolidate FVAP's Post-Election Voting Survey of Local Election Officials into the EAVS. As a result, the EAVS was far more comprehensive and elicited more complete responses from the 10,000 jurisdictions that answer the survey.

The decision to combine FVAP's survey into the EAVS received high praise from everyone involved -- respondents and surveyors alike. FVAP's ability to tailor its programs to assist our Armed Service members and their eligible family members is completely dependent on its ability to access reliable and complete data. The EAC leadership makes it unmistakably clear that the effort to better understand absentee balloting for our military and overseas voters would not have been as robust but for the decision to combine the surveys. Ending this process would be damaging to progress made thus far, given recent insights into absentee balloting and how these voters are navigating the process.

Voting Equipment and Standards. As a result of the challenges identified in the 2000 presidential election, the EAC's creation was prompted in large part by the need to provide support and research on voting equipment. In this regard, the EAC is an ally for the election official community and the voters that community supports. The EAC has dedicated a significant amount of time to modernize and quickly improve the federal testing and certification program. It has also undertaken the process of reviewing and certifying new voting equipment -- a voluntary certification that is used by almost all the states.

The EAC continues to address the ever-changing and critical assessment of voting equipment, take on the equally important roles of election analysis, and working with election officials to bolster trust in our election system. To this end, the EAC provides an indispensable service to Congress, election officials, and the public.

As an organization, we are dedicated to provide ongoing and vital support for a strong, modern election system. State and local election officials work tirelessly to innovate and improve our voting process. The very best of these election officials work with and share information with the EAC. Eliminating the Commission provides no meaningful financial benefit for the federal government, and removes an invaluable resource from election officials, voters, and the public.

For these reasons, we urge you to support the ongoing existence of this small but effective group of public servants.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Ambrogi', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Adam Ambrogi
Program Director, Elections
Democracy Fund Voice