

# **MAKE ELECTION REFORM A REALITY**

## ***FULLY FUND THE “HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT”***

November 18, 2004

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to support full funding for the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) in the FY05 appropriations omnibus. HAVA, which passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, includes a laundry list of reforms that states must implement for federal elections. As evidenced by the recent election, state and local governments have been working on reforms such as improving disability access to polling places, updating voting equipment, implementing new provisional balloting procedures, developing and implementing a new statewide voter registration system, training poll workers and educating voters on new procedures and new equipment.

To help state and local governments pay for these reforms, HAVA authorizes \$3.9 billion over three fiscal years, including over \$600 million for FY05. To date, Congress has generously appropriated \$3 billion between FY03 and FY04. However, the FY 05 appropriations bills under consideration contain no funding for the states.

The states have moved forward on implementing the mandates required under HAVA based on a **federal commitment that HAVA would not be an unfunded mandate** and have proceeded with state planning activities to meet the looming HAVA deadlines in good faith. State officials have incorporated the federal amounts Congress promised when developing their budgets. Without the full federal funding, state and local governments will encounter serious fiscal shortfalls and will not be able to afford to complete implementation of important HAVA mandates. According to a recent state survey, lack of federal funding for HAVA implementation will result in many states scaling back their voter and poll worker education initiatives and on voting equipment purchase plans, both of which are vital components to making every vote count in America.

One of the “lessons learned” in the 2004 and 2000 elections is that spending money on voting equipment without having the resources to teach the voters how to use the equipment or the poll workers how to set it up, take it down and troubleshoot during the day, is often more costly. The HAVA mandates on voting systems and statewide database requirements are clear and unequivocal - states must spend the federal funds they have received on those capital expenditures or face the Department of Justice.

We are thankful that you have seen the importance of funding the work of the Election Assistance Commission in FY05. The states are anxious for the voting system standards, the statewide database guidance, and the studies on provisional voting, voter education, poll worker training, and voter fraud and voter intimidation.

We thank you for your support of funding for the Help America Vote Act, and we look forward to working with you on this critical issue. Should you have any questions, please contact Leslie

Reynolds of the National Association of Secretaries of State at (202)624-3525 or Rob Randhava of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights at (202) 466-6058, or any of the individual organizations listed below.

Sincerely,

Organizations Representing State and Local Election Officials

Council of State Governments

International Association of Clerks, Recorders, Election Officials and Treasurers

National Association of Counties

National Association of County Recorders, Election Officials and Clerks

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials

National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS)

National Association of State Election Directors

National Conference of State Legislatures

National League of Cities

Civil and Disability Rights Organizations

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industrial Organizations

American Foundation for the Blind

Americans for Democratic Action

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund

Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Center for Voting and Democracy

Central Conference of American Rabbis

Common Cause

DemocracyWorks

Dēmos: A Network for Ideas & Action

Epilepsy Foundation of America

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems

National Coalition on Black Civic Participation – VOTE Election Reform Task Force

National Council of La Raza

Organization of Chinese Americans

Paralyzed Veterans of America

People For the American Way

Project Vote

Union for Reform Judaism

United Auto Workers

United States Student Association

USAction

U.S. Public Interest Research Group