

INTERVIEW WITH PAUL DeGREGORIO

## THE ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION



In October 2003, President George W. Bush nominated IFES Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Paul DeGregorio to the Election Assistance Commission (EAC). DeGregorio sat down with *Elections Today* to discuss his upcoming role on this new federal agency.

**Elections Today:** *What is the significance of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) for upcoming U.S. elections?*

**Paul DeGregorio:** This is the first time in American history that the federal government is providing significant funding and important technical information and guidance to the states and territories regarding the administration of elections. Such support will help improve the voting process, encourage the debate of ideas on election reform, increase voter confidence in the conduct of elections and encourage greater participation in elections. All of these efforts will work to strengthen American democracy.

**ET:** *In addition to you, who are the other nominees to the EAC?*

**PD:** Former New Jersey Secretary of State, the Rev. Deforest "Buster" Soaries, is a noted inspirational speaker who has served as an advisor to the EPA on minority issues. Gracia Hillman, a consultant to non-profit and corporate organizations, has served as Executive Director of the League of Women Voters and as an advisor on women's issues in the Clinton State Department. Texas attorney Ray Martinez was assistant director of Intergovernmental Affairs under President Clinton and is Director of the Every Texan Foundation, a voter participation organization.

**ET:** *What perspective will you bring to the EAC?*

**PD:** I have worked in elections for more than 30 years, including eight years as Director of Elections for St. Louis County, MO, and ten years of experience with IFES working

to improve the process of democracy and voting throughout the world. I also co-chaired Missouri's election reform commission in 2001-2002 and have participated in hundreds of seminars, meetings and conferences regarding the voting process. My primary focus has been increasing the professionalism of the administration of elections, increasing voter participation and voter confidence, and pushing reforms that make the voting process fair and fraud-free.

**ET:** *What are some of the top issues the EAC will have to face during its first 100 days?*

**PD:** Our immediate priorities will include getting top staff in place, reviewing state plans, disbursing funds to states, conducting meetings of EAC advisory bodies, setting priorities for addressing requirements of HAVA, and listening to and addressing the concerns of voters, state and local officials, members of Congress, technology experts and key constituency groups.

**ET:** *As you move on to the EAC, what have you learned from your 10-year association with IFES?*

**PD:** It's been truly an honor and a great privilege to work with the world's premier organization devoted to the improvement of the election process and spreading democracy to every corner of the globe. The experience gained at

IFES, from our work to advise the Russian Federation in its first parliamentary election in 1993, to the important report we produced on the election problems in Florida's Miami-Dade County, to the outstanding team we sent to Iraq to help promote the election process in that troubled nation, has fully prepared me to serve the people of the United States as a Commissioner of the EAC. IFES has attracted nearly 1,000 talented individuals who have worked in over 120 countries to extend the reach of democracy to millions of people worldwide. While I am excited to serve in this new role on the EAC, I will miss working with IFES President Richard Soudriette and the outstanding team of professionals he has assembled. **ET**

*Paul DeGregorio is Executive Vice President of IFES.*

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