

# Elections Today

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### ELECTION CALENDAR

#### PRESIDENTIAL

Ukraine - October 31, 2004

Uruguay - October 31, 2004

Palau - November 2, 2004

United States - November 2, 2004

Niger - November 13, 2004

Namibia - November 15, 2004

Romania - November 28, 2004

Mozambique - December 1-2, 2004

#### PARLIAMENTARY

Botswana - October 30, 2004

Namibia - November 16, 2004

Romania - November 28, 2004

Mozambique - December 1-2, 2004

#### LEGISLATIVE

Uruguay - October 31, 2004

Palau - November 2, 2004

United States - November 2, 2004

Cayman Islands - November 17, 2004

#### REFERENDA

Macedonia - November 7, 2004

Burundi - November 26, 2004

Switzerland - November 28, 2004

### ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

## PREPARING AMERICA TO VOTE

by Gracia Hillman

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) created and funded election reform mandates to be implemented by all States. (Under HAVA, the term "States" is used to refer to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the three territories of American Samoa, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands.) HAVA also created an expectation that the ills of previous election cycles would be cured for the good of all eligible citizens who want to register to vote and have their votes counted fairly.

Another important component of HAVA is the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC), which began operations in January 2004, as a brand new independent federal commission. The bipartisan EAC is led by four commissioners, appointed by President Bush, who serve staggered terms. The commissioners include Chairman DeForest "Buster" Soaries, Paul DeGregorio, Ray Martinez III and myself, as Vice Chair. We have always understood that EAC's mission has three components, which are to serve as a national clearinghouse on matters concerning the administration of federal elections, provide guidance and best practices, and set appropriate standards and guidelines for voting systems and equipment.

We quite literally hit the ground running from day one and our plight has not been easy. EAC had been established 10 months later than envisioned under HAVA. It was seriously under funded; had no offices, telephones or other means of communications; and had no staff. We developed a strategic start-up position through partnerships with several other Federal government agencies. We also found excellent program partners through our relations with State and local election officials and groups within the advocacy, civil rights, disability and academic communities.

We determined that our first order of business was to disburse \$2.3 billion dollars that had been appropriated by Congress to the States. This is the bulk of the money that States are using to implement their election reform programs. As of the end of September 2004, EAC had paid about \$1.33 billion to 44 eligible States. Payments to the other 11 States will be expedited as they certify that they have met the eligibility requirements. *(continued on page 3)*



Election workers at a polling station



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We next turned our attention to the growing concern about the security and reliability of electronic touch-screen voting systems, popularly referred to as DREs. Public discontent, and therefore the clamor around this issue, seemed to be growing every day. EAC determined it would best serve the public's interest if we examined this issue in the context of our responsibilities to set voting system standards and issue guidelines to States that could be considered in the purchase and use of various voting systems.

HAVA mandates a process for setting updated voting system standards. The delayed appointment of EAC meant that new standards could not be issued in time for this year's election; however, EAC expects to adopt these standards and issue guidelines by June 2005. This milestone will address the many and varied concerns about voter-verified paper trails for electronic touch-screen machines and other issues about the security and reliability of the various voting machines currently in use across the United States. In the meantime, States continue to use standards that were approved by the Federal Election Commission in 2002.

EAC serves as a clearinghouse of information on the experiences of State and local governments in administering elections and operating voting systems. We have held public hearings to identify best practices, problems and transition issues associated with all types of voting systems, including DREs, Optical Scan, Punch Card and Lever voting machines. Based on the testimony of dozens of experts, EAC compiled valuable information for best practices guidance to be issued to State and local election administrators.

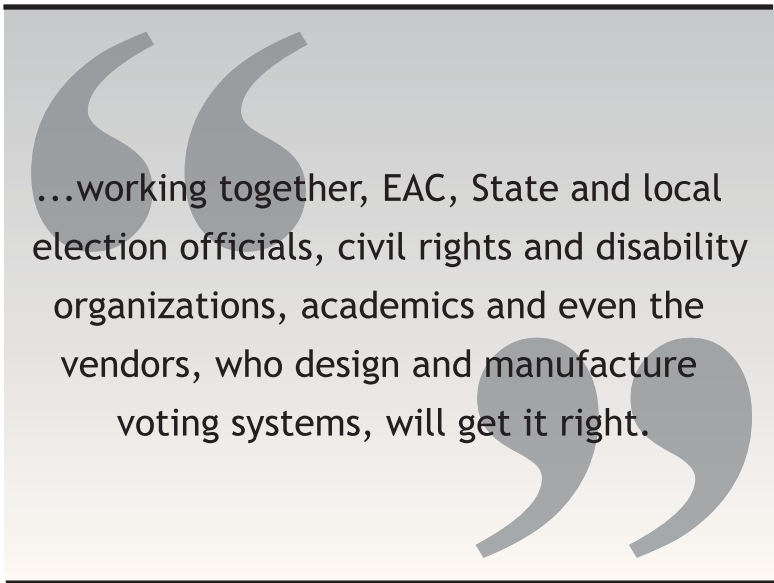
Three sets of EAC best practices guidance have been released, which cover the HAVA mandates that States must implement in 2004. Guidance #1 covers *Administration, Management and Security in Voting Systems and Provisional Voting*. Guidance #2 covers *Facilitating Voting by U.S. Citizens Covered by the Uniformed (Military) and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act*. Guidance #3 covers *Voter Identification, Polling Place Signage and State Administrative Complaint Procedures*.

These sets of guidance were designed to be as comprehensive as our limited resources permitted, yet simple and user friendly. Our goal was to make the information useful and practical for election administrators and helpful to civil

rights, disability and grassroots groups. This guidance and other information can be obtained from EAC's website at [www.eac.gov](http://www.eac.gov).

My colleagues and I understand that the obvious failures of the administration of elections must be fixed. While the eye of the storm has been on election equipment, we recognize that voting is a human activity. The administration of elections at the polling place is shaped in large part by the people who do the work. There are about 193,000 polling places in the United States and an estimated 2 million poll workers are needed on Election Day. All too often, there is a serious shortage of poll workers, which inevitably leads to Election Day problems. EAC agrees with State and local election administrators that this is a very serious problem and has established the EAC National Poll Workers Initiative to help make every vote count. We are working with colleges, corporations, nonprofit organizations, faith-based entities and government agencies to promote this message.

Problems with equipment and people are somewhat predictable. However, the not-so-predictable issue of catastrophic occurrences on Election Day, either natural or otherwise, has emerged as a legitimate and important concern among various State and local election officials. EAC has attempted to identify the various processes that election administrators would follow to respond to a catastrophic event if—and only if—one occurred on Election Day and disrupted the elections in a significant way in any jurisdiction. This year's record-breaking hurricane season proves that we can take nothing for granted.



**...working together, EAC, State and local election officials, civil rights and disability organizations, academics and even the vendors, who design and manufacture voting systems, will get it right.**

EAC is working to make certain that every eligible U.S. citizen who wants to vote has the opportunity and that every vote will count. We want technology to help, not hinder, election administrators in accomplishing these tasks. EAC also recognizes that one size does not fit all when it comes to the type of voting product and system that should be used. Working together, EAC, State and local election officials, civil rights and disability organizations, academics and even the vendors, who design and manufacture voting systems, will get it right. **E1**

*Gracia Hillman is the Vice Chair of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.*