

OPEN LETTER TO CONGRESS:
HONOR COMMITMENT TO ELECTION REFORM
SUPPORT FULL FUNDING FOR HAVA

March 2, 2010

We, the undersigned organizations, are deeply appreciative of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funding that states have received since the law's passage in 2002. 2010 marks the fifth federal election cycle since HAVA became law, and the third federal election cycle since states and localities were required to meet its deadlines for federally-mandated voting processes and equipment.

As such, we urge you to honor your commitment to election reform and appropriate the remaining \$387 million in authorized funding for requirements payments to states and \$11 million for the U.S. Health and Human Services Department to assist states with ensuring polling place accessibility for people with disabilities and maintaining the protection and advocacy programs. These amounts represent the difference between what Congress promised for comprehensive, long-term assistance to states in adopting HAVA mandates, and the very real possibility that such reforms cannot be sustained or fully realized.

While states and localities have done much of the groundwork to put HAVA requirements in place, the lack of full federal funding has significantly hindered their initial plans for implementation and resulted in significant cost increases. Nowhere is this more obvious than in voting machine certification and purchasing. Congressional delay in providing proper funding for the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) prevented the timely development of voting system guidelines and the creation of a federal voting system certification program. Some state and local governments were unable to utilize existing equipment, while others had to replace voting equipment more than once in an effort to comply with evolving guidance on accessibility and security.

The development of statewide voter registration databases and major upgrades to voting systems have been two of the most costly, yet innovative outcomes of HAVA. Without full funding, there is very little hope that states can manage the costs of these election improvements. Full funding will also help maintain efficiency and effectiveness in poll worker training and voter education during this period of rapidly changing election laws.

For example, federal law now requires state and local governments to implement new processes for military and overseas voters which include electronic delivery methods for election materials and ballot tracking mechanisms. These common sense requirements, while commendable, were adopted by Congress in October 2009 without any funding to support them.

In summary, we ask for your support in authorizing the remaining \$398 million dollars that was originally allocated in HAVA. It is critical to fulfilling the promise of election reform and to providing resources that will help state and local governments meet their long-term challenges.

Should you have any questions, please contact the organizations listed below.

Sincerely,

Coalition for Full Funding of HAVA

Organizations Representing State and Local Election Officials

The Election Center

International Association of Clerks, Recorders, Election Officials and Treasurers

National Association of Counties

National Association of Secretaries of State

National Association of State Election Directors

National Conference of State Legislatures

Civil and Disability Rights and Voter Advocacy Organizations

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

Asian American Justice Center

Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law

Common Cause

Demos

Fair Elections Legal Network

FairVote

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

NAACP National Voter Fund

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund

Paralyzed Veterans of America

People for the American Way

Project Vote

SAVE

U.S. Public Interest Research Group