



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES OF STATE
INTERNATIONAL ELECTION PROTOCOL**

Whereas, democracy and self-governance are the principles upon which the United States of America was built; and

Whereas, the United States has made the promotion of democracy a basic principle of its foreign policy; and

Whereas, the United States was a founding member of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); and

Whereas the United States signed the OSCE's Copenhagen Agreement, which allows member countries to observe each others' elections; and

Whereas, observing elections around the world provides government officials from OSCE member countries with an opportunity to learn about different election practices; and

Whereas, over the past two decades the United States has participated in international election observer missions to Russia, Mexico, South Africa, Indonesia and other countries; and

Whereas, the Secretaries of State believe that a citizen's right to choose his government is the basis for all other rights; and

Whereas, the Secretaries of State and other state and local election officials safeguard the integrity of the elections process in the United States; and

Whereas, the United States has an opportunity to promote good practices and information exchange by supporting OSCE international observers in this country;

Therefore, be it resolved that the National Association of Secretaries of State welcomes OSCE international election observers from the OSCE member countries to the United States.

Expires July 2010

Adopted this 24th day of July, 2005
in St. Paul, Minnesota

PROTOCOL FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS

Created June 22, 2005; Passed July 24, 2005

The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) formally adopted a Resolution on February 6, 2005, by a majority vote of the membership at the Business Meeting of the 2005 Winter Conference; that said Resolution said, in part, that “it is recommended that NASS should develop a protocol for receiving and assisting international visitors and observers and that this could be developed as a pilot program for those states and localities that will have elections in 2005”.

That NASS endorses and supports the following protocol for international elections observers in the United States for use during the election years 2005 and 2006 as a pilot program, to be reviewed and evaluated following the November, 2006, federal elections for further refinement and improvement. It is intended to facilitate visits from Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) members to the U.S. to observe this country’s elections processes:

CONTACT AGENCY

It is recommended that the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC), in cooperation with the OSCE Office of the U.S. Department of State, serve as the initial contact point for OSCE international election observers and that it assist in coordinating the observers’ visits with the states. The OSCE should submit a letter of interest to the U.S. Department of State who would then share this letter of interest with the EAC at least 60 days prior to Election Day, which will then be directed to the appropriate state jurisdiction.

The EAC will serve as an information contact between U.S. state and local election officials and the OSCE that requests observation assistance. The U.S. Department of State will seek advice of the EAC pertaining to State and local jurisdictions and their ability to afford access to OSCE Observers.

ACCREDITATION

It will be necessary for all OSCE observers to be accredited by the appropriate U.S. state and local election authorities. This accreditation process must be completed far enough in advance of the election to avoid placing undue burdens on the U.S. state and local election officials.

CODE OF CONDUCT

All OSCE international election observation must be carried out fully in accordance with the appropriate U.S. federal, state and local laws. OSCE election monitors will be required to observe the established OSCE code of conduct throughout their visits. This includes and is not limited to: practicing strict impartiality, displaying identification at all times, monitoring in an unobtrusive manner, refraining from personal commentary; and complying with all U.S. federal and state laws and regulations.

Hall of States, 444 N. Capitol Street, N.W., Suite 401, Washington, DC 20001

(202) 624-3525 (202) 624.3527 Fax

www.nass.org

All OSCE observers will be expected to participate in applicable orientations under the auspices and facilitation of the U.S. Department of State or its designee before observing elections to ensure that they fully understand the proper role of an observer and U.S. and State election laws and procedures. Observers will refrain from any interference with the election process and they will not inhibit in any way the free access of the voters to polling places. Upon the completion of their observations, the OSCE observation Mission will be asked to share their observations in a written report with the state's contact authority at least 24 hours before it is released to the public.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS

OSCE International Election Monitors will be given access to voter registration lists, poll worker training sessions, election procedures and materials, polling places and counting centers as U.S. and state law allows.

CONCLUSION

International election observation has become an important part of the democracy-building process because of the opportunity to promote best practices and to exchange information. NASS encourages the Secretaries of State, State Election Directors and all county and municipal election officials to lend their full support to facilitating international election observation.