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Statement by Chief State Election Officials on 2006 Midterm Elections: Elections Ran Smoothly Nationwide; Our Focus Now is on Continuing to Improve Election Administration

At first glance, Election Day 2006 appears to have been a good day for election administration in the United States: voters nationwide turned out in large numbers and, according to a CNN exit poll, 87 percent of them reported that they were confident that their votes would be counted accurately. Now, two days after the election, it has become even more apparent that elections ran smoothly.

Election officials are verifying vote totals in close races and determining the outcomes in a fair and impartial manner. No legal challenges have been filed and even the toughest critics of our election system agree there were no large-scale voting problems. Nationwide voter turnout was more than 40 percent according to some reports – higher than during the 2002 midterm election. According to American University's Center for the Study of the American Electorate, Virginia saw the highest voter turnout in that state's history. And according to the nonpartisan group Young Voter Strategies, turnout among 18 to 29-year-olds increased 25 percent.

Where glitches did occur, election officials dealt with them quickly and effectively. Jurisdictions that encountered setbacks moved quickly to resolve them. Local election officials in Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania and South Carolina kept polling places open late to compensate for minor delays caused by new voting equipment. In Denver, Colorado, voters encountered long lines after power outages and equipment malfunctions, but everyone who was in line to vote before polling places closed had the opportunity to cast a ballot.

As the nation's chief state election officials, we are pleased with the turnout figures and voting successes that are being reported. We have worked hard to improve elections in our states and to educate voters across the country. This year, we launched a national voter education website, www.canivote.org, that helped prepare voters to participate on Election Day. Close to 50,000 people visited the site on November 7 – more than double the number of voters who called various voter hotlines to ask questions or report problems. We believe that's a clear indication of the positive impact that voter education can have and the important role election officials play in engaging voters.

Back in February of 2006, we reaffirmed our determination and commitment to ensuring that all eligible voters can register and vote, and that all votes are counted accurately and fairly in each and every election. Reports of this year's election administration successes confirm that we have fulfilled our promise to administer free and fair elections. In the coming weeks and months, we will continue to direct election administration and reform in our states in the manner in which we resolved to do. We look forward to working with our staff members and local election officials to ensure that the country's next elections for federal office run smoothly again in 2008.

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