



NASS
National Association
of Secretaries of State

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February 1, 2010

Open Letter to Members of Congress

Federal Legislation Would Undermine Progress and Interfere with States' Rights

Dear Members of Congress:

In recent years, you have been asked to consider legislation that would set national standards for administering elections. In general, it is our collective opinion that the passage of any such law should recognize the states' ability to effectively administer elections and not interfere with the progress they have made in implementing election reforms. Perhaps most importantly, it should take into account our country's unique political philosophy -- the belief in the division of authority between state and federal governments.

When it comes to the way elections are administered in this nation, state governments are best prepared to decide what is right for their residents. The nuances of what works in New York City, for example, may not be practicable for a small town in rural Idaho. As such, flat uniformity that does not make allowances for regional and local differences does not necessarily equal success. Legislation to introduce national standards for elections must not remove the opportunity for states to continually improve their systems or shackle the country to a single, bureaucratic system that could quickly become obsolete, be susceptible to widespread fraud or make change cumbersome. Nevertheless, the states have worked hard to implement the requirements of the Help America Vote Act of 2002, and we will work diligently to ensure that new federal requirements to improve voting for military and overseas voters are in place by November 2010. In fact, many states have moved forward to implement provisions that go well beyond these new federal requirements.

In short, states are the laboratories of democracy and the incubators of innovation. On behalf of the nation's chief state election officials, we appeal to Congress to respect this reality in your discussions regarding the creation of new legislation, and we ask that you include state and local officials in your discussions so that you give them the flexibility they need to develop voting solutions in conjunction with their own unique laws, history and culture.

Sincerely,

The National Association of Secretaries of State
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