Minutes: NASS Elections Committee Meeting
2:45 PM - 4:15 PM
July 15th, 2016
Nashville, TN

Participants:

Hon. Wayne Williams, CO (Co-Chair)
Hon. Natalie Tennant, WV (Co-Chair)
Hon. John Merrill, AL
Hon. Brian Kemp, GA
Hon. Lawerence Denney, ID
Hon. Paul Pate, IA
Hon. Alison Lundergan Grimes, KY (by proxy)
Hon. Tom Schedler, LA
Hon. Matt Dunlap, ME
Hon. Ruth Johnson, MI (by proxy)
Hon. Steve Simon, MN
Hon. Jason Kander, MO (by proxy)
Hon. Linda McCulloch, MT
Hon. Barbara Cegavske, NV
Hon. Bill Gardner, NH
Hon. Al Jaeger, ND
Hon. Jon Husted, OH
Hon. Jeanne Atkins, OR (by proxy)
Hon. Pedro Cortes, PA
Hon. Nellie Gorbea, RI
Hon. Tre Hargett, TN
Hon. Spencer Cox, UT
Hon. Jim Condos, VT
Hon. Ed Murray, WY

Secretary Tennant called the meeting to order and announced that the first order of business was consideration of a 2011 NASS Resolution Establishing a Task Force for the Future Disposition of EAC Duties. She noted that the resolution was set to expire unless renewed at the conference. She noted that the resolution was discussed on the June Committee conference call and the view was to let it expire. As a result she recommended the resolution be allowed to sunset. There was no discussion or objection to the recommendation and the resolution was allowed to sunset.

Amy Bunk, Director of Legal Affairs and Policy, Federal Register, provided an overview of Secretary of State Responsibilities and deadlines for the 2016 Electoral College. She said that as soon as possible after the election, states must prepare a Certificate of Ascertainment that separately lists the names of

each parties' electors and the number of votes they received. She said it must also be signed by the Governor and include the state seal. She noted that December 13th is the deadline to settle any controversies regarding electors, and December 19th is the date of the meeting of the electors. She said the Certificates of Vote must separately list the names of the persons receiving votes for President and Vice President, separately list the vote totals for each candidate, and be signed by all the electors. She noted that December 28th is the deadline to submit the Certificates of Vote and Ascertainment. She outlined what to look for when preparing and reviewing the Certificates of Vote and Ascertainment and where they must be sent. She noted that 7 originals are required for the Certificate of Ascertainment and six originals are required for the Certificate of Vote. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that the certificates have the correct mailing address and encouraged the use of a courier that can provide a tracking number. She also provided the link to http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/officials.html and noted that it provides information and resources to assist states in carrying out the Presidential election responsibilities.

Matt Boehmer, Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program, provided an update on overseas voting initiatives designed to assist UOCAVA voters. He noted that FVAP has a renewed focus on assisting UOCAVA stakeholders and analyzing data. He described FVAP efforts to engage military voters through education and outreach. He encouraged election officials to view UOCAVA voters similar to how a business views customer. He discussed collaborative efforts between FVAP, USPS, CSG, and other federal agencies, nonprofit organization, and associations. He emphasized that the policy working group recommendations were not intended as a list of federal legislative initiatives but as options for states to review and determine what might work best in their state. He said the technology working groups is addressing issues such as ballot duplication, data standardization, ballot tracking projects, and use of DOD common access cards for registration and ballot request. He also described DOD and USPS efforts to facilitate election mail processing, including the publication of recommended mailing dates and increased communication between postal officials and election officials. He encouraged the NASS Elections Committee to embrace change and continue to support programs and services for UOCAVA voters.

Tammy Patrick, BPC Fellow, Bipartisan Policy Center, and Monica Childers, Director of Government Services, Democracy Works, provided an update on efforts to improve election mail. Ms. Patrick noted increased collaboration between USPS, election officials, and other stakeholders. She said USPS has pilot projects in NY and VA that show where mail is at each point in the mailing system and said this can help improve mail voting. She noted that USPS issued updated guidelines for election mail that now advises voters to mail ballots one week before deadline in order to account for unforeseen issues and allow sufficient time for processing. She noted that Iowa was the first state to pass legislation allowing data on intelligent bar codes to validate that they were turned in on time. She also noted that the USPS election mail toolkit and postal mail election bulletins are mailed to election officials prior to the election, and encouraged members to utilize the new Bipartisan Policy Center report on the New Realities of Voting by Mail in 2016.

Ms. Childers provided an overview of the electionmail.org website. She encouraged members to share the site with anyone who interacts with voted ballots during the year. She said the site provides a mechanism to report problems with election mail. She said the reports are submitted to USPS staff to help identify and resolve the issue. She said that 11 states utilized the site during the primaries and encouraged more states to use the site in order to make USPS aware of potential problems impacting election mail. She said about 1/3 of reported issues were based on delivery delays, and about 20% of issues impacted more than 1000 at a time. She added that most errors were not systemic, but noted one situation where report of ballot being returned to sender revealed a software glitch that could have been a much broader problem if not identified and resolved early. She also noted that USPS has made a number of election mail improvement this year including internal issue tracking for election mail, ballot samples in automation software testing, and proactive outreach to election officials.

Secretary Williams asked member if they had any 2016 election preparation activities they wanted to share with the Committee. He noted that Colorado opened a full service clerk and records office on the state's largest military based that will help make it easier for members of the military to register. Secretary Murray noted that Wyoming has been gathering data to better understand the reasons behind low youth voter turnout rates. He said they have also started a youth voter turnout initiative for the upcoming election and said his office his happy to share resources from that efforts with other states. Secretary Dunlap noted that Maine is also focusing on youth voter outreach initiatives and encouraged status to implement a Vote in Honor of a Veteran program. Secretary Gorbea noted that Rhode Island will soon be deploying new voting equipment statewide and is also focusing on the youth vote through a mobile website designed to encourage participation by young voters. She said will also be implementing online voter registration soon. Secretary Pate said that his office recently hosted a Voter Engagement Summit in Iowa with 26 colleges and universities and said the effort is part of their partnership with Turbo Vote. Secretary Simon said Minnesota recently started a statewide mock election program for the Presidential election and his office provides ballots, stickers, and other materials, and collects the results. He said schools decide how to conduct the election and noted that there has been good participation throughout the state so far. Secretary Tennant noted that as part of National Voter Registration Month West Virginia is planning to hold a voter registration related event or activity each day. She asked states to provide her with any ideas or practices that they think might be good to incorporate.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15PM.