



**NASS Resolution Supporting International Election Observers Where Allowed by State Law and  
NASS Protocol for International Observers**

Adopted July 20, 2010; Reauthorized July 12, 2015

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 Secretaries of State believe that a citizen's right to choose his or her government is fundamental to all other rights; and

WHEREAS, the United States of America was a founding member of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1975, now consisting of 56 member nations, and in 1990 signed the OSCE's Copenhagen Agreement, which gives the right of member countries to observe each other's elections; and

WHEREAS, working through the United States Department of State approximately 44 OSCE election observers were hosted in approximately 40 states to observe the November 2012 presidential election; and

WHEREAS, it is important that the state and local election officials, where allowed by state law, serve as ambassadors of goodwill for the United States by welcoming international visitors and observers to learn first-hand about the election process in the United States in a spirit of openness and transparency; 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, observing elections around the world provides government officials from OSCE member countries with an opportunity to learn about different election practices; and

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

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) welcomes OSCE international election observers from the OSCE member countries to observe elections in states where allowed by state law.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that NASS recognizes that it is important for visitors and observers from OSCE and other officially-sanctioned international observer and visitor delegations to be welcomed, and NASS encourages federal, state and local election officials, where allowed by state law, to cooperate and facilitate the opportunities for international observers and visitors to witness United States' election systems first-hand.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that NASS endorses the idea for an appropriate federal agency or non-profit, working with state and local election officials and where allowed by state law, to assume the role of providing international visitors and observers with accreditation to observe elections in states and localities around the country, with the understanding that these observers will not hinder the election process in any way.

EXPIRES: Summer 2020



## **PROTOCOL FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS**

Approved on July 24, 2005 Reaffirmed on July 20, 2010; Reauthorized on July 12, 2015

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 Resolution said, in part, that "it is recommended that NASS should develop a protocol for receiving and assisting international visitors and observers." The Resolution was intended to facilitate visits from Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) members to the United States to observe this country's elections processes.

NASS endorses and supports the following protocol for international elections observers in the United States, where allowed by federal and state law.

### **CONTACT AGENCY**

It is recommended that the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC), in cooperation with the OSCE Office of the United States Department of State, serve as the initial contact point for OSCE international election observers and that it will assist in coordinating the observers' visits with the states, where allowed by state law. The OSCE should submit a timely letter of interest to the United States Department of State, which would then share this letter of interest with the EAC, at least 60 days prior to Election Day. The EAC will then direct the letter of interest to the appropriate state jurisdiction.

The EAC will serve as an information contact between state and local election officials and the OSCE observers who request observation assistance. The United States Department of State will seek advice of the EAC pertaining to state and local jurisdictions and their state laws to allow access for OSCE observers.

### **ACCREDITATION**

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

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

All OSCE international election observation must be carried out fully in accordance with the appropriate federal, state and local laws. OSCE election observers 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 federal, state and local laws and regulations.

All OSCE observers will be expected to participate in applicable orientations under the auspices and facilitation of the United States Department of State or its designee before observing elections to ensure that they fully understand the proper role of an observer and federal, state and local election laws and procedures. Observers will refrain from any interference with the elections 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**

As federal and state law allows, OSCE international election observers will be given access to voter registration lists, poll worker training sessions, election procedures and materials, polling places and counting centers.

## **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 where federal and state law allows.