



March 4, 2015

**Oppose H.R. 195, The Election Assistance Commission Termination Act**

Chairman Candace S. Miller  
Committee on House Administration  
1309 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Robert Brady  
Committee on House Administration  
1309 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Brady,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, we urge you to oppose H.R. 195, a bill designed to eliminate the Election Assistance Commission ("EAC" or "Commission"). The Leadership Conference believes that terminating the EAC risks reducing the voting and civil rights of our citizens—rights for which many have given their lives.

At a time when voters are facing increased challenges to accessing the polls in their states, it is alarming that this Congress would consider eliminating a vital institution whose primary purpose is to further the goals of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), one of our nation's major federal voting laws, and to protect the rights of those who are most frequently disenfranchised and least able to advocate for their right to vote. Further, as demonstrated by the experiences of those voters in the 2012 and 2014 elections who endured long lines and were turned away at the polls due in part to inaccurate registration rolls, our current system of elections is highly inefficient. The need for the EAC could not be more critical. Rather than undermining a commission that plays an important role in standardizing and modernizing election administration, Congress should focus its efforts on improving access to the franchise.

The EAC does valuable work to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of our nation's election systems. The Commission plays a major role in collecting accurate and comparable election data. With our nation's complex and diversified election administration system, central data collection is essential if we are going to improve our citizens' trust and confidence in election results. In addition, the Commission develops and fosters the training and organization of our nation's more than 8,000 election administrators. Through its many working committees and the work it does to foster robust dialogue among advocates, manufacturers, and administrators, the Commission is improving the administration of elections. Its award-winning web page has become the "go to" site for election

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administrators, advocates, and academics. The EAC also oversees the distribution of federal funds that assist states and municipalities with election administration.

The EAC has also played a central role in improving the accessibility of voting for the country's more than 37 million voters with disabilities. We still have a long way to go to achieve HAVA's mandate to make voting accessible. The EAC's leadership is essential to continuing the effort to offer all Americans the right to vote "privately and independently."

The timing of this bill is of particular concern given that, after more than three years without a single commissioner in place, the Senate unanimously confirmed three new commissioners this past December. Although one position is still vacant, the EAC now has the quorum it needs to address the problems facing our country's voting systems.

The nearly four-year absence of a quorum at the EAC hindered the agency when Americans needed it most. The EAC could not hold public meetings, adopt new policies, or issue advisory opinions. The bipartisan Presidential Commission on Election Administration, co-chaired by the general counsels of the Obama and Romney 2012 campaigns, noted in their report last year that "the standard-setting process for new voting machines has broken down ... due to a lack of [EAC] commissioners. ... Without a fully functioning EAC to adopt new standards, many new technologies that might better serve local election administrators are not being brought to the marketplace."

Last week, the EAC met for the first time in more than four years to begin its important work. Now that it has a quorum, the Commission can get back to work evaluating and endorsing standards and guidelines that reflect the newest and best methods of election administration.

As we look to the future and work to improve our system of elections, the EAC must continue to do its important work to ensure that our elections are fair, efficient, and accessible. In light of the many challenges faced by our state and local election administrators and the serious procedural problems that weaken voter access and participation, it is time to reaffirm our commitment to voting rights and fair elections by strengthening the EAC and providing it with the staff it requires to function effectively. H.R. 195 would eliminate an important tool for improving a voting system fraught with problems and should be rejected.

We urge you to oppose H.R. 195. Thank you for your consideration of our position. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Leadership Conference Legal Director Lisa Bornstein, at (202) 263-2856 or [Bornstein@civilrights.org](mailto:Bornstein@civilrights.org).

Sincerely,

Wade Henderson  
President & CEO

  
Nancy Zirkin  
Executive Vice President