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EAC releases data from 2008 presidential election

Registered voters up by 14 million; online registration increased; nearly 1 million ballots sent to military & overseas voters

WASHINGTON – The United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) today released the results of its 2008 Election Administration and Voting Survey and the 2008 Uniformed and Overseas Voting Act Survey. These survey results contain comprehensive, nationwide data about election administration in the U.S. The complete results and all data provided by the states are available on the EAC website.

“We commend election officials from the 50 states, four territories and the District of Columbia who worked so hard to provide the federal government complete and accurate election data under substantial budget and time constraints,” said Chair Bresso Beach. “The entire election community will benefit from their efforts to provide quality data.”

2008 Highlights (based on information reported by the states)

- **Registered voters:** More than 190 million Americans were registered to vote, an increase of more than 14 million since the 2004 presidential election.
- **Military and overseas citizens:** Nearly one million ballots were sent to military and overseas citizen voters. Sixty-nine percent were returned, and 93.6 percent of those returned were counted.
- **Domestic absentee ballots:** States transmitted more than 26 million absentee ballots, and 91.1 percent (approximately 9 out of 10) were returned and submitted for counting.
- **On-line registration:** Nearly 700,000 Americans registered to vote using the Internet.

- **Poll workers:** 878,360 poll workers staffed some 132,237 polling places. On average, 6.6 poll workers were assigned to each polling place, an increase from the 2006 mid-term average of 6.1 poll workers. Nearly half of the jurisdictions reported difficulty in obtaining poll workers. There was a total of 185,671 precincts.

- **Voting systems:** The most common was the direct recording electronic (DRE) or touch screen machine, with 23 states reporting 218,370 DREs in use. The most widely deployed was the optical or digital scan voting system, with 43 states reporting 107,519 in use.

- **Voting methods:** Nearly two-thirds (60.8 percent) of voters cast their vote in the 2008 Presidential election at the polling place. The breakdown of the remaining votes cast was 16.8 percent domestic absentee voting; 13.1 percent early voting; 1.3 percent provisional ballots; and 0.7 percent absentee voting by military or overseas citizens.

2008 Election Administration and Voting Survey

The 2008 Election Administration and Voting Survey is the third conducted by EAC. In addition to providing basic information about voting, it also includes data from two federally mandated reports – the impact of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) and the Uniformed and Overseas Citizen Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). The 2008 survey instrument was finalized after receiving input from the EAC Standards Board and the Board of Advisors and a wide variety of stakeholders, including the general public.

The 2008 survey instrument was distributed to the 50 states, four territories and the District of Columbia. It contained 51 questions in the quantitative section that comprised of six sections: voter registration, UOCAVA, domestic civilian absentee ballots, election administration, provisional ballots and Election Day activities. Twenty-two questions about state election laws were included in an accompanying qualitative section called the Statutory Overview, which is available at www.eac.gov.

Caution is necessary when interpreting these data, particularly when comparing these data from year to year or state to state due to changes to the survey, changes in state tracking of data across time, and the varying levels of completeness in the states' responses.

2008 Uniformed and Overseas Voting Act Survey

The Help America The Help America Vote Act mandates that for each regularly scheduled general election for federal office, states collect data on how many UOCAVA ballots were sent and received, and instructs EAC to collect the data and deliver the results of the survey

to Congress. The survey consists of data from the county (or equivalent of) level from 50 states, four territories and the District of Columbia. The survey covers the day after the 2006 general election through the 2008 general election. Response rates to the 2008 survey have increased since 2006, but some states still do not track all data items and election terminology varies from state to state.

In addition to the UOCAVA surveys, EAC has also issued a report entitled UOCAVA Voters and the Electronic Transmission of Voting Materials in Four States and three case studies describing the experiences of states transmitting ballots electronically and using internet voting. EAC's Web site includes a section dedicated to military voters featuring links to the voting sites of every branch of the military and other useful resources. These reports, studies and resources are available on the EAC website.

The EAC is also working with the National Institute of Standards and Technology to provide best practices and guidelines to states on transmitting voting materials via e-mail, fax and the Internet. They will be released in time for the 2010 federal election.

UOCAVA protects the voting rights of members of the Uniformed Services (active duty), members of the Merchant Marine and their eligible dependents, Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service, Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and United States citizens residing outside the U.S. UOCAVA requires states and territories to allow these citizens to register and vote in elections for federal office using absentee procedures.

EAC is an independent commission created by the Help America Vote Act of 2002. EAC serves as a national clearinghouse and resource of information regarding election administration. It is charged with administering payments to states and developing guidance to meet HAVA requirements, adopting voluntary voting system guidelines, and accrediting voting system test laboratories and certifying voting equipment. It is also charged with developing and maintaining a national mail voter registration form. The three EAC commissioners are Gineen Bresso Beach, chair; Gracia Hillman, vice chair; and Donetta Davidson. There is one vacancy on the commission.