

February 7, 2017

The Honorable Gregg Harper  
Chairman  
Committee on House Administration  
1309 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Brady  
Ranking Member  
Committee on House Administration  
1307 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

**NATIVE AMERICAN GROUPS URGE YOU TO OPPOSE H.R. 634, THE ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION TERMINATION ACT**

Dear Chairman Harper and Ranking Member Brady:

On February 7, 2017, the Committee on House Administration is scheduled to markup bills that would radically alter the manner in which federal elections are administered, including one that would dismantle the Election Assistance Commission (“EAC”). On behalf of the Native American Voting Rights Coalition (“NAVRC”), a coalition of national and grassroots organizations advocating for the equal access of Native Americans to the political process, we ask you to oppose H.R. 634, the Election Assistance Commission Termination Act.

Congress created the EAC in the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (“HAVA”), Pub. L. No. 107-252, which was passed with overwhelming bipartisan support to address problems in our voting system identified in the 2000 Presidential Election. Title II of HAVA established the EAC as an independent bipartisan agency that assumed responsibilities for federal activities in election administration that were formerly performed by the Office of Election Administration of the Federal Election Commission (“FEC”). HAVA also established two EAC boards, the Standards Board and the Board of Advisors, which have a broad-based non-partisan and bipartisan membership of state and local administrators with expertise on the best practices for administering federal elections.

The EAC has played a critical role in helping to improve the integrity of elections in the United States. Through its work with state and local election officials and voting advocacy organizations, the EAC has canvassed the nation to identify the best practices for effective election administration. It has served as a clearinghouse for model programs through its outreach to those responsible for or interested in conducting fair and impartial elections. The EAC’s invaluable resources include detailed guidance for election management, such as contingency planning, poll worker training and best practices, ballot security, and effective ways of communicating information to voters.

The EAC's work has included collaborating with the National Institute of Standards and Technology to prepare the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines, which identifies baseline standards to measure whether voting systems provide equal, secure, and reliable access to voters. Through those guidelines, the EAC and National Institute have vastly improved opportunities for individuals with disabilities to vote privately with the confidence that their votes will be counted.

Programs for oversight of grant programs to the states also have been capably overseen by the EAC, including administration of HAVA funds to modernize voting systems and programs to develop innovative and secure technology. Under the EAC's guidance, there has been greater accountability for ensuring that federal appropriations are used for their intended purpose. The Commission has likewise facilitated the development and implementation of cost-effective solutions to voting problems.

The EAC's efforts have helped state and local governments to modernize our election system and take steps to dismantle barriers to registration and voting that Native Americans continue to face. H.R. 634 would roll back that progress and impede the efforts of Native voters to exercise their fundamental right of citizenship. Section 1004 of the bill makes that explicit, proposing to fold the invaluable work that the EAC performs back into the FEC, the very same overworked agency from which Congress removed it because of its inefficiency and ineffectiveness on election administration issues.

At a time when there has been strong bipartisan concern expressed about the integrity of our election systems, including vulnerability to security threats from abroad, we ask the Committee to reject efforts to turn back the clock and make our voting systems less safe and reliable. Congress should strengthen, not terminate, the EAC and provide it with the resources to allow it to continue to perform its indispensable function of improving America's elections. We strongly urge you to oppose H.R. 634, the Election Assistance Commission Termination Act.

For more information, please contact Natalie Landreth, Senior Staff Attorney at the Native American Rights Fund ("NARF"), at (907) 276-0680 or [Landreth@narf.org](mailto:Landreth@narf.org), or James Tucker, Pro Bono Voting Rights Counsel for NARF, at (702) 415-2941 or [jtucker@armstrongteasdale.com](mailto:jtucker@armstrongteasdale.com).

Very truly yours,

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Native American Rights Fund

/s/ Jacqueline Johnson Pata  
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National Congress of American Indians

/s/ Marci McLean  
Executive Director  
Western Native Voice

/s/ Robert M. Brandon  
President  
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/s/ O.J. Semans, Sr.  
Executive Director  
Four Directions