

# **MAKE ELECTION REFORM A REALITY**

## ***FULLY FUND THE “HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT”***

April 27, 2004

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby, Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Treasury and General Government  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Treasury and General Government  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ernest Istook, Jr., Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Treasury and Independent Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John W. Olver, Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Treasury and Independent Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Shelby and Murray and Representatives Istook and Olver:

We, the undersigned organizations, strongly urge you to appropriate \$800 million for the Help America Vote Act (P.L. 107-252) (“HAVA”) in the upcoming Treasury-Transportation appropriations legislation for fiscal year 2005. This amount would ensure full funding of the new law, an important priority for our organizations and for the communities we represent.

The Help America Vote Act, which passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, was designed to prevent the problems of the 2000 election from taking place in future elections. HAVA includes an important list of reforms that states must implement for federal elections, and while the requirement to replace outdated voting equipment has garnered a great deal of media and public attention, voting machines are just a part of the picture. States are working on reforms such as improving disability access to the polling place; implementing new provisional balloting procedures; designing, developing and in some cases implementing a new statewide voter registration system; training poll workers; and educating voters on new procedures and new equipment.

To help states and localities pay for these reforms, HAVA authorizes \$3.9 billion in appropriations over three fiscal years, including \$600 million in FY05. At this point, however, the actual funding of HAVA is in serious danger of falling well short of its goal. To date, Congress has generously appropriated \$3 billion between FY03 and FY04. The proposed budget number for FY05, however, is only \$40 million, a sum that falls well below what is needed for successful implementation of HAVA. State election officials acted on a commitment that HAVA would not be an unfunded mandate and proceeded with state planning activities to meet the looming HAVA deadlines. It is now time to honor this commitment to the states and to the American public at large.

Given the difficult fiscal circumstances facing state and local governments, immediate and full funding of HAVA is now needed to ensure HAVA is implemented successfully.

Without full federal funding, states and local governments simply cannot afford to complete implementation of the important reforms that they are now required to make.

No civil right is more fundamental to democracy than the right to vote. In order for America to continue to serve as an example for democracies around the world, we must continue to improve our electoral processes here at home.

We thank you for your support of funding for the “Help America Vote Act,” and we look forward to working with you on this critical issue. Should you have any questions, please contact Rob Randhava of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights at (202) 466-6058, Susan Parnas Frederick of the National Conference of State Legislatures at (202) 624-3566, or any of the individual organizations listed below.

Sincerely,

Organizations Representing State & Local Officials

Council of State Governments

Election Center

International Association of Clerks, Recorders, Election Officials and Treasurers

National Association of Counties

National Association of County Recorders, Election Officials and Clerks

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund

National Association of Secretaries of State

National Association of State Election Directors

National Conference of State Legislatures

National League of Cities

Civil Rights Organizations

Alliance for Retired Americans

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Civil Liberties Union

American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industrial Organizations

Americans for Democratic Action

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund

Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now

Brennan Center for Justice

Center for Voting and Democracy

Common Cause

Dēmos: A Network for Ideas & Action

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems  
National Council of La Raza  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
People For the American Way  
Project Vote  
The Arc of the United States  
Union for Reform Judaism  
United Cerebral Palsy  
United States Public Interest Research Group  
United States Student Association  
Voting Rights Project, Institute for Southern Studies

cc: The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
United States Senate

The Honorable Christopher J. Dodd  
United States Senate

The Honorable Bob Ney  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
United States House of Representatives