



U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION  
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## **EAC Updates Federal Voting System Guidelines**

**SILVER SPRING, MD** – The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) today approved updates to the standards used to test America’s voting systems. Commissioners adopted revisions to the decade-old voluntary voting system guidelines (VVSG) and approved updates to the EAC’s voting system testing program manuals. After their confirmation in January—and after four years without the required quorum of members to adopt policies—the EAC’s new commissioners made updating the standards and policies for testing voting systems their top priority.

“These revisions improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the testing and certification process,” said EAC Chairwoman Christy McCormick. “These updates allow us to get new voting systems or modifications to systems out more quickly to those election officials who desperately need them. We’re also focusing on what we can do to foster best practices, reduce risks and engender the confidence of the electorate,” McCormick said.

“The 2016 election cycle is here. Since Day one, the three of us have agreed that we must operate with a sense of urgency, time is not a luxury.” stated Vice-chair Hicks. “The EAC must do all it can to provide guidance for the election process to run smoothly. Our stakeholders have made it clear that they are depending upon the EAC to offer the technical guidance and expertise only it can provide. Moving forward with the VVSG 1.1 standards helps to provide some of that guidance.”

“Old voting technology is a huge challenge facing election officials across the country,” said EAC Commissioner Matthew Masterson. “Our process must be responsive to their needs so problems in the field are identified and resolved quickly.”

Adopted by the EAC in 2005, the VVSG provide a set of specifications and requirements against which voting systems can be tested to determine if they possess the requisite functionality, accessibility and security capabilities. In addition, the guidelines establish evaluation criteria for the national certification of voting systems.

The commissioners’ unanimous approval of revisions to the VVSG serves to clarify the guidelines to make them more testable; enable the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to create test suites for the proposed revisions; and improve portions of the guidelines that were out of date and could be updated without requiring massive programmatic changes. With today’s decision, the EAC improved the consistency and efficiency of the testing process, which will lead to cost savings for both election officials and manufacturers. With these changes complete, the commission will look to move forward with writing a new set of guidelines.

In other business, commissioners approved updates to the EAC’s Testing and Certification Program Manual, 2.0 and Voting System Test Laboratory Program Manual, 2.0. The manuals, which were first

adopted in 2006 and 2008, respectively, will improve the efficiency and speed of the testing and certification of voting systems with the added goal of reduced cost.

The commissioners also acted on advisory opinion requests from state and local election offices related to the expenditure of federal funds distributed for election improvements under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA).

#### About EAC's Guidelines

A proposed revision to the 2005 guidelines was offered during a 120-day public comment period in the summer of 2009. Since that time, the EAC's Testing & Certification Program discovered additional best practices, experienced anomalies and deficiencies with voting systems entering the Testing and Certification Program, and clarified many ambiguities with the standard. Changes were made after the initial 120-day public comment period to address these issues, and then reopened for an additional 130-day public comment period which ended in January, 2013.

For more information on changes made since the initial public comment period, please see the [Federal Register notice](#). All comments received were reviewed and will be available with final VVSG 1.1 guidelines in the next few weeks at [www.eac.gov](http://www.eac.gov) as well as published in the Federal Register.

These guidelines are voluntary. States may adopt them entirely, in part or not at all. States may also choose to enact stricter performance requirements for voting systems. Currently, 47 states use some or all of EAC's standards, testing and certification program.

#### History of Voting Standards and Guidelines

The [Help America Vote Act](#) instructed EAC to develop voluntary voting system guidelines -- a set of specifications and requirements against which voting systems can be tested to determine if the systems provide all of the basic functionality, accessibility and security capabilities required of these systems.

On December 13, 2005, EAC unanimously adopted the 2005 Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG), which significantly increased security requirements for voting systems and expand access, including opportunities to vote privately and independently, for individuals with disabilities.

The 2005 guidelines updated and augmented the 2002 Voting System Standards, as required by HAVA, to address advancements in election practices and computer technologies. The 2005 Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG 1.0) represented the third iteration of standards for voting systems. The first set was developed in 1990 by the Federal Election Commission (FEC), and were updated in 2002.

#### History of Voting System Testing & Certification

The National Association of State Election Directors (NASD), a nonpartisan, volunteer organization consisting of election directors, began testing voting systems against FEC standards in 1994. HAVA mandated that EAC accredit voting system test laboratories and certify voting equipment, marking the first time the federal government has offered these services to the states. Participation by states in EAC's certification program is voluntary. The EAC's full accreditation and certification program became effective in January 2007.

#### HAVA Requirements for Voting Systems

Section 301(a) of HAVA sets forth the standards that voting systems used in federal elections must meet regardless of whether they choose to adopt the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines.

The 301(a) requirements state that all voting systems must be able to perform the following functions: (1) allow the voter to review selections before casting a ballot; (2) allow the voter to change selections before casting a final vote; (3) notify the voter when more selections are made than permitted; (4) provide for the production of a permanent paper record suitable to be used in a manual recount; (5) provide voters with disabilities, the same opportunity for access and participation (including privacy and

independence); (6) provide accessibility in minority languages for voters with limited English proficiency as required by Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and (7) provide for an error rate in operating the voting system that is no greater than the error rate set forth the 2002 Voting System Standards.

For more information about Tuesday's public meeting, see the [agenda documents and watch the archived webcast](#).

*EAC is an independent bipartisan commission created by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002. HAVA was passed by the U.S. Congress to make sweeping reforms to the nation's voting process, address improvements to voting systems and voter access that were identified following the 2000 election, and to provide federal funding to states for new voting equipment. HAVA mandates that EAC test and certify voting equipment, maintain the National Voter Registration form, conduct research and administer a national clearinghouse on elections that includes shared practices, information for voters and other resources to improve elections. HAVA specifies that EAC's four commissioners are nominated by the President on recommendations from the majority and minority leadership in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate. No more than two commissioners may belong to the same political party. Once confirmed by the full Senate, commissioners may serve two consecutive terms. Any action by the commissioners requires the approval of at least three of its members. Currently, there is one vacancy on the commission. More information is available at [EAC.gov](http://EAC.gov).*

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