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SENATE RULES COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON STATE PROGRAMS THAT EXPAND THE NUMBER OF REGISTERED VOTERS AND MAKE VOTER LISTS MORE ACCURATE

State officials describe successful programs that automatically integrate motor vehicle records with voter rolls, and use regional list matching to reduce errors

Schumer: We must focus on ways to prevent voter registration problems instead of trying to fix them at the polls

WASHINGTON, DC-- The Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, chaired by U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer, heard testimony today from state election officials with highly successful programs to expand the number of people registered to vote and keep the voter rolls as accurate as possible, even when people move.

“Every Election Day, there are too many stories of American citizens who think they are registered and find out when they show up to vote that they are not able to cast a ballot,” Schumer said. “We must focus on ways to prevent these problems instead of trying to fix them at the polls.”

The hearing focused on two initiatives that were highlighted in the Presidential Commission on Election Administration’s (PCEA) final report as ways to improve voter registration. The first is eSignature, which was created in Delaware. eSignature ensures that every citizen who visits the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) will be given the opportunity to be registered to vote and have personal information, such as current address, automatically updated on the voter list. The information is entered electronically and shared between the DMV and the Delaware election officials.

The second initiative is the Electronic Registration Information Center or ERIC. ERIC was developed with support from the Pew Charitable Trusts but is now run by the nine participating states and the District of Columbia. ERIC assists states by allowing them to check voter registration lists against the voter rolls of other participating states as well as lists held by U.S. Postal Service and the Social Security Administration.

The witnesses were Elaine Manlove, Delaware’s State Election Commissioner, John W. Lindback, Executive Director Electronic Registration Information Center, Judd Choate, Director of Elections, Colorado Secretary of State’s Office and Christopher M. Thomas, Michigan Director of Elections.

This marks the third hearing in a series in which Schumer has explored ways of improving election administration. The first was held on February 12, 2014, when the committee heard testimony from the bipartisan co-chairs of the PCEA. The second was held on March 12, 2014, and examined ways to use technology to streamline and improve elections with online voter registration and electronic pollbooks.

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Dr. Judd Choate is the state elections director for Colorado, Chairman on the Board for the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), and is in line to be the 2017 President of the National Association of State Election Directors (NASSED). Dr. Choate has a J.D. from the University of Colorado Law School and both a Ph.D. and M.A. in political science from Purdue University. Prior to joining the Colorado Department of State, Dr. Choate practiced election law at the Denver firm of KELLY GARNSEY HUBBELL + LASS. He also served as a law clerk for Colorado Supreme Court Justice Alex J. Martinez and as a summer clerk for Judge Timothy Tymkovich of the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals. For several years prior to law school, Dr. Choate was a professor of political science at the University of Nebraska, where he taught courses on campaigns and elections.

Mr. John Lindback is the Executive Director of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a consortium of states using state-of-the-art technology to improve the accuracy of their voter registration rolls and improve access to voter registration for US citizens. He is the first executive director of ERIC, which was formed in May, 2012 by seven states. Prior to joining ERIC, Mr. Lindback served as a senior officer for Election Initiatives at the Pew Charitable Trusts. Prior to joining Pew, Mr. Lindback worked for 14 years in state elections administration. He served for eight years as director of elections in Oregon, which made him the chief administrator for the conduct of all elections in Oregon. During his tenure with the Oregon Secretary of State he was elected president in 2008 of the National Association of State Elections Directors. He was also elected to serve on the executive board of the U.S. Elections Assistance Commission's Standards Advisory Board. Prior to his work in Oregon, John worked as chief of staff to the lieutenant governor of Alaska for six years, which included administrative oversight of the Alaska Division of Elections. Mr. Lindback holds a B.A. degree in journalism (1976) from the University of Arizona.

Ms. Elaine Manlove has served as the Election Commissioner for State of Delaware since 2007. Previously, she spent eight years as Director of the Department of Elections for New Castle County. In both Elections positions, she has seen many changes from both sides of the election process – local and state perspectives. She has overseen Delaware's electronic signature project to allow voters to have their registration information transmitted in real-time from the

Division of Motor Vehicles to the Departments of Election in each county. As Commissioner, she is responsible for the Help America Vote Act funds, the statewide voter registration system, campaign finance and the Parent/Student Mock Election. Ms. Manlove is a graduate of The Election Center's Certified Election Registration Administrator (CERA) program and is member of NASED (National Association of State Election Directors). A native Delawarean, born and raised in the City of Wilmington, she graduated from St. Elizabeth's High School and Goldey Beacom College.

Mr. Chris Thomas is the Director of Elections in the Michigan Department of State, a position he has held since 1981. Mr. Thomas also served on the Presidential Commission for Election Administration. From 1977 to 1981, Mr. Thomas served as Director of Campaign Finance Information and Director of Campaign Finance Operations for the State of Michigan. Mr. Thomas served as the Director of Public Communications at the Federal Election Commission from 1975 to 1977. He began his election administration career in 1974 in Washington, D.C. where he was a Staff Assistant responsible for managing campaign finance filings in the Office of the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives. Mr. Thomas is a founding member of the National Association of State Election Directors. Mr. Thomas has served on the Board of Advisors to the Election Assistance Commission since 2005. He received a B.A. from Michigan State University, an M.A. from St. Louis University, and a J.D. from the Thomas M. Cooley Law School.