

United States Senate Committee on Rules and Administration

Hearing – “Election Administration: *Making Voter Rolls*

More Complete and More Accurate”

Statement of Senator Charles E. Schumer

April 9, 2014

Today the Rules Committee is holding the third hearing in a series on the Presidential Commission on Election Administration’s “best practice” recommendations. Earlier we heard an overview of the Commission’s reports from bipartisan co-chairs Bob Bauer and Ben Ginsberg. Last month we heard about the innovations of online voter registration and electronic pollbooks from state and local election administrators who have successfully implemented these reforms.

At today’s hearing we will continue looking at specific recommendations made by the Presidential Commission. Today’s hearing focuses on reforms that both increase the number of Americans that are registered to vote and ensure that the voter rolls are as accurate as possible. These issues, as much as any we have discussed, are integral to fulfilling the promise of our democracy.

Every Election Day, there are too many stories of American citizens who are not able to cast a ballot that counts because either they are not registered to vote or their registration information is not current.

Even more common is the number of Americans that must spend additional time at the polling place because so many registrations must be updated on Election Day. This can be very time consuming for individuals who need to update their information, poll workers, and even voters whose information is updated, but who must still wait in line for others to provide correct information. Fortunately, in many instances there is still an opportunity for individuals who have moved within the jurisdiction to update their information and still cast a ballot.

Today’s hearing is focused on ways to prevent these problems instead of trying to fix them at the polls. The solutions that our witnesses will testify about today will help all Americans, not just the voters who need to be registered or update their registration information. In addition to increasing the speed at which voters can be checked-in on Election Day, more accurate voter rolls save money and time, which are precious resources for local election officials.

We are fortunate today to hear from current and former state election officials who have already applied innovative solutions to improve the way they handle elections. At our last hearing, my colleague Senator Coons mentioned that his state of Delaware has developed a program that seamlessly integrates the voter registration process into the routine process of obtaining or

updating a driver's license. This program, known as "eSignature," is helping to fulfill the promise of the 1993 National Voter Registration Act in Delaware. Today, Delaware's State Election Commissioner Elaine Manlove will tell us about this program, which she has championed and turned into a national example of good governance.

We will also hear about the Electronic Registration Information Center or ERIC. This program, started by the Pew Center on the States, is now owned and governed by its member states. ERIC allows partner states to share resources, compare lists for potential duplicates and identify potentially eligible citizens who are not registered. While still in its early stages, the ERIC program has already proven that it improves the quality of the registration rolls and helps states to identify citizens who might want to register and vote. I look forward to learning more about the ERIC program from the testimony of our witnesses.

I am pleased that we have another outstanding panel to discuss the important topic of improving election administration. Our witnesses have worked at the cutting edge of their field to improve how our elections are conducted. I am hopeful that their success in their states can be spread throughout the country.

I would like to thank all of our witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to their testimony.