

Summary of Opening Statement of Thomas Hicks
Nominee for Commissioner
Elections Assistance Commission

Thank you for allowing me to testify this morning on my qualifications to be a commissioner at the Election Assistance Commission.

Over the last 7 plus years, I have worked at the Committee on House Administration, the equivalent committee in the House to Senate Rules and Administration. My primary responsibility is advising and providing guidance to the committee members and caucus, on elections issues. Prior to that, I worked at Common Cause, a nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organization that empowers citizens to make their voices heard in the political process and to hold their elected leaders accountable to the public interest. I enjoyed working with state and local election officials, civil rights organizations and other stakeholders to improve the voting process.

Throughout my childhood, my parents instilled in me two basic lessons of life. The first was that, in the most basic terms, your car may break down, your house may burn down, and life will inevitably throw you a series of unexpected curveballs, but your education will always be there, so get as much of it as you can. The second lesson was to always treat your fellow man as you would like to be treated. These lessons have guided me through life and, if confirmed, I hope to continue to apply these life lessons at the EAC.

Should I be confirmed, I hope to use the lessons learned in life and my experiences to continue working to achieve this goal. Thank you and I will be happy to answer any questions.

Senate Committee on Rules
Statement by Thomas Hicks, Nominee to be a Member of the Election Assistance Commission
Wednesday, June 29, 2011

Chairman Schumer, Ranking Member Alexander, members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on my qualifications and thoughts on becoming a commissioner on the Elections Assistance Commission. I would like to thank House Minority Leader Pelosi, the Committee on House Administration Ranking Member Bob Brady, House Minority Whip Hoyer, Democratic Caucus Chair Larson, and a list of other members from both sides of the aisle that is too long to state during my five minutes. I would also like to thank everyone who supported and encouraged my nomination. I am honored and humbled to be nominated and re-nominated by President Obama to serve on the Election Assistance Commission.

I would like to acknowledge the presence of my three children, Elizabeth who is 7, Megan who is 4 and Edward who is 2. I would also like to recognize my mother Annie Hicks who traveled from Boston for this occasion. I would also like to express my appreciation to all the people who helped me get to this point today, many of whom could not make it but are here in spirit.

I am the oldest child of Benny and Annie Hicks, who were born and raised in southern Georgia. They moved to Massachusetts after marrying in the late sixties to start a family and seek out new work opportunities. Although, they were not able to access the formal educational opportunities provided to me, both have taught me more lessons than any text book. They are now enjoying their retirement and doting on their grandchildren. My mother retired from the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and my father as a Mechanic for various companies.

Throughout my childhood, my parents instilled in me two basic lessons of life. The first was that, in the most basic terms, your car may break down, your house may burn down, and life will inevitably throw you a series of unexpected curveballs, but your education will always be there, so get as much of it as you can. The second lesson was to always treat your fellow man as you would like to be treated. These lessons have guided me through life and, if confirmed, I hope to continue to apply these life lessons at the EAC.

Another powerful experience was watching my mother vote for the first time. She brought my brother and I into the voting booth and pulled the lever. She gently reminded us that when she was growing up in southern GA, it was a lot harder for minorities to vote than on that day when she voted for President Jimmy Carter. I was able to share this story with President Carter a few years ago. The ability to help facilitate access to our voting system – the cornerstone of our system of government – for all eligible Americans, has been a strong motivating factor in my career.

Over the last 7 plus years, I have worked at the Committee on House Administration, the equivalent committee in the House to Senate Rules and Administration. I interviewed for the job the day after my oldest daughter was born. My primary responsibility is advising and providing guidance to the committee members and caucus, on elections issues. Prior to that, I worked at Common Cause, a nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organization that empowers citizens to make their voices heard in the political process and to hold their elected leaders accountable to the public interest. I enjoyed working with state and local election officials, civil rights organizations and other stakeholders to improve the voting process.

Growing up in Boston, and participating in a voluntary busing program to the Boston area suburbs for high school, gave me a unique perspective on working with a diverse constituency—not just racially, but economically, and culturally. As Senior Class President, I was able to bridge gaps of mistrust between the school's administration, students, teachers and parents. These experiences have served me well in my collegiate athletic career, but also in my pursuit of higher education and my career path.

I believe that, regardless of partisan ideology or political affiliation, we all want the same thing—fair, accurate elections, where we are confident of the outcome and all eligible Americans (domestic and overseas) are able to participate in our process, the best in the world. Should I be confirmed, I hope to use the lessons learned in life and my experiences to continue working to achieve this goal. Thank you and I will be happy to answer any questions.

Thomas Hicks

Thomas Hicks serves as the Democratic Senior Elections Counsel for the Committee on House Administration. In this role, he is responsible for issues relating to campaign finance, election reform, contested elections and oversight of both the Election Assistance Commission and Federal Election Commission. Mr. Hicks came to the committee from the government watchdog group Common Cause, where he served as a Senior Lobbyist and Policy Analyst.

Prior to joining Common Cause, Mr. Hicks worked for nearly 8 years in the Clinton Administration as a Special Assistant and Legislative Assistant in the Office of Congressional Relations for the Office of Personnel Management.

Mr. Hicks, a native of Boston, Massachusetts, earned his Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Clark University in Worcester, MA. He earned his law degree from the Catholic University of America - Columbus School of Law.