

SENATE RULES COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON IMPROVING ELECTION DATA COLLECTION

*Hearing focused on need for additional election data and how data can
be used to improve election administration*

*Schumer: The Starting Place Must Be Developing a Solid Understanding
of What is Happening in Polling Places Across the Country on Election
Day*

WASHINGTON, DC - The Senate Committee on Rules and Administration heard testimony today from election experts on using election data collection to improve how elections are conducted across the country.

“Without concrete data to guide us, we are often simply taking our best shot at the dartboard of election reforms,” Schumer said. “While we have heard about great suggestions for reform, the starting place must be developing a solid understanding of what is happening in polling places across the country on Election Day.”

The Presidential Commission on Election Administration’s report highlighted the need for improved data collection in the elections field. The witnesses testified about the broad issues of election data collection, highlighted leaders in the field, and discussed the important role the Election Assistance Commission can and should play in improving the collection and use of election data.

The panel of witnesses includes Heather Gerken, J. Skelly Wright Professor of Law, Yale Law School; Charles Stewart III, Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor of Political Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Kevin Kennedy, Director and General Counsel, Wisconsin Government Accountability Board; David Becker, Director of Elections Initiatives, The Pew Charitable Trusts and Justin Riemer, a former Deputy Secretary and Governor’s Confidential Policy Advisor at the Virginia State Board of Elections.

This marks the fourth 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 Presidential Commission on Election Administration. 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. The third was held on April 9, 2014 when the committee discussed programs designed to improve the quality of the voting lists and expand the number of registered voters.

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Ms. Heather Gerken is the J. Skelly Wright Professor of Law at Yale Law School. Professor Gerken specializes in election law and constitutional law. Her most recent scholarship explores questions of election reform, federalism, diversity, and dissent. Professor Gerken clerked for Judge Stephen Reinhardt of the 9th Circuit and Justice David Souter of the United States Supreme Court. After practicing for several years, she joined the Harvard faculty in September 2000 and was awarded tenure in 2005. In 2006, she joined the Yale faculty. Professor Gerken served as a senior legal adviser to the Obama for America campaign in 2008 and 2012. Her proposal for creating a “Democracy Index” was incorporated into separate bills by then-Senator Hillary Clinton, then-Senator Barack Obama, and Congressman Israel and turned into reality by the Pew Charitable Trusts, which created the nation’s first Election Performance Index in February 2013.

Mr. Charles Stewart III is the Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor of Political Science at MIT, where he has taught since 1985. His research and teaching areas include congressional politics, elections, and American political development.

His current research about Congress touches on the historical development of committees, party leadership, and Senate elections. Since 2001, Professor Stewart has been a member of the Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Project, a leading research efforts that applies scientific analysis to questions about election technology, election administration, and election reform. He is currently the MIT director of the project. Professor Stewart is an established leader in the analysis of the performance of election systems and the quantitative assessment of election performance.

Mr. Kevin Kennedy has been Wisconsin’s chief elections officer for the past 30 years. Wisconsin has consistently-high rankings in surveys of voter turnout and other measures of effective election administration. Mr. Kennedy started his career in government as an assistant district attorney and graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in mathematics.

Mr. David Becker is director of Election Initiatives for The Pew Charitable Trusts. He supervises work in election administration, including using technology to provide voters with information they need to cast a ballot; assessing election performance through better data; and upgrading voter registration systems. Before joining Pew, Becker served as a senior trial attorney in the Voting Section of the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division, where he led

numerous investigations into violations of federal voting laws regarding redistricting, minority voting rights, voter intimidation, and vote dilution. In addition, he supervised federal monitoring of elections and helped direct Department of Justice policy on enforcing the Help America Vote Act.

Mr. Justin Riemer previously served as the Deputy Secretary and Governor's Confidential Policy Advisor at the Virginia State Board of Elections from 2010 to 2014. Mr. Riemer was the Editor and Co-Author of the Republican National Lawyers Association's (RNLA) recent report: "RNLA Response to the Report and Recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration: The Republican Legal Community on the PCEA Report with Additional Prescriptions for Reform".