

**The Honorable Mike Quigley
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government**

Hearing on the Election Assistance Commission

Opening Statement

11:00AM | February 16, 2021

This hearing will come to order.

As this hearing is fully virtual, we must address a few housekeeping matters.

For today’s meeting the Chair or staff designated by the Chair may mute participants’ microphones when they are not under recognition for the purposes of eliminating inadvertent background noise.

Members are responsible for muting and unmuting themselves. If I notice that you have not unmuted yourself, I will ask you if you would like the staff to unmute you. If you indicate approval by nodding, staff will unmute your microphone.

I remind all Members and Witnesses that the five-minute clock still applies. If there is a technology issue, we will move to the next Member until the issue is resolved and you will retain the balance of your time.

You will notice a clock on your screen that will show how much time is remaining. At 1-minute remaining, the clock will turn to yellow. At 30 seconds remaining, I will gently tap the gavel to remind Members that their time is almost expired. When your time has expired, the clock will turn red and I will begin to recognize the next Member.

In terms of the speaking order, we will follow the order set forth in the House Rules, beginning with the Chair and Ranking Member, then Members present at the time the hearing is called to order will be recognized in order of seniority, and finally Members not present at the time the hearing is called to order.

Finally, House Rules require me to remind you that we have set up an e-mail address to which Members can send anything they wish to submit in writing at any of our hearings or markups. That e-mail address has been provided in advance to your staff.

Before I give my remarks, I'd like to welcome our Ranking Member, Mr. Womack, for his very first hearing with our subcommittee. We have gained a couple new members to our subcommittee this Congress, Mr. Pocan and Ms. Lawrence—I'd like to welcome them and our returning subcommittee members.

I'll keep my opening statement brief, so we can get right into questions.

This morning we welcome Benjamin Hovland, Chairman of the Election Assistance Commission, to testify on EAC's work to ensure our Federal elections are fair, secure, and accessible.

Chairman Hovland, thank you for being here today.

It is well known that our foreign adversaries have made attempts and even breached our U.S. election system to varying degrees in the 2016, 2018, and 2020 elections.

U.S. officials at all levels of government have worked tirelessly to address vulnerabilities in our election systems.

As a result, the 2020 election was declared, quote, "the most secure in American history," by the previous Administration's own Department of Homeland Security.

The fact these dedicated election officials were able to achieve this feat amid a global pandemic is even more remarkable.

However, now is not the time to proclaim “mission accomplished.”

Even though the 2020 election was “secure,” we know there was malicious activity from foreign adversaries leading up to and on Election Day.

The threats to our democracy are constant and ever evolving. Our enemies will not be taking a break, so neither can we.

This subcommittee has helped lead Congress’ efforts to address this issue.

Since fiscal year 2018, we provided **\$805 million in grants** to states to improve election security. We provided an additional **\$400 million** last year to help states prepare for the 2020 elections during the coronavirus pandemic.

As we know, EAC administers this funding to the states. Commissioner Hovland I hope you can help us better understand what the states still need and how they are currently spending the money.

We have made significant and important investments in these grants, but it seems the sporadic nature of these funds has hampered the ability of states spend the money quickly.

I am curious to know your thoughts on how consistent year after year funding could help improve the rate at which states spend. And other ideas you might have about incentivizing states to get money out the door faster.

We will also want to hear about EAC's work to help election officials improve the administration of elections and help Americans participate in the voting process. We must ensure the agency has sufficient funds to do so.

After their funding was slashed nearly in half between 2010 and 2019, EAC received a significant infusion of funds in fiscal year 2020. Fiscal year 2021 sustained that upward trend, providing the agency with \$17 million.

As the U.S. continues to face threats to our elections, now more than ever we must ensure EAC has the necessary resources to provide vital support to states and the voting public.

I look forward to hearing from Commissioner Hovland this morning on the election security grants and what additional tools and resources are needed for the safety, security, and accessibility of our elections.

Before I turn to our witness for his statement, I would like to recognize our Ranking Member, Mr. Womack, for his opening remarks.