



U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION
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**U.S. Committee on House Administration, Elections Subcommittee
Hearing on Examining Best Practices for Strengthening Election Security**

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May 20, 2026

Chairwoman Lee, Ranking Member Sewell, and members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome the chance to highlight the ongoing work of the [Election Assistance Commission \(EAC\)](#) to bolster election security. This hearing demonstrates your commitment to election integrity across America, and we thank you for your efforts.

Whether responding to the needs of election officials or strengthening the reach of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), the EAC partners with states to support the administration of federal elections. As an independent, bipartisan agency, responsible to both Congress and the states, the EAC fulfills a unique role. This structure allows the EAC to offer trusted, objective support that is grounded in federal law and responsive to the practical realities faced by state and local election officials as they currently manage the 2026 elections.

At the same time, the U.S. election system serves as a global leader and model for secure and reliable election administration. Policymakers in democracies around the world look to the EAC, particularly our Testing and Certification Program and its voluntary standards, as they consider how to bolster confidence and security in their own elections. This ongoing interest underscores the importance of maintaining a strong and transparent election infrastructure across the United States with support from Congress. The Commission is well-positioned to build on this foundation and continue advancing safe, secure, accurate, and accessible elections.

Protecting the security of our elections bolsters confidence in the people, processes, and technology that are the cornerstones of our election system. Together, we strive to make voting secure and remain vigilant in our work to keep these processes and systems safe. Well-established practices including pre-election testing, auditing, and the use of paper ballots ensure that our election infrastructure is protected from malicious disruptions. That said, the current atmosphere requires constant attention, and the EAC works tirelessly to promote best practices to aid hard-working election officials.

I would like to discuss several key areas where the Commission provides meaningful security-focused services and best practices to election administrators who are on the frontlines. This includes advancing the latest iteration of the [Voluntary Voting System Guidelines \(VVSG\)](#), assisting state and local officials through [election supporting technology](#), and effectively distributing [Election Security Grants](#). These EAC initiatives, rooted in HAVA, offer ongoing guidance for election officials, our federal partners, stakeholders, and voters. These programs are vital to maintaining strong election systems that can quickly address evolving threat environments.

The EAC's Voting Technology Team

Building on Chairman Hicks' broader overview, the EAC's Election Technology Division includes the Testing and Certification Program, the Field Services Program (FSP), and the Election Supporting Technology Evaluation Program (ESTEP). Staff on these teams collaborate to be responsive to the needs of election officials to strengthen the integrity and security of voting systems. Under HAVA, the VVSG are at the core of the agency's election technology work.

The EAC's election technology team, which is responsible for testing, certification, and field services, consists of just 10 staff to serve the entire country. While this team continues to provide outsized contributions to the EAC's mission, as demand for these services continues to grow, additional resources will be essential to maintain this level of support for localities nationwide. I would also reference Chairman Hicks' comments about a potential EAC expanded technology testing program. This initiative has the capability to further safeguard election systems and provide critical feedback.

The EAC and VVSG

During FY 2025 and early 2026, the EAC's Election Technology Division achieved a significant milestone in modernizing the nation's voting system infrastructure by [certifying two voting systems to the latest Voluntary Voting System Guidelines, VVSG 2.0](#). These certifications represent the first availability of next-generation voting systems since VVSG 1.0 was adopted by the Commission in 2005. The updated guidelines provide requirements around software integrity, auditability, and system-wide security.

As of May 2026, five additional systems are in test under the VVSG 2.0 standard, and the EAC has made continued progress toward their evaluation this year. These are important steps toward seeing 2.0 systems in voting locations across the nation. Beyond the voting system standards, the EAC also conducts accreditation and ongoing assessments of the [Voting System Test](#)

[Laboratories \(VSTL\)](#) that perform this critical testing work. This includes documentation review and on-site audits to verify that appropriate testing processes and procedures are in place.

Some of the enhanced security requirements of VVSG 2.0 include:

- Voter-verifiable paper record of every ballot,
- Increased support for auditing: improved cybersecurity requirements of air-gapped systems, software integrity checks, multi-factor authentication, enhanced access controls, and secure system updates,
- Enhanced physical standards consisting of notifications of unauthorized access and restrictions on what can be connected to the system, and
- Requirement for software independence, meaning no change in the software can change the results in a way that cannot be detected.

VVSG 1.0 is now a legacy standard. The EAC formally closed submissions in November 2023 and completed certification of all previously submitted systems in 2025. The EAC has fully transitioned to VVSG 2.0 to devote attention to refining and strengthening the standards going forward. However, all EAC-certified voting systems are secure, and limited maintenance modifications to VVSG 1.0 systems may continue to be tested and certified.

The EAC's VVSG-related [principles and best practices](#) reflect developments through years of testing, certification, and experience monitoring the quality of fielded systems. At their core, these guidelines translate the principles of the EAC's VVSG into clear and actionable steps that officials can use every day. The guidance is structured to cover the full election lifecycle and focuses on security, accessibility, usability, auditability, and interoperability of voting systems.

During 2025, the Testing and Certification Division also created a draft VVSG 2.1 in collaboration with stakeholders and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). As part of this effort, the EAC convened five meetings of the [Technical Guidelines Development Committee](#) to collect feedback directly from members. The VVSG 2.1 initiative reflects the agency's commitment to the continuous improvement of election systems and the modernization of guidance centered around election integrity.

VVSG 2.0 also emphasizes transparency, recognizing that clearly communicating security processes is essential to building voter confidence. These practices are not conceptual. They reflect what election officials are already doing to secure systems and manage risk. Measures like audit logging, the use of paper records, tamper-evident seals, two-person integrity, and chain-of-custody procedures show how VVSG guidelines are implemented in daily operations. Continuity planning also plays a key role, ensuring that systems remain resilient even when unexpected issues arise in the field.

The EAC's Field Services Program

The EAC's [Field Services Program \(FSP\)](#) provides an important on-the-ground complement to the agency's testing and certification work, allowing the EAC to assess how voting systems perform once they are deployed in real-world environments. Established in 2023, the FSP brings technical expertise directly to election offices and testing labs to confirm deployed systems match their certified configurations.

This work underscores a crucial point: The best validation of a system is how it performs in the field. Through in-person engagement with states and localities, the EAC conducts quality-monitoring activities designed to strengthen confidence in system integrity.

During our travels, we frequently hear how election offices rely on national, accredited experts to strengthen not only their own cybersecurity posture but also to address and identify critical threats across the broader election security community. Our increased presence in this field has been greatly appreciated and repeatedly acknowledged by election officials. The EAC has pivoted as much as possible and stands ready to continue to lead where needed. As security demands on election systems and processes continue to grow, so does the need for sustained investment and trustworthy support.

Election Supporting Technology Evaluation Program

The EAC launched the [Election Supporting Technology Evaluation Program \(ESTEP\)](#) in 2022. This marked the start of a focused EAC effort to research best practices around election supporting technologies, such as [electronic poll books](#), electronic ballot delivery, voter registration, and election night reporting systems, which are not covered by the VVSG. These systems help support elections throughout the year through voter list maintenance, ballot accounting, and the timely reporting of results. With dedicated funding in 2023, the program expanded to support pilot testing, developing draft voluntary standards and program manuals building internal capacity through new staff and partnerships with VSTLs.

Recognizing ESTEP's value to the election community, the EAC Commissioners voted unanimously in December 2023 to establish ESTEP as a permanent component of the agency's work. That foundation led to a major milestone in May 2024 when the EAC launched the nation's first federal Voluntary Electronic Poll Book Certification Program. Building on a successful pilot that evaluated seven systems, the program sets a path for a voluntary federal-level assessment of electronic poll books. It has already certified three systems to date, marking a major milestone in advancing trusted, standardized electronic poll book technology for election officials nationwide. The value of this program is noted by the fact that just weeks after

certifying the first electronic poll book system, North Carolina adopted the agency's [Voluntary Electronic Poll Book Certification requirements](#) for its own [certification program](#).

Started in 2024, the [Election Night Reporting \(ENR\) Systems pilot program](#) focuses on systems that share unofficial election results with the public on election night. While they are separate from voting systems, they aggregate data from a range of sources and can vary widely in how they are designed and operated. Given the widespread use of ENR systems across the country, the pilot evaluates the need for a uniform approach to validating how these systems implement strong security and accessibility features expected by jurisdictions as information is reported and disseminated to the public.

To support this effort, the EAC developed the Voluntary Election Night Reporting Guidelines (VENRG), focusing on core areas like usability, security, and accessibility. The guidelines were shaped by input from technical experts and election officials, helping to ensure that election night reporting systems are easier to use, more secure, and accessible to the public while promoting greater consistency in how election results are presented. The EAC also has plans to incorporate electronic ballot delivery and voter registration systems into the ESTEP process.

As jurisdictions continue to modernize their systems, the EAC is not only analyzing emerging election technologies like voter registration and election night reporting systems but also translating those findings into practical guidance for manufacturers and election officials. By developing voluntary guidelines and identifying best practices, ESTEP helps strengthen the systems that voters rely on for timely and accurate election information. We look forward to collaborating with Congress on further codification of this program's goals as the EAC continues to ensure that potential blind spots in the election technology landscape are eliminated.

Artificial Intelligence, Elections, and the EAC

Artificial intelligence (AI) is already shaping election administration. We frequently observe election officials using AI constructively, including improving staff training, voter communications, and resource allocation.

As Chairman Hicks' testimony has mentioned, to support this, the EAC provides products and services for state and local officials, including AI-focused trainings and presentations. Recent examples include a presentation to members of the Local Leadership Council FACA board on April 13 that focused on AI governance and policies. Also, a virtual office hours session took place on May 6, focusing on the practical and innovative ways local election officials are using AI tools and corresponding with the publication of the new resource, [AI in Action: Case Studies for Election Officials: A Practical Guide to Implementing AI in Your Election Office](#).

In February 2024, the Commission adopted [grants guidance](#) to help counter the malicious use of generative AI tools. This determination addressed the use of HAVA grants related to countering AI-generated content, including manipulation or fabrication of images, audio, and video to create misleading election information with the capability to disenfranchise voters, influence election outcomes, or harm trust in electoral processes.

The EAC continues to work with our federal partners and the private sector to leverage AI technologies for a more robust defense. The EAC launched an initiative this year to evaluate the cybersecurity of election technologies utilizing vetted security researchers as well as AI-assisted assessments. We encourage election technology manufacturers to make use of these resources as well as AI tools to continuously improve the security of their systems.

As demand for AI compute resources increases, competition for computer memory and related components is already causing supply chain pressures that could drive up costs or delay the deployment of newer and more secure voting systems. This comes at a time when jurisdictions are preparing a replacement cycle with VVSG 2.0-certified systems. The EAC is monitoring these potential supply chain risks and will work with the sector to develop solutions.

The EAC will continue to provide AI-related best practices and serve as a conduit between election officials and technology providers as we navigate this year's elections and the ones to come.

Election Security Grants

A core component of the EAC's mission is distributing, monitoring, and auditing the use of federal grants that support improvements to election administration and security. Federal HAVA funds, including the recent appropriations of \$45 million in FY 2026 and \$15 million in FY 2025, are a key resource for election administrators dealing with the continuing demands of election security and evolving threats. Grant funding is crucial, and the election community values your efforts to address the needs of state and local governments through the congressional appropriations process. We frequently hear from states that they are best positioned to strengthen and sustain election security when federal funding is predictable, consistent, and sufficient to support long-term planning.

HAVA funds help states modernize aging voting systems and invest in security resources that strengthen election infrastructure. Election security is not a one-time investment, and states must plan for ongoing system maintenance and upgrades to ensure the integrity of election infrastructures. State grant reports show that states use funds to support sustainable security practices such as network monitoring, endpoint protection, multifactor authentication, and automatic system backups. States also conduct frequent cybersecurity training for election

officials, including tabletop exercises and cross-training with other states and with our federal partner agencies.

The EAC has also issued guidance in response to escalating threats of violence against election officials reported by the states. This [resource outlines](#) how HAVA Section 101 funds can be used for physical security resources and services to protect state and local election personnel. Some of the practical examples of allowable uses include enhancing facility access controls, improving surveillance and lighting, monitoring social media threats, and supporting coordination with local law enforcement.

Through technical assistance and regular engagement with election offices, we discuss how HAVA funds support states' security goals and gather best practices that inform our [Grants Guidance](#). This guidance helps election officials prioritize operational needs and respond quickly to evolving challenges. Managed effectively, HAVA funding allows states to make investments in the security and resilience of election infrastructure.

Conclusion

With security top of mind for election officials and all public servants, the EAC will continue to vigorously move forward in our work to protect the election infrastructure that supports America's representative democracy. We are a small agency, but one [exclusively devoted to fulfilling the promise of HAVA](#) and meeting the evolving needs of election administration improvement across the country.

While HAVA was enacted with security in mind, the threat landscape and the presence of malicious actors have since grown exponentially in both number and complexity of attacks. Today, state and local officials are incorporating cybersecurity protections and physical security measures into nearly every aspect of elections. If we are to continue to be the world leader of transparent, safe, and secure elections, we must provide the resources and expertise to state officials to diligently execute their duties. Through adequate funding of the EAC, the Commission will continue in 2026 and beyond to provide crucial support and policy recommendations to states and localities.

Thank you for your support of the EAC and your tireless commitment to state and local election officials and election integrity. We look forward to collaborating closely with you on these and other important matters. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.