

Supporting Statement A

U.S. Election Assistance Commission

Study of Voter Hotlines Operated by Election Offices

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

The proposed information collection is necessary to meet requirements of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 (42 U.S.C. 15301). HAVA §241(a) requires the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to conduct and make available to the public studies regarding the election administration issues described in subsection (b). The goal of these studies is to promote methods of voting and administering elections which:

- (1) will be the most convenient, accessible, and easy to use for voters, including members of the uniformed services and overseas voters, individuals with disabilities, including the blind and visually impaired, and voters with limited proficiency in the English language;
- (2) will yield the most accurate, secure, and expeditious system for voting and tabulating election results;
- (3) will be nondiscriminatory and afford each registered and eligible voter an equal opportunity to vote and to have that vote counted; and
- (4) will be efficient and cost effective for use.

Section 241(b)(9) of HAVA requires the EAC to periodically study methods of educating voters about the process of registering to vote and voting, the operation of voting mechanisms, the location of polling places, and all other aspects of participating in elections. Furthermore, Section 245(a)(2)(C) of HAVA indicates that the EAC may investigate the impact that new communications or Internet technology systems used in the electoral process could have on voter participation rates, voter education, and public accessibility. Based on these requirements, the EAC seeks to conduct an information collection to determine the current state of voter information hotlines that are operated by Federal, State, and local government agencies and election offices. The findings of the proposed information collection will serve as the basis for developing recommendations regarding the development and implementation of voter hotlines. These recommendations will be part of a report on the key findings of the proposed information collection, which will be made available to election officials and the public.

2. Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will be used. If the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support information that will be disseminated to the public, then explain how the collection complies with all applicable Information Quality Guidelines.

In 2005, the EAC undertook a research study of voter hotline data available online to determine trends. A voter hotline was defined as a toll-free line that connects voters with elections offices, which then disseminate information and educate voters. The EAC found that there were several hotlines in operation during the 2004 Presidential election, and their sponsorship and capabilities varied to a great degree. To build on and augment these research findings, the EAC wishes to

conduct another study to determine the current state of voter information hotlines that are operated by Federal, State, and local government agencies and election offices. The information will be gathered through a one-time Internet survey of Federal, State, and local government agencies and election offices. A report on the key findings of the information collection, along with recommendations for the development and implementation of voter hotlines, will be made available to the election officials and the public at the conclusion of the information collection. The report will include information on existing voter hotlines and their features by state and will be made available on the EAC website at www.eac.gov. HAVA §241(c) also requires the EAC to submit to the President, to the Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate a report on each study conducted under subsection (a) together with such recommendations for administrative and legislative actions as the EAC determines are appropriate.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological techniques or other forms of information technology.

This information collection will utilize a web-based Internet software to conduct an opinion survey. The survey will be self-administered electronically.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

This is the second study conducted by the EAC regarding HAVA Section 241 (b) (9). In 2005, the EAC undertook a pilot research study of voter hotline data available online to determine trends. The purpose of the proposed information collection is to build on and augment the previous research conducted by the EAC. Previous and contemporaneous information on information hotlines offered by U.S. election offices has been reviewed to eliminate duplication; no other information collection was identified as having collected this information.

5. If the collection of information involves small businesses or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.

This collection of information does not involve small businesses or other small entities.

6. Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently.

If the EAC does not collect this information it may be unable to comply with its statutory requirements under HAVA (42 U.S.C. 15301). This collection will only be conducted once.

7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

Not applicable.

8. Describe the efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

The EAC published a notice in the Federal Register on February 7, 2007, at 72 FR 5682 soliciting comments for a period of sixty (60) days. A second notice was published on May 21, 2007, at 72 FR 28038 soliciting comments for a period of thirty (30) days. This information collection request did not receive any public comments. A copy of the Federal Register notices, a summary of the comments received, and an explanation of the revisions made have been submitted with this ICR. Small, medium, and large election jurisdictions were consulted on extensively during the drafting of the information collection instrument to ensure it accurately captured the information the EAC seeks to study.

9. Explain any decisions to provide payments or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

The EAC does not provide any payment or gift to respondents.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

Prior to volunteering to participate, respondents will be assured that responses will not be associated with a particular respondent.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

There are no questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Provide an estimate in hours of the burden of the collection of information.

The burden to each respondent is .5 hours (30 minutes). This survey will be sent to each election jurisdictions in the US resulting in six thousand four hundred and fifty-five (6,455) respondents being sent the survey. Based on a 30% response rate the total annual burden is estimated at 968.5 hours.

- a. Number of respondents = approximately 1,937 (30% response rate out of a sample size of 6,455)
- b. Number of responses per each respondent = 1
- c. Total annual responses = 1
- d. Hours per response = .5 hours (30 minutes)
- e. Total annual reporting burden = 968.5 hours (*# of respondents x frequency of response x hours of response*)

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or record-keepers resulting from the collection (excluding the value of the burden hours in #12 above).

There are no capital or start-up costs associated with this information collection.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

The estimated cost to the Federal Government is \$50,000. This estimate includes: \$1,600 for the data collection software, \$47,700 for staff labor, and \$700 in office expenses including communication and printing costs.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 or 14 of the OMB 83-I.

This is the first time this information collection has been performed by the Federal government.

16. For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.

A report on the key findings of the information collection, along with recommendations for the development and implementation of voter hotlines, will be made available to the election officials and the public at the conclusion of the information collection. The report will include information on existing voter hotlines and their features by state and will be made available on the EAC website at www.eac.gov. HAVA §241(c) also requires the EAC to submit to the President, to the Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate a report on each study conducted under subsection (a) together with such recommendations for administrative and legislative actions as the EAC determines are appropriate.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons why display would be inappropriate.

Not applicable to this collection.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19 of the OMB 83-I.

To the extent that the topics apply to this collection of information, the EAC is not making any exceptions to the “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions.”