

## Summary of Public Comments Received on the Information Collection

### U.S. Election Assistance Commission

#### Study of the Feasibility and Advisability of Establishing a Program of Free Return or Reduced Postage for Absentee Ballots

#### Survey of Registered Voters

#### Public Comment Summary:

The EAC published a notice in the Federal Register on January 23, 2007, at 72 FR 2875 soliciting comments for a period of sixty (60) days. A second notice was published on May 21, 2007, at 72 FR 28037 soliciting comments for a period of thirty (30) days. This information collection request received only one comment. The comment asked how the accuracy of the sample would be harmed through the exclusion of respondents who could only be reached through a cell phone, and it suggested that the sample include respondents that could be reached both through landline telephones and cell phones.

#### Action Taken:

Research was conducted to evaluate this claim and determine if it was necessary to include cell phone users in this study. Based upon this research, it has been determined that the study will still be conducted using only random digit dialing technology (RDD).

Previous research on this issue of reaching cell phone respondents reveals that the exclusion of this group of people does not have a significant impact on the data. In March 2006, the Pew Research Center conducted a survey to evaluate the accuracy of surveys that only rely on a sample of a population of landline telephone users are accurate. Using a sample of 1,503 adults, the project interviewed 752 landline users and 751 cell phone users. The survey revealed that “the absence of this [cell-only] group has only a minimal impact on the results.”<sup>1</sup> In fact, the study found that the inclusion of cell phone respondents “changes the overall results of the poll by no more than one percentage point on any of the nine key political questions included in the study.”<sup>2</sup> This report suggests that the inclusion of cell phone respondents may have little affect on the results, and subsequently it may be applicable to conduct a survey with a population of landline telephone users in order to achieve a truly representative survey.

Additionally, contacting cell phone users can increase the cost of the survey. In the March 2006 Pew Research Center Survey, the cost of contacting cell phone users was 2.4 times higher than the cost of contacting landline users. Additional costs for the cell phone users include, providing a cash incentive to offset cell phone minute charges, and

---

<sup>1</sup> *National Polls Not Undermined by Growing Cell-Only Population: The Cell Phone Challenge to Survey Research* (2006, May 15). The Pew Research Center. March 9, 2007, from: <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/276.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

conducting manual dialing to call respondents as it is prohibited by federal law to use automated dialing devices when calling cell phones.<sup>3</sup>

Significantly, this report points out that most cell phone-only users are between the ages of 18-34.<sup>4</sup> A similar report in 2004 suggests that the pre-election surveys that weighted the data for age was not “significantly biased by the absence of the cell-only voters.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it was determined that it is possible to conduct a telephone survey without contacting cell-phone users.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Keeter, Scott. “The Impact of cell phone noncoverage bias on polling in the 2004 presidential election.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 70 (Spring 2006): 88-99.