

Summary of Public Comments Received and Actions Taken

U.S. Election Assistance Commission

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

Focus Groups

The EAC published a notice in the Federal Register on November 14, 2006, at 71 FR 66321 soliciting comments for a period of sixty (60) days. A second notice was published on May 18, 2007, at 72 FR 28036 soliciting comments for a period of thirty (30) days.

Public Comment Summary:

1. This information collection request received a comment from the U.S. Postal Service citing a concern over the potential establishment of a program of free return or reduced postage for absentee ballots. The U.S. Postal Service indicated that it lacks appropriations to fund such a program, and the positive experience of Oregon and Washington, which rely almost exclusively on a vote-by-mail system, suggests that increased voter participation is not correlated with free or reduced postage for absentee ballots. In a separate communication, the U.S. Postal Service provided suggestions to improve this information collection.
2. This information collection request received a comment from a member of the public indicating that the study will fail to draw any valid conclusions due to such a small sample of potential beneficiaries.

Actions Taken:

In response to these comments, the EAC and the study contractor decided to increase the number of focus groups from three to nine. Each selected group (individuals with disabilities, Senior Citizens and people with low-incomes) will have three dedicated focus groups. To ensure the diversity of responses and participants, each selected group will have one focus group from an urban, rural, and suburban location (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

	Low-income	Senior Citizens	Individuals with Disabilities
Urban	Washington, DC	Sacramento, California	Washington, DC
Rural	Lenawee/Hillsdale County Michigan	Lafayette County, Mississippi	Central Valley, California
Suburban	Memphis, Tennessee Metro	Colorado Springs, Colorado	Detroit area Michigan

	(Marshall County, Mississippi)		
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Furthermore, in consideration of the concerns presented by the U.S. Postal Service and in consultation with the EAC, the study contractor adjusted the focus group discussion guides to address these issues.

The EAC and the study contractor have consulted extensively with the U.S. Postal Service in preparing the information collection request. Wherever possible and in consultation with the EAC, the study contractor adjusted the information collection to accommodate the comments from the U.S. Postal Service. In addition, U.S. State and county election officials were consulted extensively during the development of the focus group materials.