

Voting in 2004:
A Report to the Nation on America's Election Process
Tuesday, December 7, 2004
Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building

Welcome and Opening Statements:

[LOG: TW: = Tova Wang; WH: = Wade Henderson; CP: = Chellie Pingree; RN = Robert Ney; SH: = Steny Hoyer; RH: = Rush Holt; BA: = Barbara Arnwine; RN: = Ralph Neas; MC: = Melanie Campbell

FS: Welcome to everyone. Thank you so much for coming out for this incredibly important event today. My name is Tova Wang, and I am a fellow at the Century Foundation. We are a progressive public policy think tank. We are based in New York and we have a Washington, DC office as well. We've been in existence for 95 years, and throughout those 95 years, we've been dedicated to finding progressive solutions to public policy problems, but none has been more important to this institution than the issue of expanding access to democracy and expanding participation in the democratic process.

We have been focusing on that issue for years, but like so many of us, here I think it was after the 2000 election that we really began to focus on the issue of

election reform. At that time we set up the National Commission on Federal Election Reform, co-chaired by former Presidents Carter and Ford.

And since that time over the past four years, we have continued to work tirelessly on the issue of election reform through reports, research, articles, conferences, public speaking, and all sorts of projects like that. And here we are in 2004, after the passage of the Help America Vote Act, and we see that there's so much more work to do, and we, at the Century Foundation are very much committed to continuing to do that important work.

And that is also why I'm so honored to be here today partnering with two organizations that are absolutely at the forefront of the fight to insure Voting Rights and insure fairness in the democratic process, common cause and the leadership conference for civil rights. I hope that this day will be an important part, an important contribution to the ongoing dialogue we're having over insuring everyone has the right to vote and that everyone's vote is counted.

And I'm now going to turn it over to a man who needs no introduction, the Executive Director of the Leadership Conference for Civil Rights, Wade Henderson.

WH: Thank you Tova, and good morning ladies and gentlemen. Indeed I am Wade Henderson, the Executive Director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the nation's oldest, largest, and most diverse civil and human rights coalition. On behalf of the Leadership Conference I want to welcome you to Voting in 2004, a report to the nation on America's election process.

Before we begin, I'd simply like to thank the Century Foundation, Tova Wang in particular, and Common Cause, Chellie Pingree, its President, our two partners and co-sponsors of today's event, for their tremendous effort in bringing this important conference together, and making it a reality. I also want to express our gratitude for the bipartisan Congressional support we've received, and in a moment, I will turn the podium over to several members of Congress, who have been especially active in the effort to fix our nation's troubled election systems.

The 2004 election represented the nation's first real chance, to move beyond the nightmare we experienced in the 2000 election, and today's conference will help us find out whether we actually did. Voting in 2004 is a look beyond the rumors and innuendo, to find out what voters really faced this year, when they tried to register and when they tried to vote, both before and on Election Day. Did the Help America Vote Act which was passed in 2002 as the answer to the problems in 2000, really help Americans to vote, or do we need to go back to the drawing board for some fine tuning?

It is clear that voters still faced problems in getting to vote, and having their votes counted. Many voters for example, had problems in getting registered and being sent to the right polling places. Some voters were victims of voter suppression and intimidation tactics. Some voters never got there absentee ballots, and many voters continued to face long lines at polling places, due to factors such as insufficient poll workers and voting equal malfunctions.

The main purpose of today's conference is to allow us to carefully study just how extensive these problems were, before we turn to what must be done. Before I introduce the members of Congress who are here to participate in this conference, I'd really like to turn over the podium to my co-sponsor and colleague, Chellie Pingree, the President of Common Cause. Chellie.

CP: Thank you. [applause] Well, thank you very much Wade. I just want to echo your thanks to the Century Foundation for helping to make this happen, and our gratitude to the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. We're very pleased to be here today sharing the podium with you, and I want to thank all of the participants who have been willing to come from across the country to report back on what they saw on Election Day and to all of you who are out there taking very seriously this important issue in our country.

We have a lot on our agenda today, and are going to have to move very quickly, so I'm going to do my best to just echo a few of the remarks that Wade made, and

to reinforce how important it is that we're all here together today.

It's true, just because this election didn't go to the courts, just because there weren't fistfights in the streets, just because we didn't have a long, contested election, doesn't mean there weren't serious problems on Election Day. Common Cause along with a variety of other organizations, had telephone alert lines, election protection systems. We collected a tremendous amount of data on Election Day; in fact if you combine all of the phone calls that were received, it was well over 400,000 calls between Common Cause and Election Protection, and we learned many of the same things that you've already heard, that the lines were long, the registration process was inept, that there were inadequate capacity to handle the number of voters in many polling places and what we call the three hour poll tax happened; in fact it was six hours and nine hours wait in many places around the country where voters did not have the opportunity to vote in the manner which we consider critical.

At Common Cause, we think it's a fundamental right to make sure that everyone who is eligible to vote has that opportunity, and that every vote after Election Day is counted. And that is really why we're here today, to have a report back to the nation to start to collect the data and information that we gathered from around the country, and as Wade says, to implement it in both what Congress will consider in the coming year and in state across the country where we need to make sure that every voter's opportunity and right to vote is protected.

We've released today a report from Common Cause, the report from voters, beginning to outline some of the data and information that we received, and after today, and after many of the other organizations have had an opportunity to compile their data, we look forward to coming back and assessing what are the best public policy options to make sure that we no longer have the elections of 2000's and the elections of 2004, but we can say in America that we're proud of our voting system, that we're comfortable importing it to countries around the world, and that we feel

guaranteed that everyone in this country has the opportunity to vote and to have their vote counted.

Let me turn it back to Wade to introduce the members of Congress. We're very pleased to have their support here today. We know it's a busy day here on Capitol Hill and we look forward to working with these members and many others in solving some of the problems, and I want to give a special thank you to Congressman Rush Holt, who has done a particular amount of work in inspiring, both putting us all here together today, and in his concerns about the security of voting machines and I know he'll be working together with the other members we have here today, the sponsors of HALA and all those who are looking forward to making sure that we never have to talk about these problems again.

WH: Thank you Chellie. [Applause] I noted in my remarks that we have enjoyed bipartisan support in organizing today's important meeting, and I'm especially pleased that the co-sponsors of the Help America Vote Act really saw the importance of gathering information about how the 2004 election actually happened on the ground, and they decide to support the effort today.

Senators Christopher Dodd and Mitch McConnell, the leading co-sponsors in the Senate, are unable to be here today, and they send their regrets, but we appreciate their support and their assistance in helping to arrange the facilities for today. And we're especially pleased to note the Congressman who are here, the representatives who were such leading factors in moving the Help America Vote Act earlier.

I see Congressman Ney, the Chair of the House Administration Committee that helped to move this effort along, Congressman Steny Hoyer, a leader of the House of Representatives, minority leadership, an individual who really needs not introduction, but the two played such an important role in working together to advance this debate, and as Chellie has already mentioned, Congressman Rush Holt, who helped to facilitate today's meeting and we extend our greetings and appreciation Congressmen, for your help.

I would like to begin this process by asking Congressman Ney to come up and speak, and then to be followed by Representative Hoyer and Representative Rush Holt. Congressman Ney, please.

RN: Thank you for the warm round of applause. I appreciate it this morning. I'm just kidding. Nobody applauds back home; I don't expect you here in the nation's capital to do it. I want to thank the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights for inviting me here, and of course, the other two sponsors, Common Cause and the Century Foundation. I'll be brief, but I think it's an important seminar conference report to the nation that you're having.

I'm from a little unnoticed state called Ohio, which I think we have all heard of. We appreciate the 80 to 100 thousand some people that helped our economy that were not from Ohio this year, that lived there from about February to Election Day, so on behalf of all Ohioans - Democratic, Republican, and Independent, Green Party, Nader and everybody - thank you for the boost to our economy.

Again, I want to thank the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights for organizing this conference and inviting me to participate. These are conferences that have been actively involved in election reform, since we began debating it in the 107th Congress, and

I'm glad that they're staying involved. I hope today's conference will help promote greater understanding of our nation's election system, and contribute to effective implementation of productive reforms.

That will be in a wide variety of areas that we could discuss. On November the 2nd, 2004, our national ... our nation conducted the first federal general election governed by the requirements and instructions set forth by HAVA, the act, of course, of 2004, the landmark election reform legislation establishes a new election administration standards and states will be assisted for the first time in the history of this country with federal dollars.

I can't let the time go by without noticing the course and acknowledging Congressman Steny Hoyer, who was the first person that came to me and said, you know, we need to do something. And it went beyond just hanging and dimpled and pregnant chads. It went to a whole lot of different issues, of provisional balloting, which we had controversy, of course, in our state, and

I know that will be talked about, and across the nation in those areas.

But I want to thank Congressman Hoyer for his perseverance on the issue. HAVA was a good thing, HAVA is a good thing. It was the first participation in federal elections, the idea of provisional balloting was to stop the issue of disenfranchisement. For the first time in the history of the United States, the blind were able to vote in secrecy, which was ... those were provisions for persons with disabilities that Congressman Hoyer pushed very hard and I support and also Senator Dodd, I have to mention Senator Dodd and his great work on the [unint.] blunt and a lot of others. So I think it's a good piece of legislation 'till today stands there.

Also, three billion of the 3.9 billion has been funded, and I know that there's more money that's going to be coming. My own never implemented it yet, and I wish that would happen, but right now, I think we have to look at ... prior to the election and after the election.

Prior to the election there were widespread reports predicting our election system might collapse, and the nation would be put through another experience where the winner would not be known for weeks or months. Thankfully those predictions did not turn out to be true, despite a record turnout of 120 million citizens who voted in the recent election, our system held up remarkably well, and the winner was known the next day.

This is not to say the election was perfect, and no election ever is. There's always room for improvement and we have to continually and thoughtfully look for ways to make those improvements. Hopefully today's conference would advance that goal of ways to improve upon the improvements that HAVA brought to the system.

The successful conduct of the 2004 elections should not lead us to become complacent. There remain millions of HAVA dollars that of have yet to be distributed to the states, and many states are still in the process of updating their voting equipment and nearly every state still have significant work to be done, before they'll be able to deploy their statewide

voter registration databases which HAVA requires to be in place by 2006.

So we are under no illusions today, I'm not, I know the other members are not, under any illusions that our election reform is finished. However while work remains to be done, I hope we would all think very carefully before calling for further changes on a massive scale in federal law. History shows that Congress has acted carefully and deliberately when considering significant electoral forums, as we should.

Consider the Voting Rights Act passed in 1965; 28 years passed before the Congress adopted the National Voter Registration Act in '93. Now maybe that was too long, but there still has been a deliberative process, that's because the elections are so important, that nine more years transpired before the Help America Vote Act.

At the time of its passage, Presidents Ford and Carter hailed HAVA as providing the most meaningful improvements in voting safeguards since the civil

rights laws of the 1960s. The election in November was the first conducted under HAVA's provisions, and the law will still not be fully implemented until 2006, and we have to keep pushing that goal, which is the central database, but also military voting, provisional votes, a lot of other issues that still have to be fully implemented.

While we as a Congress need to continually evaluate the impact of the laws we pass, we also need to give election officials and voters sufficient time to adjust to HAVA's requirements as well as an opportunity to assess for ourselves the full implications of the law. We will not be serving our country well if we fall into the pattern of amending our nation's election laws every four years, based on perceptions of how one provision or another have harmed or benefited a particular group in a previous election.

Nor should advocates of sweeping changes in our federal election statutes believe that the only changes made by such a process would be the ones that they would want. In other words, other changes could come,

that you may not want. Or let's say the process results in compromise; that means no one gets everything they want, but we hope those compromises are always in the best interests of the citizens.

So that word of caution. I do again want to thank you all for attending. I want to also recognize Congressman Holt. We haven't agreed on the issues, but I think he's a nice person; he's very thoughtful in his processing. We had a hearing with [unint.], a very fascinating, good hearing and I think Congressman Holt would attest to that, where we had people on both sides of the issues come forward to talk about this. States can now do receipts, but again, I think that it's not going to be the last of the receipt discussion, nor necessarily should it be. We should always look at the issues.

I want to mention Congressman John Larson of Connecticut. We have talked; we are going to have series; we semi-announced this publicly but we're going to have a series of meetings in January on a lot of a variety of issues, on the elections ... and we want to hear also across the nation, I said this on

National Press Call, before the election, we want to hear from people what went wrong.

What are you disputing? Who did what? What worked? What didn't work? We wouldn't be doing justice to the public if we didn't do that. So I hope we can work with you in the comprehensive hearings that we're going to have on a lot of different election issues. We'll be having the hearings, and I want to look closely to our current election system. And I welcome you obviously to attend those hearings. Thank you for having me here today.

[applause]

WH: Congressman Bob Ney, Chair of House Administration, thank you. I'd now like to introduce the lead co-sponsor of the Help America Vote Act, the now House Minority Whip, the Congressman from Maryland, Representative Steny Hoyer [applause].

SH: Thank you very much Wade, good morning everybody. I am pleased to be here, and I am certainly pleased to be here with my good friend Wade Henderson of the Conference, and Chellie Pingree the President of Common Cause and Tova Wang, where did Tova go? Togo, go, where go, Togo? In any event, I'm glad to be here

with Tova Wang, assuming she's here somewhere, she was here.

Let me begin by thanking all of you who were responsible for raising the specter of the need for substantial election reform at the federal level. Working together, we on both sides of the aisle and throughout the country, and Tova is absolutely correct, President Ford's and President Carter's leadership, as well as the leadership of so many groups represented in this room, made HAVA possible.

The premise of HAVA is that good elections are not a liberal or progressive issue, a moderate issue, or a conservative issue; they're an American issue. If America stands for anything in the world, it stands for free people coming together and making decisions as to their future and their government. Obviously in order to stand by that requirement, we need to have elections that are honest and fair, inclusive, and that every American is encouraged and facilitated in registering and casting their vote, and insuring that every vote is accurately counted. ... [applause] ...

That was our intent. Have we accomplished it perfectly? We have not. Everyone in this room knows that. Now let me say to you that I've had some experience, I was just counting as I was sitting there, Wade, I have run, participated, participated, I have run in 34 separate elections, personally. And for those 34 cycles, I had some focus on every vote being counted, particularly that was cast for Steny Hoyer. Now of course, I didn't know which votes were cast for Steny Hoyer, which meant that I wanted to insure that every vote was accurately counted.

That is what HAVA is about, that is about, that is what this conference is about. I want to congratulate Rush Holt, for his leadership. I think Rush Holt is more than a nice guy. He's also one smart fellow, ladies and gentlemen ... [applause] ... and I will discuss briefly, I know you want to get me off the podium.

But I do want to say some things, because I've been very involved in this effort, as all of you know, and I have some thoughts, I have some thoughts on where we were in 2000, where we were in 2004, and more importantly, where we need to be. It's important to

look back, not judgmentally but analytically on what went right, what went wrong, how can we make what went wrong go right, next time and the time thereafter.

Let me begin by thanking, as I have, the leadership, the conference, Chellie, thank you, Senator Pingree from my perspective, but Chellie, let me thank you for your leadership of Common Cause. By the way as you know I'm the whip, but I think Sara knows more about being the whip than I do. She was longer with the whip's office; so I don't know where Sara is, but thank you, Sara, for the work that you're doing as well, and again, Tova Wang.

I want to thank Representative Holt and all of you for raising issues; I'm not going to get deeply into the paper trail issue. All of you have known we've had this discussion and in my jurisdiction, the State of Maryland, we've used the lever machine for decades, which didn't have a paper trail, as all of you know.

But the issue of insuring the fact that not only is every vote counted, but if there is a dispute, that we can then make sure that the votes were accurately

counted, is a very legitimate issue, that you, Rush, have raised, and others have raised, that we need to pursue, and I've urged and will continue to urge, the committee to look into that, for the Congress to consider it.

As a principal co-sponsor of the Help America Vote Act of 2002, I'm eager for a status report on the new law. That's why you're here, that's why all of us are her. And the United States is to have the best election possible and serve as an example for how democracies should elect their public officials, we must be willing to continuously scrutinize the state of our electronic system and all the relevant laws that pertain to voting.

In none of those 24 elections in which I ran in the state of Maryland was fraud a major issue, but in none of those elections did anybody contend that it was run perfectly. That's over almost a 40 year period, from 1966 to today. Today's conference is the first of what I hope will be many in the coming months that will assess the impact of federal election reform in the 2004 election.

I'm especially looking forward to election reform, oversight hearings that Chairman Ney has mentioned, and I want to say something about Bob Ney. Without Bob Ney, we would not have had HAVA. Without Bob Ney, and Speaker Hastert, and President Bush very frankly, we wouldn't have the 3.8 billion dollars, three billion of which has already been sent out to the states.

I think that money has been used productively, not perfectly but productively, to get better technology, the better access, again, not perfectly but better. Bob Ney was a critical factor in us moving that legislation forward, as were many of the groups in this room.

I will also following with great interest the work of the new Election Assistance Commission. I hope that you will engage them. I believe there are four individuals who are very honestly trying to participate in a process to make our elections better and to serve as an advisory. They do not have, as you know rulemaking or any statutory authority to impose

their will on the states, but they will, in my opinion, over the years become a very, very important leader in this effort.

With this week's passage of the Omnibus Appropriation Bill, the EAC will have the resources to study the 2004 elections, and provide state and local election officials the guidance they need to run even better elections in 2006 and thereafter.

Although it is still too early to know with certainty what went right and went wrong as a totality, there is anecdotal evidence that the 2004 elections represented a positive step forward, though not a perfect step forward. TO be sure, there were problems, in areas across the country, not in any one state. There were problems in each of the states.

There were also disturbing reports from People of the American Way, my good friend Ralph Neas who worked so hard on this legislation and worked so closely with me on the adoption of the Americans with Disabilities Act, that many people faced too many barriers at the ballot box. Our effort was to overcome them.

We have not gotten across that river yet, and we must get there, we must get there so that no American feels that through some arbitrary or capricious or willful or intentional procedure that they were precluded from either registering or voting or were put in lines so long that the discouragement level was so high that they did not feel that they could vote.

That is not the America that any of us want in this room. From long lines to arbitrary and unfair registration procedures to voter intimidation and misinformation, they all existed in this past election, as you know, and tragically have existed in almost every election that we've had.

These problems, which have long plagued our election system, must be recognized, discussed and corrected. They are a blight on our democracy that no American should tolerate. That said, the 2000 debacle was a wakeup call to federal and state governments to reform this nation's election system. They rose up, spoke up, and we responded, again not perfectly, but I think

importantly, and have established a basis for a much better system.

We cannot afford to become complacent in light of the accomplishments. Today's conference has proved that we will not. Much work remains to be done. Rush Holt has made that point, Wade has made that point, Chellie I know has made that point, the Century Foundation has made that point, and I reiterate it as well.

In the next several months, I intend to be focusing on four key issues. These are not the only issues, but they are certainly four of the issues that I think at least we need to look at. I intend to closely monitor further implementation of HAVA. HAVA is a very new statute, as Bob Ney observed, and it is the implementation of statutes that's really more important.

As the sponsor of Americans with Disabilities Act we are still working 14 years after the adoption of the Americans with Disabilities Act to see its promise come to fruition. It has not done so perfectly at that point. HAVA certainly falls into that category.

As many of you know, only two provisions of HAVA went into effect this year - new voter identification requirements, which was not in the house bill by the way, and the new provisional balloting requirements. Of course, the new technology made more affordable by HAVA was used more extensively, and its use and performance must be reviewed and analyzed.

The rest of HAVA does not go into effect until 2006, including what is arguably the most important and far-reaching reform - statewide registration systems. And I urge Wade, I know you and Common Cause and the Century Foundation - but I urge all of you, in your respective states, to focus on this process. Because with the technology, the information technology available to us, the ability to clearly have the ability to have in every precinct instantaneous access to correct the registration list will be a giant step forward.

I was in my precinct this past month, and found that they were having trouble getting through to the Election Office, as they have in every election in

which I have participated, which meant that they could not get the kind of directions. One must understand, as all of you do, that 97, 98 percent of the folks working to administer those elections for those 120 million people - are not professionals, are not highly trained, and therefore we are dealing with a largely amateur run system. It is remarkable how well they do, and how conscientious the overwhelming majority of them are. But the statewide registration system, with computer access and real time, in my opinion, will take us a very great step forward.

Secondly, I will explore ways to include provisional ballots. Provisional ballots was not implemented in the United States of America as I intended, as I think Senator Dodd intended, as I think Congressman Ney intended, as we discussed that provisional ballots were designed to provide for every voter casting a ballot that came into the precinct, wherever they might have lived.

Not to make a judgment on the spot, the whole intention of provisional ballot was to say we will take a ballot from you, you can cast your vote, we

will put it aside, and in a less intense environment, the next day or the day after, we will check to see whether or not in fact you were an eligible voter, not just in that precinct.

Now HAVA fell short because we did not impose on the states a uniform standard for provisional ballots. In my opinion, we need to do so, but I will tell you, that is very controversial. We could not have passed that through the House of Representatives. We have some folks here who were very focused on how much we were going to impose upon the states. I see some of our fine staffers with whom I worked. But the fact of the matter is, provisional ballot ought to be a uniform standard throughout the United States of America. I would hope you would focus on that. Thank you very much. ... [applause] ...

Some states, including battleground states, implemented provisional ballots in ways that I believe were contrary to the letter and certainly the spirit of HAVA. Provisional ballots are intended to facilitate - facilitate, make it easier, not to create an additional bureaucratic judgment at the time of the

election, for people whose registration is called into question on Election Day.

To the extent eligible voters cast them in the correct election jurisdiction, they should be counted, and correct jurisdiction, I would point out to you, from my perspective, is if they voted for the people that they were eligible to vote for, not because the squiggly line between Precinct 1 and Precinct 2 was drawn in a way that they may have ... it may have just been drawn, and they voted in the old elementary school last year, and now they were supposed to vote in the new elementary school, but by gosh, they went to the old elementary school.

Our point is, in Philadelphia they sent them to police stations ... hear me ... they sent people to police stations to cast provisional ballots - clearly an intimidation. It was to say you can vote, fill it out, we'll put it aside, and if in fact you are eligible to vote for those folks, your vote will be counted.

Third I will focus on HAVA itself. HAVA must be reauthorized next year. It is my hope that Chairman Ney and ranking Democrat John Larson will dedicate themselves, along with Senator Lott and Senator Dodd of the 104th Congress to reauthorizing ... I said 104th, 109th Congress. Although I no longer serve on the House Administration, I pledge to all of you that I intend to be very much involved - Wade and others - in the reauthorization, and in the oversight of HAVA.

HAVA is a shining example of what true bipartisanship can promote. I overwhelmingly support it. Not a perfect piece of legislation, as none are, and this oversight that you're participating in initially today will start a process that I think will make HAVA better.

MS: [inaudible comment from audience]

SH: Let me get back to that. I mentioned, I referenced that, but let me get back to it. Fourth, I will urge Congress to fulfill its commitment to the states by fully funding HAVA. Eight hundred million is still unfunded; we did less than 25 million this past, in this 388 billion dollar bill that we're passing, that we passed yesterday, and we should come up with the

800 million dollars this year, but we need to do more for the Election Administration Commission, and for the college program.

One of the successes that is not known, is we had some [unint.] 1500 or so? Approximately 1500 college students participate as election officials on Election Day - a small number, but the HAVA program provided, and by the way for your information, originally HAVA, which is the name of the bill, but originally I applied HAVA to the college program that I suggested we put in the bill and was included in the bill.

Because my theory was, we would get college students, young people, whose percentage of voting was low, to get them involved in the elections. Also, the average age of our election officials continues to go up very markedly. We're going to lose them. Forget about how comfortable they are with information technology, which is the question that I'll address in just a second.

Younger people ... I tell you, my grandson runs the computer better than I do. He's eight years old. You

know, that'll tell you how old I am. But the fact of the matter is, getting younger people involved on Election Day in my opinion will also send a message to all their colleagues in college that this is something to be doing, and to get involved in, and so they will vote.

The good news is, as you know the young people voting in this past election was substantially up. Don't be fooled by the fact that they were still at 17 percent. We had a substantial spike up in almost every area. But young people voted in significantly greater numbers, and that's to be admired and encouraged, and the college program, I think will help.

Congress has a duty to fund the remaining 800 million and providing additional funding and a reauthorization for such vital programs as the Commission itself, grants to states and the HAVA College Program, which I've discussed. Today's conference is only the beginning, but it is an important beginning.

Let me close with the question, which I did reference, which is an important question, which I've urged Bob

Ney and John Larson to look at. And that is the ... how to you verify, how do you check after the fact, the computers? How do you insure that the computers are not manipulated at the front end, so that the result you get is inaccurate? Again I would call your attention to the lever machine that all of us used for years was subject to the same kind of manipulation.

As you know in the lever machine the only figure you had is when you opened up the back, the number that was there, just as the computer gives you a number. You assumed that the numbers worked every time. You assume that no tumbrel had been shaved down, so that when you pulled that lever and the tumbrel worked, that it would in fact run the vote. It may or may not have.

However correctly, everyone has observed, and we've had very substantial here, that the computer, we all know, is easier in some respects to manipulate, to be compromised. But at the same time, as you know, the technology does do something that has not been ... Bob referenced it, had not been done before. And we can accommodate both verification, in my opinion, and

making fully accessible the secret ballot to those with disabilities. That is a critical objective of HAVA. It is one that I will fight to protect, and I know all of you will as well.

Wade, I know I probably talked too long, but thank you all for participating and focusing on this issue. It is what America is all about, and we will make America better, to the extent we make voting in America more accurate, more trusted, and more accessible. Thank you very much ... [applause].

WH: Thanks Congressman Hoyer. Our last Congressional speaker this morning has been referenced on several occasions during our open preliminary remarks but he's an individual who has really been a catalyst for today's discussion and we appreciate the role that he has played in helping to bring together today's event. The work of Common Cause and the Century Foundation and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights indeed benefited from his contribution, so I want to acknowledge Congressman Rush Holt from New Jersey and invite him to the podium.

RH: Thank you, Wade, and good morning everyone. Thank you for coming. I'd particularly like to thank my

colleagues. Steny Hoyer says he will remain involved even though he's no longer the ranking member of the Administration Committee and I'm sure he will, and it's a good thing. I'm glad Bob Ney has helped with today's conference, as well as Senators Dodd and McConnell. I'd particularly like to thank Wade Henderson of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and as well as Chellie Pingree, Common Cause, and Dick Leone of the Century Foundation, who is represented today by Tova Wang.

We're here to learn. We're here to get an education, not to jump to conclusions. On my frequent visits to schools, I often ask the students, what is the greatest invention in history? And they knowing that I'm a scientist will come up with various scientific and technological suggestions. I argue that it is our Constitutional system of government. It's a system that is truly remarkable, the way it works.

But we are not the greatest democratic republic in the world because we assert that we are. This invention is not a pinnacle of granite - immutable, carved and polished on Capitol Hill. The genius of the invention

is that it is self-correcting, but if the very process of self-correcting, the principal mechanism for self-correction to vote is impaired; we've got problems. This is something that requires constant tending, constant scrutiny, and its today we begin that scrutiny.

If we don't re-point the building blocks regularly, this great invention, our government, is in trouble. Today we will from representatives, the citizenry who will talk about what has happened. I'd like to thank today's panelists, they've come from far and wide, but more important, they put in days, hours, months, preparing, finding out what we needed to know about how elections worked, and then collecting that evidence.

When I first started talking with conveners about the conference, I said what we need is evidence, not rumors, not ideological jeremiads, not policy prescriptions, but a good account of how things worked, and didn't work, this past November. Not how it might have worked but how it should have worked, or

how it works in theory, but how it actually worked for the citizens of this country.

Now I have and you have some ideas, some prescriptions for improving the process. For myself, I would be happy if I didn't hear the phrase "paper trail" today from anyone other than those who have evidence to talk about it - for example, the Secretary of State of Nevada. It's the evidence that we need at this point.

And so I'm so delighted in the way that Common Cause and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and the Century Foundation have put this program together, with an emphasis on evidence. There's more to gather; there will be more to do after today, but this will provide the focus for gathering what we need to know, so that we can then move on with policy prescriptions.

So it is particularly important that we've had my legislative colleagues participating in this so that they can take the benefits of this day. And we can, in fact, shore up our reputation as the shining city on the hill - the democracy that is above reproach,

above suspicion, an example for the entire world.

Thank you very much.