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EXPERTS OFFER STATES A PLAN FOR IMPROVING STATE ELECTION PROCEDURES *Report of The Century Foundation's Working Group on State Implementation of Election Reform is Released at Annual Meeting of State Secretaries*

Monday, July 25, St. Paul, Minnesota—In response to the voting problems that remained apparent in the 2004 presidential election—and with the deadline fast approaching for states to comply with more federal mandates—a nonpartisan group of prominent election law scholars and voting reform experts has produced a groundbreaking set of policy recommendations to help state legislators and election officials improve their voting procedures in time for the 2006 and 2008 federal elections.

Balancing Access and Integrity: The Report of The Century Foundation Working Group on State Implementation of Election Reform was released today at the annual meeting of the National Association of Secretaries of State. Tova Andrea Wang, executive director of the working group, presented details of the report to attendees, many of whom oversee the election process in their states.

The members of the working group are: Tova Andrea Wang, senior program officer and democracy fellow, The Century Foundation (executive director); Norm Ornstein, resident scholar, American Enterprise Institute; Daniel Tokaji, assistant professor, Moritz College of Law, The Ohio State University; Guy-Uriel E. Charles, associate professor of law, University of Minnesota Law School; Edward B. Foley, professor of law, Moritz College of Law, The Ohio State University; Samuel Issacharoff, professor, New York University School of Law; Martha Kropf, assistant professor of political science, University of Missouri, Kansas City; and Roy Schotland, professor of law, Georgetown University Law Center.

“This group of some of the most esteemed elections scholars in the country has come up with innovative ways for states to make the voting system fair and accurate, and one the American people can have confidence in,” said Tova Wang. “Given the sometimes unclear or contentious legal mandates the federal government has established to date, we provide a plan for how states can implement the laws in ways that expand access to the polls and ensure voting integrity.”

The 2004 election was the first big test of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). Enacted in the wake of the deeply flawed 2000 election, the law was passed in an effort to improve the voting process, ensure ballot integrity, and increase voter access. The working group determined that while HAVA represented an important step forward in improving the country's broken voting process, this election season exposed ambiguities and gaps in that law and its implementation that could result in continued problems with elections—particularly in close contests. The group noted that while the votes in last year's election likely exceeded the “margin of litigation,” there were nonetheless troubling developments in states and local districts around the country.

With the view that most election reform must be implemented at the state level, there is little chance of further imminent action from Congress, and with HAVA mandating that many of the reforms be implemented by the end of this year, the working group looked at practical ways to solve the problems that HAVA may have inadvertently created. They have developed realistic approaches and specific steps that states can take in order to fulfill the original intent of the act.

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The Century Foundation conducts public policy research and analyses of economic, social, and foreign policy issues, including inequality, retirement security, election reform, media studies, homeland security, and international affairs. The foundation produces books, reports, and other publications, convenes task forces and working groups, and operates seven informational Web sites. With offices in New York City and Washington, D.C., The Century Foundation is nonprofit and nonpartisan and was founded in 1919 by Edward A. Filene.

The goal of the group in making these recommendations is to enable states to improve their electoral systems in ways that both ensure accuracy and integrity in the voting process and assure that all eligible voters are able to cast ballots and have their votes counted. After examining the most common problems and looking at best practices in jurisdictions around the country, the group made specific recommendations for improvements in the following areas:

- voter registration
- provisional ballots
- statewide voter registration databases
- felon purges and enfranchisement
- voter identification
- testing and certification of voting systems

The working group also noted that there are powerful arguments both for and against early voting, which is increasingly being embraced by election administrators, voting advocates, and voters. The group cautions states to carefully consider all of the competing arguments and research before proceeding further with early voting systems. In addition, the group also strongly urges the federal government to provide additional funding for election reform activities at the state and local level; and it recommends that all states make sure that rules governing vote recounts are clearly established in time for the next federal election.

“This report, the product of hard and diligent work by a disparate group of election experts, examines in careful detail a series of major ongoing problems in election administration in America, and makes balanced and constructive recommendations with a sharp eye for what is practical and achievable,” said Norm Ornstein. “The fact that the 2004 presidential election did not result in a lengthy delay or litigation before its resolution does not mean that the election system has been fixed, or is working smoothly or well. Much work remains to be done before our elections can inspire genuine confidence from voters, scholars, and practitioners alike. This report provides a roadmap for much of that work.”

The Century Foundation has been at the forefront of efforts to reform the voting system since the issue achieved national prominence following the 2000 presidential contest. In 2001, the foundation cosponsored the National Commission on Election Reform, cochaired by former Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. The final report of that commission served as the model for important measures in the Help America Vote Act.

Highlights of the working group’s recommendations are attached. ***Balancing Access and Integrity: The Report of The Century Foundation Working Group on State Implementation of Election Reform*** is available online at The Century Foundation’s Election Reform Web site at www.reformelections.org and on its main site at www.tcf.org. An executive summary of the recommendations, bios of the working group members, ordering information, and additional information on election reform are also available online. Please contact Christy Hicks at hicks@tcf.org or (212) 452-7723 to receive a press copy of the report, or to arrange an interview with a working group member.

**Balancing Access and Integrity:
The Report of The Century Foundation Working Group on State Implementation of Election Reform**

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