Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)
US Public Policy Council of ACM (USACM)

1828 L Street NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036
Main Phone: 212-626-0541
acmpo@acm.org

June 18, 2013

Mr. Robert Bauer
Mr. Benjamin Ginsberg
Co-Chairs
Presidential Commission on Election Administration
GSA, 1776 G Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Co-Chairman Bauer and Co-Chairman Ginsberg:

We are writing to express our interest in the work of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration. We are the U.S. Public Policy Council of ACM (USACM), a community of technical experts representing ACM — the Association for Computing Machinery — a major technical and professional society with members involved in all aspects of computing and information technology. ACM's members have decades of experience in the technologies of voting, vote counting and vote auditing. USACM has a long history of research and advice to policy makers on technology to support election systems.[1] We stand ready to advise the commission on technology issues related to the commission's mission.

As you are fully aware, technology is a critical aspect of modern voting systems. Voting systems have unique requirements that mean technology that might be appropriate in other contexts (e.g., retail or business uses) may not be appropriate for voting. Among these requirements are:

Reliability: Minimizing the chances of failures and ensure the success of holding an election for which citizens trust the results, whether or not they supported the outcome.

Responsiveness: Ensuring voters can register, vote, and be notified of results within the time limits required by the system.

Security: Preventing the insertion of users or votes into the system, the removal of votes, or the determination of vote content by unauthorized personnel.

Privacy: Protecting the identities and votes of system users.

Auditing: Allowing ballots to be recounted accurately and without revealing voters' individual choices.

Accessibility: Ensuring voting systems, including voting technologies, are accessible and usable for every citizen throughout the entire voting process. Improved voting accessibility to meet the needs of a wide variety of people is an important part of increasing participation in elections.

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[1] http://usacm.acm.org/evoting/category.cfm?cat=0&E-Voting

ACM US Public Policy Council (USACM)   Tel: +1-212-626-0541   acmpo@acm.org
1828 L Street NW, Suite 800   Fax: +1-202-667-1066   usacm.acm.org
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Usability: Ensuring validated design of paper and electronic ballots so users can confidently record their intent.

Additionally, technology has unique capabilities that can improve voting access for traditionally disenfranchised constituencies such as disabled and military voters. Voting technology has the capacity to address the accessibility needs of a wide variety of people, an important part of increasing participation in elections. Such technology must be both accessible to those with disabilities and usable so that every voter can have an efficient, effective and satisfying voting experience.

As the commission recognizes, there are many different areas of expertise required to complete the Commission's mission, including legal, policy, and election administration. No less important is technical expertise, to understand the risks and advantages of different technologies. We urge the Commission to take advantage of expertise available from technology researchers and practitioners in academia, government, and industry to support well-informed recommendations.

We are happy to provide advice and recommendations on technology issues as they arise. Feel free to contact our Public Policy Office at 212-626-0542 or by email at acmpo@hq.acm.org.

Regards,

Eugene H. Spafford, Ph.D.
Chair, U.S. Public Policy Council
Association for Computing Machinery

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