



# NEWS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE **BRUCE McPHERSON**

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## **California Secretary of State Bruce McPherson Outlines Proposals to Enhance the Security, Reliability and Accessibility of Voting Systems Nationwide**

*Address Given to State and Federal Elections Officials at the  
National Association of Secretaries of States Conference*

SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO - Today, Secretary of State Bruce McPherson delivered an address about "The Future of Voting in America" at the National Association of Secretaries of State Summer Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Secretary McPherson discussed ways for states to work collaboratively with each other and the Federal government to enhance voting system security; accuracy and reliability; as well as usability and accessibility.

"As election officials, we have the honor to be trusted with administering and safeguarding the basic right of free people, the right to vote. It is our responsibility to work on a state-to-state basis, and a federal-to-state basis, to improve the administration of that basic right."

Secretary McPherson gave his remarks after his successful oversight of two statewide elections since taking office in March of 2005. Most recently, the June Primary Election was California's first statewide election under the new federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) mandates. HAVA is a federal law that was passed in 2002 and requires sweeping changes in the elections process nationwide.

"The implementation of HAVA presents us with challenges as well as opportunities. We must work together to ensure that the voters see the full promise of HAVA and that as we work to ensure accessibility for all eligible voters, we are simultaneously working together to ensure security, reliability and accuracy of every vote cast."

Secretary McPherson outlined the following three proposals in an effort to engage his partners nationwide in the improvement of the voting system certification process:

First, Secretary McPherson outlined a proposal to enhance voting system security and reliability. The proposal would call on the states to join with the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to develop a national program to conduct a comprehensive risk analysis of voting systems as part of the federal certification process. This would enhance the already rigorous security tests that are currently done, and create a program to conduct exhaustive examinations of all potential security risks and solutions prior to system certification.

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Secondly, Secretary McPherson encouraged the EAC to move forward with the research and development program that is articulated in HAVA. This effort would examine voting systems and the issues of: Security; accuracy and reliability; and usability and accessibility. For this to come to fruition, Congress would need to fully fund the mandates of HAVA and the EAC would need to have the full support of the states.

HAVA requires that the states put in place voting systems that meet certain accessibility and usability requirements. Electronic voting systems (DREs) are the expected solutions to these HAVA driven mandates, and the time has come to move forward with the studies that HAVA calls for, to ensure we are doing all we can to recognize the full promise of this law.

Lastly, some have criticized the federal certification process as “vendor driven” in that, the vendors choose the Independent Testing Authority (ITA) that conducts the testing for their certification and provide payment directly to the ITA. One way to improve the process would be for the EAC to establish an escrow account for the vendors during testing and to place control of the account with a separate entity, like the EAC. This would put some distance between those performing the testing and the vendor and allow the EAC to select the specific testing authority as opposed to the vendor. This proposal would do on the federal level what is now being done in California, with the state certification process.

Tom Wilkey, Executive Director of the federal Elections Assistance Commission said, “I commend Secretary of State Bruce McPherson for his visionary leadership. The proposals he presented today are consistent with the long term goals of the EAC, and I look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with him to see the full promise of HAVA.”

In addition to these specific proposals, Secretary McPherson outlined California’s strict certification process, along with the stringent checks and balances that he has established, making California a model among states for its rigorous testing standards.

“Any voting system vendor who wants to do business in California knows that they must comply with these standards and they must continue to work with our county elections officials to ensure ongoing reliability after system certification,” said McPherson.

“I look forward to continuing to work with my counterparts in other states and federal officials to research, develop and implement ways that we can improve the voting process,” continued McPherson.

“Through collaboration and dedication, we can increase access for all voters, including voters with disabilities, as well as ramp up our testing and security procedures resulting in increased voter confidence and the assurance of the integrity of every vote cast.”