



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF THE UNITED STATES

March 16, 2017

To: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives

From: Chris, Carson, President

Re: HR 634, The Election Assistance Commission Termination Act

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The League of Women Voters respectfully urges you to oppose HR 634, The Election Assistance Commission Termination Act, which was recently reported by the Committee on House Administration. With continuing controversy about the accuracy, conduct and participation in American elections, this is not the time to abolish the only federal entity devoted exclusively to improving election administration on a bi-partisan basis.

The Election Assistance Commission (EAC), though it receives little attention, does invaluable work to improve our nation's election systems on a voluntary, non-regulatory basis. The EAC seeks to ensure the efficacy, reliability, and trustworthiness of our nation's election systems by conducting research, collecting data, and sharing information among elected officials, the public, and interested organizations.

For example, the Commission is charged with developing voluntary standards for voting systems. Unfortunately, the EAC lacked a quorum for several years, leaving states and localities without guidance or assistance. The result: Many jurisdictions ran the 2012 election with outdated, broken voting machines and many voters waited in line for hours to cast their ballots.

Now, however, the EAC has voted to accredit a new voting system test laboratory after a recommendation by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The lab will test new voting equipment against the voluntary voting system guidelines, which are themselves receiving the attention of the EAC.

Importantly, the EAC has played a central role in improving the accessibility of voting for the country's more than 37 million voters with disabilities. Although further steps are still needed, the EAC's leadership is essential to continuing the effort to offer all Americans the right to vote "privately and independently."

HR 634 proposes to transfer key EAC functions to the Federal Election Commission (FEC). We believe that would not be wise. The FEC is dysfunctional. It is overwhelmed by its current responsibilities. And the FEC is starkly divided on partisan lines, making it particularly inappropriate for election administration responsibilities.

Rather than eliminating the EAC, Congress should provide the agency with resources and a renewed commitment to sponsoring and encouraging information sharing among state and local officials, EAC committees, the non-partisan voting rights community, technical experts and others.

Elections are the life blood of a democracy. We strongly urge to actively oppose HR 634, The Election Assistance Commission Termination Act.