

## **I. In Focus This Week**

### **Committee to modernize voter registration launches**

*Bipartisan group calls for updates to improve integrity, save time and money*

*Special to electionlineWeekly*

WASHINGTON, DC – This week, traditional political opponents put aside their differences in an effort to improve the voting process for all Americans. A distinguished array of Democratic and Republican former members of Congress, secretaries of state, local elections administrators and election experts announced the formation of the “[Committee to Modernize Voter Registration](#).”

The group is dedicated to bringing the voter registration system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by automating the outmoded system that relies on paper forms being filled out by voters and manually processed by local elections officials.

The Committee is led by co-chairs Marc Elias, former general counsel for Kerry-Edwards 2004 and lead recount lawyer for Franken 2008, and Trevor Potter, former general counsel for the 2000 and 2008 McCain presidential campaigns. Other members of the Committee include:

- former UN Ambassador and Senator John Danforth (R-Mo.);
- former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.);
- former U.S. Representatives Harold Ford, Jr. (D-Tenn.) and Susan Molinari (R-N.Y.);
- Pennsylvania Secretary of the Commonwealth Pedro A. Cortés and former Washington Secretary of State Ralph Munro;
- Matthew Damschroder, deputy director, Franklin County (Ohio) Board of Elections and Dean Logan, registrar-recorder/county clerk, Los Angeles County;
- Dr. Thomas Mann, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, Norm Ornstein, co-director of the American Enterprise Institute’s Election Reform Project; and
- Doug Chapin, director of Election Initiatives for the Pew Center on the States.

The Pew Center on the States also released “Bringing Elections into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Voter Registration Modernization,” an [issue brief](#) that highlights the underperformance of the current voter registration system and provides Pew’s broad recommendations for a modernized system that is more accurate, cost-effective and efficient.

Through their experiences on presidential and other federal campaigns dealing with voter registration problems across the country, Elias and Potter came to recognize the scope of the problem with the current patchwork system. Although they work for competing political parties, the seasoned election attorneys have found common ground on a series of commonsense upgrades to the voter registration system.

“Marc and I may find ourselves on opposite sides of many issues, but we both agree that the voter registration process in this country is in serious need of an overhaul,” said Potter.

“Throughout our campaign work, we saw firsthand the inefficiency and needless expense in our paper-based registration system,” he said. “The way we register voters in this country does not adequately protect against registration fraud, burdens election officials and also blocks eligible voters from the ballot box.”

Many of the troubling problems faced by voters on election day can be traced back to registration issues. The problems associated with reading hand-written registration forms and the deluge of registrations submitted immediately prior to an important election contribute to a domino effect of inefficiencies that cause problems at every step of the process.

“The registration system affects all other election-related activities downstream, from how quickly your absentee ballot request is processed to the accuracy of poll books on election day,” said Elias.

“Fixing this process means that election officials can get back into the business of administering elections and campaigns, and third parties will no longer have to be in the business of registering voters,” he said.

Members of the Committee stressed the need to begin the conversation and encourage Congress to act while the experience of last year’s election is still fresh in voters’ minds, but before the politics of the next election cycle distract from the urgent call for reform.

“Pew has been heavily engaged in the issue of voter registration modernization since December 2008, when our post-election ‘Voting in America’ summit revealed deep frustration with our nation’s current underperforming voter registration system,” said Chapin.

“Pew shares the committee’s commitment to identifying fact-based, workable, bipartisan approaches to modernization and we stand ready to work with election officials to make them a reality.”

Specifically, the committee asserts that the best way to modernize the voter registration system would be to better use existing databases to help populate and maintain voter rolls. Importantly, this would remove the role of third parties in registering eligible voters.

Additionally, the committee is advocating for a system that will allow a registration to be portable so that voters are not forced to re-register when they move, and will include a fail-safe mechanism for any election day problems.

The committee advocates a commonsense, technologically-based approach to solving many of these problems. For instance, by using existing databases to help populate and maintain voter rolls, they assert, states and local governments could save scarce financial and staff resources that would otherwise be spent shuffling, entering and reviewing reams of paper registration forms.

For more information on the Committee and its work, please visit: [www.modernizeregistration.org](http://www.modernizeregistration.org).

## II. Election Reform News This Week

This week Nebraska-based [Election Systems & Software \(ES&S\)](#) purchased [Premier Election Solutions, Inc.](#) (formerly Diebold) for a reported \$5 million in cash, plus payments representing 70 percent of any cash collected on outstanding accounts that were receivable as of Aug. 31. “For more than 40 years, ES&S has recognized the incredible responsibility it has to voters and election administrators,” said Aldo Tesi, president and CEO of ES&S. “This acquisition is an opportunity to continue fulfilling our company’s core mission of maintaining voter confidence, and enhancing the voting experience. We are committed to meeting current and future needs for voting system solutions and services and providing better solutions to our customers.” How this sale will affect clients of both ES&S and Premier remains to be seen, but in an email sent to its clients Thursday morning, ES&S said: “ES&S and PES are committed to work closely with you as we combine the strengths of both organizations. We are committed to a smooth transition with no interruptions to the level of service and support for your upcoming elections. We promise to proactively communicate to you as changes occur. One thing will never change: our commitment to supporting customers’ election needs and requirements. Any upcoming elections will be supported in the manner our customers have come to expect from our two companies.” According to the [Canton Repository](#), Diebold bought Global Election Systems for about \$31 million in January 2002. The company has endured numerous lawsuits and problems with requirements that varied by state. Diebold has been

looking to sell the touch-screen and optical scan voting, and electronic voter registration business since early 2006.

The Station [fire raging in the Angeles National Forest forced a delay in counting ballots](#) in two special elections Tuesday in California, officials told the Los Angeles Times. LA County Registrar Dean Logan said he took steps to carry out Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's executive order aimed at ensuring that all eligible firefighters and other emergency workers had the opportunity to vote in Tuesday's special elections in the 51st Assembly District in the Los Angeles area and the 10th Congressional District in the Bay Area. Logan said his office set up emergency voting sites and made available emergency provisional ballots at the two fire incident command centers in Los Angeles County. The governor's order also extended voting hours until 10 p.m. at the command centers, so the results were going to be delayed.

While lack of water has caused problems in California, it's too much water that is causing headaches in King County, Wash. As a precaution in anticipation of flooding that could inundate the Green River Valley, [King County is considering moving its elections operations](#) from its Renton headquarters to a temporary facility at Boeing Field. Kathy Brown, director of the county's Facilities Management Division, told the County Council on Wednesday that Executive Kurt Triplett may decide to move elections to an operations center at King County International Airport. The cost estimate for the move, which would need to be completed by Oct. 6, is just over \$1 million, Brown said. A decision likely will be made by next week. Brown said the logistics of a possible elections department move are complicated. The general election is Nov. 3. "Actual physical work needs to start now," Brown told the Council. "It is a very, very tight timeline." County Councilman Bob Ferguson said he worried the county might move into a facility that was inadequate. He said officials need to make "sure we're able to run that election well."

According to an interview published this week in *The New York Times*, seven months after taking office, Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. is reshaping the [Justice Department's Civil Rights Division](#) by pushing it back into some of the most important areas of American political life, including voting rights and redistricting after the 2010 census. To bolster a unit that has been battered by heavy turnover and a scandal over politically tinged hiring the White House, there is also proposed a hiring spree that would swell the ranks of several hundred civil rights lawyers with more than 50 additional lawyers, a significant increase for a relatively small but powerful division of the government. The division is "getting back to doing what it has traditionally done," Holder told the paper. "But it's really only a start. I think the wounds that were inflicted on this division were deep, and it will take some time for them to fully heal."

**Personnel News:** [Bob L. Bartlesmeyer](#) has joined the Doña Ana County, N.M. Bureau of Elections as the elections supervisor. Bartlesmeyer has more than 25 years experience with elections management, including 22 years as the Lawrence County Clerk, a position to which he was elected at age 21 and then served six consecutive terms. Most recently, he served as absentee ballot coordinator for Palm Beach County, Fla. [Judd Choate](#) has been tapped to serve elections director for the Colorado secretary of state's office. Choate is a Denver-based election attorney. [Stephen N. Trout](#), a lawyer and former senior counsel to the California Secretary of State has been appointed the new director of the Oregon Elections Division. Trout has also counseled California's Senate minority leader and was assistant registrar of voters in San Bernardino County and most recently was president of Elections Solution Providers, which helps local governments comply with federal and state election laws. [Evelyn Arnold](#), auditor for Chelan County, has been hired as the superintendent of elections for King County Elections. She replaces Bill Huennekens, who left his post in 2005 after a court challenge of November election results that revealed problems with the voting process in the state's most-populous county. Arnold is a certified public accountant and a certified government financial manager who was honored as County Auditor of the Year in 2004 by the Washington secretary of state. Denton County, Ark. Elections Administrator [Don Alexander](#) is planning to retire following the November elections. "When I came on this job, there was a lot of equipment missing and the warehouse was in shambles," he told the local newspaper. Alexander takes pride in the work he did to clean up the messes and refine the way the county has conducted elections since. [Gary J. Smith](#), chairman of the Forsyth County, Ga. BOE recently took home the 2009 Freedom Award for innovation, presented during the Election Center's 25th annual national conference in San Diego. The center honored Smith for his 2008 election program, the early voting wait-time dashboard. The Internet feature allowed voters to view wait times at all early voting polling stations in real time online.

### III. Research and Report Summaries

*electionline provides brief summaries of recent research and reports in the field of election administration. Please e-mail links to research to [sgreene@pewtrusts.org](mailto:sgreene@pewtrusts.org).*

[It's in the Mail: Surveying UOCAVA Voters and Barriers to Overseas Voting](#) – Dr. Claire M. Smith, Research Director, Overseas Vote Foundation, September 2009: New research from the [Overseas Vote Foundation](#) creates a state policy index evaluating states' overseas voting policies. The top five states where it is easiest for overseas citizens to register to vote, submit a ballot and have it counted are Iowa, Colorado, New Mexico, South Carolina and Kansas. The five states where the overseas voting process is most challenging are Alabama, Wyoming, Arkansas, New York and Nevada. State laws and legislation are found to have a statistically significant positive influence on voter satisfaction. Additionally, outreach to these voters and the staffing of election offices is essential in implementing these policies.

### III. Opinion

National: [Voter registration](#); [Department of Justice](#), [II](#), [III](#), [IV](#)

Arizona: [Vote-by-mail](#); [Ballot counting](#)

Indiana: [Early voting](#)

Mississippi: [Voter ID](#), [II](#); [Felon voters](#)

New Jersey: [Vote-by-mail](#); [Student voting](#)

North Carolina: [Voter registration](#)

Texas: [Primary system](#)

*\*\*some sites require registration*

### IV. Job Opportunities

*All job listings must be received by 12 p.m. Eastern on Wednesday for publication in our Thursday newsletter. Job listings are free but may be edited for length. Whenever possible, include Internet information. Please email job postings to [mmoretti@electionline.org](mailto:mmoretti@electionline.org)*

**Elections Director, Pinal County Government, Florence, Ariz.**-- this is a Department Head/Administrative Officer position that works under policy direction and will manage a major department of the organization. The following are examples of some of the duties for this Position: Confers with political party chairs; coordinates department staff activities; prepares and conducts municipal, school district and special district elections for which the County is contracted; plans and recommends for Board approval the establishment for new voting precincts, supervisor districts and Justice of the Peace Precincts; plans, directs and controls the preparation and conduct of elections for which the County has responsibility; prepares bid specifications of election services and equipment; recruits, assigns and trains election board workers; assists in legal actions relevant to elections; develops and administers voter education programs; researches, prepares and submits voter changes to the Voting Rights Section of the Justice Department; selects, trains, supervises and evaluates staff.

**To qualify** you must have a Bachelors Degree and three years increasingly responsible, elections management experience, including two years in a supervisory or administrative capacity. Interested candidates should apply by going to [www.pinaljobs.com](http://www.pinaljobs.com) and submitting an online application. **Salary** range for this position is \$76,252.80 - \$105,248.00 DOE.