

I. In Focus This Week

EAC addresses accessible voting challenges and opportunities

\$5 million initiative will support research and technology

By [Kat Zambon](#)

During the past week, the [U.S. Election Assistance Commission](#) (EAC) focused on assisting voters with disabilities with an October 8 [hearing](#) on voting accessibility and an October 13 [roundtable](#) on accessible voting technology.

The events set the stage for the EAC's planned publication of a funding notice for the [2009 Accessible Voting Technology Initiative](#) on October 29. The \$5 million initiative "will fund research and technology adoption to make voting systems (including paper ballots) more accessible to all voters and make the entire election process more welcoming and accessible to individuals with disabilities."

At the roundtable, Marc Abbott, EAC grants director described the initiative as a cooperative agreement that, unlike a traditional grant, will include continuing and ongoing involvement with the government. "It gives the grantee holder a lot more flexibility, gives us more flexibility and allows in the end for a better product if it's carefully managed," he said.

A recent [report](#) on disability and voter turnout in the 2008 elections co-authored by Dr. Lisa Schur from Rutgers University showed the need for increased research on accessible voting. Using Census data, Schur estimated that 14.7 million or about 57 percent of people with disabilities voted in November compared to 64 percent of people without disabilities.

"A consistent finding from all of the surveys covering the elections from 1992 to 2008 is that people with disabilities have lower voter turnout than people without disabilities," Schur [said](#) at the hearing.

At first, trouble with terminology muddled the discussions. Participants at the roundtable voiced confusion over what it means to cast a ballot, especially as far as paper ballots are concerned. Voters with minimal manual dexterity have a hard time casting paper ballots and many voters with disabilities face challenges verifying them, Diane Cordry Golden, program coordinator for the Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs said.

The need for accessible paper ballots has grown with the collapse of the market for electronic voting machines. "There have been no significant sales of DRE voting system jurisdictions since 2006," Ed Smith, Dominion Voting Systems compliance and certification vice president said.

"The legal mandate is for one accessible voting system per polling place and therein lies the need for a clear, definable definition for the accessible voting system so you conform to the law or you don't," Golden said.

Greg Vanderheiden, industrial and biomedical engineering professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison and Trace R&D Center director said, "Anything you do to facilitate access to people with cognitive language and learning disabilities, I think, will reduce your error rate for voters in general."

Participants also focused on the role of poll workers. Improving acoustics in the polling place will not only help voters using an audio ballot but also poll workers communicating with voters, David Baquis, accessibility specialist for the U.S. Access Board said. He also recommended developing an interactive

poll worker training class, adding that the EAC Accessibility Working Group recommended the development of a training video.

Other participants suggested training college poll workers to help voters with disabilities and researching the feasibility of training poll workers with disabilities.

Poll workers should be included in voting system user testing, Vanderheiden said, and he recommended developing processes that are poll worker-proof. According to Vanderheiden, the problem doesn't necessarily fall on the poll workers themselves, but with the system created that they are being forced to use.

"We keep whining about them doing a bad job – I can't really remember meeting a poll worker who wanted to do a bad job," Ted Selker, computer scientist said.

Several participants stressed the importance of making absentee voting more accessible. Twenty-six percent of voters with disabilities voted by mail compared to 15 percent of voters without disabilities but one-third of voters with and without disabilities said that voting absentee is not as good as casting a ballot in person, Schur said. However, increasing absentee ballot accessibility would obviate transportation problems voters with disabilities face, La Belle said.

As the roundtable wrapped up, participants expressed optimism. "We're at a point now with the accessibility issue where there are some real breakthroughs on the horizon," Merle King, roundtable moderator and Kennesaw State University professor said.

Paterson vetoes polling place accessibility law

According to the [September 23 Legislative Action Bulletin](#) (LAB) by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), 2,297 election bills were introduced in 2009, 213 of which were enacted, 526 carried over to the 2010 session and 906 failed to pass. Nine bills, or .39 percent of all election bills introduced in state legislatures in 2009, were vetoed.

New York State Assembly Bill [A00584](#) would have required "each polling place to be accessible to physically disabled voters and provides guidelines" on the accessibility requirements mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the bill received unanimous support from the state assembly. [David Paterson](#), New York governor [vetoed](#) A00584 on September 16.

II. Election Reform News This Week

- The [Wisconsin Government Accountability Board's \(GAB\) five-year, \\$17.3 million plan for state elections was approved this week](#), by the Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance. Kevin Kennedy, director and general counsel of the GAB, said JCF approval enables the agency to accept almost \$4 million in federal funds through the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). It also allows the GAB to continue funding election administration initiatives that will continue to improve Wisconsin's nationally recognized approach to conducting fair, transparent elections. The plan will study changing the date of the September primary, permitting absentee ballots to be returned by e-mail, implementing elections that are conducted entirely by mail - but not requiring voters to show photo ID at the polls. The committee approved the election plan 13-1, with Sen. Julie Lassa (D-Stevens Point) voting against it because of concerns about election costs that could be passed on to local governments.
- This week, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) signed legislation into law that will allow California [emergency personnel to vote where they are serving](#) in a government-declared emergency. The bill — authored by Assemblyman Sandré Swanson (D-Oakland) — permits emergency workers to cast a provisional ballot outside of his/her precinct. "In situations like last summer's wildfires, firefighters, medics and other responders are sent out with little notice," California Secretary of

State Debra Bowen said in a news release. State law previously did not allow provisional ballots outside the county where the individual was registered to vote.

- The [Hawaii Elections Commission will issue a letter to chief elections officer Kevin Cronin expressing "displeasure"](#) in his performance after county clerks said Cronin has not collaborated on election planning and two leading state lawmakers said they had no confidence in his leadership. All four county clerks, in a public display of solidarity, told the commission yesterday that Cronin has not adequately consulted with them or sought their expertise in planning for the 2010 elections. Cronin oversees statewide elections, but the county clerks handle the vote in each county, and the clerks warned there has been little progress on preparations. "We are going to send a letter to Mr. Cronin expressing our displeasure in some of the things that have gone on," William Marston, the commission's chairman told the *Honolulu Advertiser*.
- With ads for Christmas already filling the airwaves, *electionlineWeekly* decided it wanted to get in on the act so this week, we bring you [news from the North Pole](#). Municipal officials will conduct a recount in the North Pole mayor's race, the city clerk told the *Fairbanks News Miner*. The race between incumbent Doug Isaacson and Councilman Jeff Jacobson was decided in Isaacson's favor by two votes. Jacobson said an election worker told him that the voting machine had malfunctioned on election day. "I thought about that, and I decided you know what, I'm going to request a recount," Isaacson told the paper. "Possibly, there could be some miscounts or some errors." The recount will take place Friday at 5 p.m. at the Fairbanks North Star Borough Administrative Building, North Pole Clerk Kathy Weber said. It ought to take about an hour, she told the paper.

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.

[U.S. Election Assistance Commission Office of Inspector General Audits](#) – September 2009: The Election Assistance Commission Office of the Inspector General issued audits of the administration of payments received under the Help America Vote Act from 2003 to 2008 by both [Iowa](#) and [Rhode Island](#).

[The Canvass: States and Election Reform](#) – The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), Volume 9, October 2009: NCSL's newsletter for legislators and legislative staff about state election reform activity includes stories about voter registration modernization, photo identification in Indiana, filling U.S. Senate vacancies and federal election reform activity.

IV. Opinion

National: [Voter registration](#)

California: [Imperial County](#)

Colorado: [Mail-in ballots](#)

Kentucky: [Felon voting rights](#)

Minnesota: [Instant-runoff voting](#)

Missouri: [Early voting](#)

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

New York: [Felon voting rights](#)

North Carolina: [Early voting](#)

Ohio: [Election reform](#)

Tennessee: [Voting machines](#)

Washington: [Ranked-choice voting, II](#)

***some sites require registration*

V. 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

Business Development/Sales Manager (two positions)— *Scytl USA Secure Electronic Voting* located in Richmond, Virginia and its parent *Scytl S.A.* located in Barcelona, Spain are rapidly emerging as the global leader in the development of secure electronic voting solutions for the public and private sectors. Associates of Scytl USA enjoy an entrepreneurial setting, competitive salary, continuous development and education, career advancement opportunities, and a great team environment. Reporting directly to the Managing Director, Scytl USA, the candidates will: Build and execute company business plan for achieving revenue and pipeline objectives; identification and prospecting of new business leads, including qualification and needs assessment; build and maintain regional sales opportunity pipeline utilizing company CRM tools; presentation and positioning of Scytl USA's solutions and services to prospective State and Local Election Administrators/Officials, and State Legislators; supporting the development of effective proposals and closing new business; adhering to Scytl USA's selling methodology for developing sales pipeline; maintaining direct client relationships and building new business relationships; and providing market and legislative feedback internally concerning the effectiveness of Scytl's core products and consulting services. **Requirements:** Bachelor's degree in Business Administration or Engineering (e.g., Computer Science); proven 10+ years experience in state and local government technology sales – preferably in election related products and services; software familiarity expertise in the following technologies – Web based applications/Cryptography (SSL, PKI, digital certificates and signatures...); excellent communications skills – must have strong oral presentation experience; advanced user experience in Microsoft Office, specifically Power Point, Word and Excel; and ability to travel. Scytl USA is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Please visit us at www.scytl.com to learn more about how we are revolutionizing the secure online voting environment. **To apply**, please send a cover letter and resume to the following (email accepted): Hugh Gallagher, Managing Director; Scytl USA; 6012 Glen Abbey DR; Suite 1L; Richmond, Virginia 23059; ScytlUSA@scytl.com