



February 6, 2017

Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Harper, Ranking Member Brady, and Members of the Committee on House Administration:

On behalf of Asian Americans Advancing Justice (Advancing Justice), we write in strong opposition to HR 634, the "Election Assistance Commission Termination Act." Advancing Justice is a national affiliation of five leading organizations advocating for the civil and human rights of Asian Americans and other underserved communities to promote a fair and equitable society for all. The affiliation's members are: Advancing Justice - AAJC (Washington, D.C.), Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus (San Francisco), Advancing Justice - Los Angeles, Advancing Justice - Atlanta, and Advancing Justice - Chicago. As organizations that are committed to supporting and expanding the civil and voting rights of all Americans, we have devoted substantial resources to the passage of both the National Voter Registration Act and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). Terminating the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) – a commission that plays a vitally important role in standardizing and modernizing election administration – risks reducing the voting and civil rights of our citizens. In the interest of ensuring a fair, efficient and accessible system of elections, we urge the Committee to reject HR 634.

Congress created the EAC to address serious problems with our voting systems that can suppress voter participation and turnout, including long lines at polling stations and outdated voter registration procedures. The EAC does valuable work to ensure the 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. In addition, the Commission develops and fosters the training and organization of our nation's more than 8,000 election administrators. Through its many working committees and the work it does to foster robust dialogue among advocates, manufacturers, and administrators, the Commission is improving the administration of elections. The EAC also oversees the distribution of federal funds that assist states and municipalities with election administration.

In addition to helping ensure our elections are run professionally and efficiently, the EAC also focuses on developing language access tools that can be utilized across the country. These tools help voters with language needs in their efforts to be a part of American society. As mandated by HAVA, the EAC Language Accessibility Program studies and promotes accessibility in voting, registration, polling places, and voting equipment, working in collaboration with election officials, advocacy groups, and research and public policy organizations. The program developed Glossaries of Election Terminology, Voter's Guides to Federal Elections, and the National Mail Voter Registration Form, all of which are available in translated languages. The EAC glossaries are available in six languages: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. The glossaries contain 1,843 terms and phrases used in the administration of elections in the United States. The EAC's voter's guide is available in eleven languages: Cherokee, Chinese, Dakota, English, Japanese, Korean, Navajo, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Yupik. Designed to help voters successfully navigate the federal elections process, it includes information on voter eligibility, early voting,

the registration and voting process for military and civilians living abroad, and polling place services that make voting more accessible. Finally, the EAC has translated the National Mail Voter Registration form into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese. These resources can help election officials provide translated voting materials at a lower cost and can help encourage voluntary assistance by jurisdictions.

Finally, the EAC is an invaluable agency that serves a critical function to strengthen our democracy through its provision of best practices on voting and election administration to countless jurisdictions around the country. For example, in 2016, the EAC co-hosted the “2016 Summit on Language Access in Elections,” held at the University of Maryland at College Park. The full-day convening focused on the importance of language access in the 2016 elections and beyond and featured panelists from across government, advocacy, and academia discussing the language needs and solutions for a growing number of voters. The EAC is uniquely situated to engage these types of discussions that lead to synergy amongst elections officials and community advocates to help create a better election system.

In light of the many challenges faced by our state and local election administrators and the serious procedural problems that weaken voter access and participation, the need for the EAC could not be more critical. We believe that this is a time to reaffirm our commitment to fair, efficient, and secure elections by strengthening the EAC, not eliminating it. We urge you to oppose H.R. 634. Thank you for your consideration of our position. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Terry Ao Minnis at tminnis@advancingjustice-ajc.org or 202 296-2300 x127.

Sincerely,

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