Improving New Hampshire's Election Systems
Testimony by Secure Democracy USA Director of Policy
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Special Committee on Voter Confidence

New Hampshire holds a special place in American democracy. As the state with the first-in-the-nation presidential primary, New Hampshire has the unique opportunity to lead by example by adopting critical policies and procedures that can make elections more secure and accessible for its citizens and support the state's strong network of local election officials.

Election Policy and Procedure Improvements

- Establish **pre-processing** for absentee ballots
- Guarantee "illness" as an **excuse to vote absentee**
- Develop **post-election audit** requirements
- Expand **access to voter registration** for eligible residents
- Protect New Hampshire **voter rolls**

Establish Pre-Processing for Absentee Ballots

Pre-processing absentee ballots prior to Election Day is a critical method by which your election officials can efficiently handle the influx of absentee voters. Pre-processing is an administrative procedure which gives your election officials more time to handle ballots during what has become a high pressure situation. New Hampshire temporarily permitted local election officials to pre-process absentee ballots for the 2020 presidential election. This process should become established in New Hampshire law.

Thirty-six states currently allow election officials to begin pre-processing and/or verifying voter information on returned mail ballots prior to each election, including Rhode Island, Maine, and Massachusetts. Currently, New Hampshire only permits processing absentee ballots on Election Day, prior to the close of polls.

Guarantee "Illness" as an excuse to vote absentee

Currently, those with disabilities may seek to vote absentee by mail. This excuse does not

explicitly provide access for absentee voters who find themselves ill.

Develop Post-Election Audit Requirements

A post-election audit verifies the outcome of an election by ensuring the voting machines counted ballots without error. A post-election audit focuses on the tabulation machines and can find errors in programming or software issues. Developing and implementing a post-election audit program does not have to be cumbersome or expensive. Further, post-election audits serve a purpose, evidenced by the fact that 34 states, including Rhode Island, Delaware, and Connecticut, require a post-election audit.

Risk Limiting Audits, or "RLAs," have been conducted in the U.S. for over a decade, and have become the standard for post-election audits due to their efficiency. Generally, RLAs reduce the time and cost of auditing voting machines.

Expand Access to Voter Registration for Eligible Residents

Online voter registration ("OVR") not only makes voter registration more accessible, it can reduce administrative costs for election officials and make it easier to update and maintain a state's voter rolls. OVR can be an electronic system that supports eligible voters while providing the security that voter rolls require. Many states verify voter registration information through DMV processes and programs; thus, the two systems work side-by-side to provide this service. Currently, 40 states allow voters to register to vote online. Two more states — Oklahoma and Maine — are in the process of implementing OVR.

By 2023, New Hampshire will be one of only two states east of the Mississippi lacking an online voter registration system.

Protect New Hampshire Voter Rolls

Every state has an obligation to responsibly maintain its voter rolls, both to ensure the list of eligible voters remains accurate and up-to-date, and to ensure that eligible voters are not erroneously removed and denied their access to the ballot. In an effort to achieve both of these goals, 30 states have joined the Electronic Registration Information Center, which is a bipartisan organization formed in 2012 dedicated to ensuring the efficiency and integrity of America's voter rolls.

ERIC's member states are able to securely share accurate voter information to help states identify voters who have moved within their state, voters who have moved out of state, voters who have died, duplicate registrations in the same state, and individuals who are potentially eligible to vote but are not yet registered.