



BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER

Statement of  
**Donald Palmer, Fellow, Bipartisan Policy Center's Democracy Project**  
Before the Election Assistance Commission  
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Good Morning Chairman Hicks, Vice Chair Masterson, and Commissioner McCormick. Thank you for your service.

My name is Don Palmer, and I currently serve as a Fellow for the Democracy Project at the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC). BPC is pleased to continue the work of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration (PCEA), in conjunction with the former co-chairs and commissioners, to advance bipartisan recommendations that improve the voting experience.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss what BPC has been doing to improve the voting process for all citizens. First, it is imperative to note that the primary goal of the commission's recommendations was improve the voting experience of all voters—every man and woman, all races, all ethnic groups, and all political persuasions—and to improve voter confidence in the integrity of election administration.

Democrats and Republicans, election officials and business-oriented leaders on the commission came together to endorse a number of measures aimed to streamline voter registration with new online voter registration systems and to propose ways of addressing the existing voting technology crisis. The casting of a ballot and accurate tabulation of the vote is the core mission of the voting process.

I tip my hat to the thousands of election officials and hundreds of thousands of poll workers who facilitated our democratic election with long hours of service this past November. They are the frontline officials making the voting process on the ground work in all types of difficult and stressful situations.

The PCEA set a broad goal that no voter should wait more than 30 minutes to cast a ballot and urged states and localities to take action to meet that target. Since that time, BPC has worked to reduce the potential for lines in the future by working closely with jurisdictions in a large number of states, including a number of battleground states, to collect data about where and when lines really occur.

In partnership with the Polling Place of the Future Project of the CalTech/MIT Voting Technology Project, BPC implemented a nationwide effort to measure Election Day lines at polling places across the country. The data collected will yield important insights into the flow of voters through a polling place and the effect of additional check-in locations on line length.

Participating jurisdictions spanned 22 states and ranged in size from very small counties with roughly 600 registered voters to densely populated metro areas with more than 4.5 million registered voters. In total, BPC expects the data collection program to cover jurisdictions representing more than 45 million registered voters.

BPC is hopeful that the detailed line data will help to diagnose the causes of long lines at the polls, predict where they may occur well in advance of elections, and aid in the development of tools that allow election officials to swiftly allocate resources to the precincts most in need.

It is our hope that this data will allow election officials to make better, evidence-based decisions to improve the voting experience.

What else did we learn from the 2016 election?

While the election was administered quite smoothly, there were some issues that will require attention in the near term. Yes, jurisdictions still experienced technical issues with election equipment. However, there was no catastrophic failure, and dedicated maintenance and testing helped local election officials successfully navigate another general election with aging equipment. We must remember that many counties and localities across the country have not upgraded voting technology in several cycles. These jurisdictions and states must work together to address these problems before the 2018 and 2020 elections.

There is bipartisan support for improving the election infrastructure of this country and to educate our citizens that the voting process is open and open and accessible to all citizens.

Election administrators should desperately try to keep “the process of voting” out of the political debate. The election process should not be used as a political football.

While there is no evidence that the voting process or “election” (where ballots are cast and counted) was hacked, we can always improve the way we vote and give voters more options. Let me be clear, the electoral process was secure and its integrity was maintained.

In the spirit of constant improvement, BPC will be focusing in the future on the security and accuracy of our nation’s voter registration infrastructure. A lot of attention has been paid to getting voters on the list and sharing information across state lines; less studied are the databases that are essential components of the voter registration system that are old and vulnerable to failure and cyber-attack.

These registration statewide data systems are, in many cases, more than a decade old, outdated and desperately need to be refreshed with new technology to complete the primary mission, interaction with voters and local election officials, and the maintenance of accurate and secure voter registration lists.

With the alleged penetrations in Illinois and Arizona, we need more security and monitoring of our voter registration systems. As they did in 2016, each state will be focusing more resources on this issue in the future. We at BPC will seek to learn from election officials and experts what technology is available and ways to improve the security, capabilities, and integrity of the statewide voter registration system and then generate the support for new reforms.

Moving forward, we have a duty to make the commitment to understanding what our voter registration systems can do to serve voters more effectively and protect their personal information.

Thank you.