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Arturo Vargas

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02/11

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May 24, 2011

The Honorable Greg Harper
Chairman, Subcommittee on Elections
1309 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Harper:

On behalf of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund, I am writing to express our opposition to *H.R. 672*, a bill which would terminate the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) and transfer its responsibilities to the Federal Election Commission (FEC). The NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-profit organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service. Our constituency includes more than 6,000 Latino elected and appointed officials nationwide, and our Board is comprised of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents.

The NALEO Educational Fund has been at the forefront of efforts to shape the implementation of Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) at the state level and in jurisdictions with large populations of Latino voters. Our constituency includes Latino election officials who have been at the "front lines" of HAVA implementation. In 2002, we supported the creation of EAC, which was established after Congress acknowledged that the federal government had a responsibility to develop standards, guidelines and research to provide support for states and localities in implementing federal election reform.

The proposal to move the current responsibilities of the EAC to the FEC is flawed. The duties of the FEC are to administer and enforce campaign finance laws. The FEC does not currently possess the expertise needed to carry out the EAC's work, which addresses the policies involved in conducting well-administered and accessible elections. In light of its institutional history and mission, it is unlikely that the FEC would be able to effectively make the development of such policies an agency priority.

The EAC has played an important role in ensuring that our country's elections, from local to federal, evolve with the needs of our nation. The EAC has worked toward improvements by making available materials on best practices, including manuals for successful elections and guides on terms used in elections, both in common English and translations. We have worked with EAC to address concerns regarding access to the electoral process, including the training and recruitment of pollworkers and a study of best practices for providing voters with basic registration and voting information. These kinds of activities are critical if we are to achieve increased voter turnout for all communities and accessible elections for all that are eligible.

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As this country prepares for the 2012 elections, we must ensure that all levels of government conduct elections fairly and effectively. Furthermore, we must commit to increasing voter turnout for these elections. In 2012, there will also be several jurisdictions that will be required to comply with the language assistance mandates of the Voting Rights Act for the first time. Providing jurisdictions with guidance on the best practices for complying with these requirements will be one of the priorities for EAC; if the agency is terminated, there is a serious risk that local jurisdictions will not receive the training and assistance needed to implement sound language assistance programs. We urge you to safeguard the quality of our nation's future elections and the strength of our democratic process by opposing HR 672.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Should you have any questions about the NALEO Educational Fund's work, please contact Mrs. Gloria Montañó Greene, Director of our Washington Office at 202-546-2536 or gmontanogreene@naleo.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arturo Vargas', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Arturo Vargas
Executive Director

cc: Members of House Committee on House Administration
Latino Members of Congress