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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR WALKER ANNOUNCES ELECTION REFORM STATE PLAN FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

After five months of open-meeting deliberations, Lieutenant Governor Olene S. Walker's State Plan Committee on Election Reform is releasing State Plan recommendations in accordance with the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). The plan, which addresses election reform in Utah, is now available for a 30-day public review and comment period.

"This is a turning point for elections in our state," says Walker. "Every Utahn will be affected by the recommendations of HAVA. Open discussion is essential to the process, so I encourage the public to contribute by providing feedback."

The plan addresses election reform in several areas, including the replacement of punch card voting equipment, the development of a statewide voter registration database, voter education, and poll worker recruitment and training.

The State Plan Committee was formed by Lieutenant Governor Walker last November, just one week after HAVA was signed into law by President Bush. It is composed of county clerks, political parties and other advocates, including the League of Women Voters and Utah Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Lieutenant Governor Walker stated, "Utah is in a good position to implement the HAVA requirements. Elections in our state have always been conducted in a sound, efficient manner. As always, we welcome progress and look forward to future developments."

Earlier this year Congress appropriated nearly \$1.5 billion for states to begin upgrading their voter registration database and voting devices. Utah could receive as much as \$28 million in federal aid to implement its plan if it provides a 5 percent match. The State Plan is available for public review and comment at www.elections.utah.gov.



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Utah State Plan on Election Reform - Overview

Voting Equipment

All punch card machines will be replaced with Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) voting systems by 2006. One unit per polling place will include an audio component for voters who are blind or visually impaired.

Statewide Database:

A single, centralized, real-time voter registration database will be developed.

Voter Outreach:

Programs will be implemented to increase voter participation, including the College Council on Civic Awareness, Student/Parent Mock Election, Public Service Announcements, and statewide distribution of the Voter Information Pamphlet.

Poll Worker Recruitment and Training:

A uniform, standardized training for election judges will be designed. The College Council on Civic Awareness will play an active role in recruiting trainers and poll workers. The State will also work with advocates for persons with disabilities to provide training on the new equipment.

Voter ID/Provisional Ballot:

First-time voters in a jurisdiction will be required to present identification at the time of registration or at the polls on election day. When a provisional ballot is issued, a toll-free number or website will be provided for voters to find out if their ballot was counted.

Budget:

If fully funded by the federal government, Utah will receive 28 million dollars for implementation. The majority of that, 20.5 million, will be used for the purchase of new electronic voting equipment. The remaining 7.5 million will be distributed among the costs of equipment maintenance and programming, the statewide database, voter education, poll-worker recruitment and training, and the Voter Information Pamphlet.