

WASHINGTON — Today, the Subcommittee on Elections held a hearing on audit requirements in federal elections, part of a series of hearings on federal election reform. The hearing, led by Chairwoman, Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., and Subcommittee Ranking Member, Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., featured a number of election experts who warned the Subcommittee that requiring states to conduct the mandatory audits proposed in H.R. 811 would be a costly and unrealistic requirement to force on states.

Audit provisions currently outlined in H.R. 811, which was introduced by Rep. Rush Holt, would require states to create an independent Audit Board to administer automatic audits of at least 3% of precincts after every federal election.

Critics of the bill stressed that Congress should establish objectives for states, as was done under the 2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA), versus apply the one-size-fits-all approach to states with unique election requirements and existing audit practices. Executive Director of the National Association of Election Officials, Doug Lewis, expressed particular concern over federal mandates that would not necessarily work for every state. In his testimony to the Subcommittee Lewis warned, "If Congress begins to assume that it knows more about the management practices of elections, that it knows more about what will work than local governments across the nation, that it wants it to be uniform across the United States, then democracy is in for a rough period."

In a joint letter opposing Holt's bill, the National Conference of State Legislators and the National Association of Counties claimed, "This legislation would exacerbate, rather than assist states and counties in addressing, these challenges which could lead to disastrous unintended consequences in the 2008 presidential elections."

McCarthy also expressed concerns with attempting to apply federal mandates on states that may already have implemented their own audit procedures. "Voters deserve to know that their votes are counted fairly and the results are reliable, and we must continue to ensure that our voting systems provide us free and fair elections," said McCarthy. "As we continue our examination of current voting systems, we must be careful that Washington interests do not preempt the work and procedures at the state and local levels that have given voters strong certainty that the votes they cast were counted accurately."

Election Experts Say Proposed Election Audit Requirements are Costly and Unrealistic

Tuesday, 20 March 2007 00:00

The Subcommittee is scheduled to hold a hearing on the Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2007 (H.R. 811) Friday, March 23, 2007 at 9:30 a.m.

For more information, contact the Republican Committee press office at (202) 225-8281.