

Voters First Advisory Commission Workshop

Wednesday, October 17, 2007

Room 203, State House

Commission Members Present:

Secretary of State A. Ralph Mollis

State Senator June Gibbs

Ken McGill, Pawtucket Board of Canvassers

Sue Stenhouse, Governor's Deputy Director of Community Relations

Roger Harris, RI Vote Project

Jan Ruggiero, Director, Secretary of State's Elections Division

Bob Rapoza, Board of Elections

Commission Members Absent:

State Rep. Joseph Almeida

State Rep. Jon Brien

State Sen. Juan Pichardo

Staff Members Present:

Paul Caranci, Deputy Secretary of State for Policy and Planning

Chris Barnett, Communications Director

Mark Welch, Esquire, Legal Counsel

General Public Present:

Amy Vitale, ACLU

Kate Bowden, RI Disability Law Center, Inc.

Summary of Meeting:

1. Secretary Mollis opened the meeting at 1:00 P.M. and announced Paul Caranci would chair the meeting.

2. Secretary of State staff members distributed the following handouts to the Commissioners and attendees:

a. Meeting agenda

b. Written comments received and news articles regarding issues of concern to the Commission.

c. Draft white papers on the following issues were available for those who needed them:

1. Voting Booth Privacy (Proposal 4)

2. No Excuse Absentee Voting (Proposal 7)

3. Expansion of 50' No-Canvassing Zone (Proposal 5)

3. Discussion and vote on the recommendation contained in the following White Papers:

a. Expansion of the 50' No-Canvassing Zone

i. After significant discussion, the Commissioners voted to accept the recommendations presented in the white paper with the following changes:

1. In recommendation #1, change the word "corridor" to radius. Eliminate the words "at least 15' wide, and encompassing". Change 150' to 50'. Change the word "pass" to "proceed."

- 2. Eliminate recommendation #2 in its entirety.**
- 3. In recommendation #3, change the word “corridor” to “radius.”**
- 4. Adopt recommendation #4 without change.**
- 5. In recommendation #5, add a new sentence similar to the following: “Any violation of this act will be considered a misdemeanor carrying with it specific penalties (to be enumerated) and will be enforced by the local police and the municipal court.” (Note: Mark Welch will draft the final language for this section.)**
- 6. In recommendation #6, replace the words “15’ X 150 corridor” with the word “radius.” Replace the word the phrase “no contact zone” with the phrase “a no contact zone”.**
- 7. Add a new recommendation #7 reading “Each polling place must have only one entrance and that entrance must be accessible for people with disabilities.”**

b. No Excuse Absentee Voting

i. The Commission voted unanimously to recommend that no excuse absentee voting not be enacted because it would increase the potential for voter fraud and it would create havoc among those local and statewide officials charged with its implementation.

c. Voting Booth Privacy

i. The Commission voted unanimously to recommend no changes in this area. It was determined that the current system is the best available and that privacy will be increased if local officials follow the precepts of the Board of Elections in the setup of the equipment. Further, the Board of Elections will ensure that all polling places will be large enough to provide for the proper spacing between voting

booths.

ii. At the suggestion of Commissioner Bob Rapoza, the Commission voted to recommend that RIGL 17-19-3(5)(ii) be amended to conform with RIGL 17-19-3 (5) (iii).

4. White Papers were distributed for Voter Roll Cleanup and Early Voting. These issues will be discussed at the next meeting. Paul Caranci is working on the White Paper for the Closing Times of Polling Places. That paper will be ready for distribution by the end of this week and will be both e-mailed and mailed in hard copy to all Commissioners. Also, Commissioners Stenhouse and Gibbs said their paper on The Elimination of The Master Lever will be ready for submission very soon. All of these issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Commission.

The meeting concluded at 2:48 P.M.

Minutes taken by: Paul Caranci

The next workshop will be held on Thursday, November 1, at 1 P.M. in Room 203 in the State House.