

Voters First Advisory Commission Workshop

Wednesday, November 13, 2007

Room 203, State House

Commission Members Present:

Secretary of State A. Ralph Mollis

Senator June Gibbs

Senator Juan Pichardo

Representative Jon Brien

Ken McGill, Pawtucket Board of Canvassers

Sue Stenhouse, Governor's Deputy Director of Community Relations

Roger Harris, RI Disability Vote Project

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

Commission Members Absent:

Representative Joseph Almeida

Robert Kando, Director, Board of Elections

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:

Kate Bowden, Staff Attorney, RI Disability Law Center, Inc.

Summary of Meeting:

1. Secretary Mollis opened the meeting at 1:10 P.M. and announced the 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. Draft white papers on the following issues were available for those who needed them:

1. Early Voting (Proposal #1)

2. Voter Roll Cleanup (Proposal #2)

3. Closing Times For Polling Places (Proposal #10)

3. As a result of an inquiry from Commissioner Brien, Secretary Mollis updated the Commissioners on the results of the exit poll conducted following Saturday's referendum vote in Lincoln.

a. About 730 of the approximately 3,200 voters were polled.

b. 95% of the respondents with an opinion indicated they liked the concept of Saturday voting.

4. Discussion of penalty language to be included in white paper on expansion of 50' No- Canvassing Zone (Proposal # 5)

a. Attorney Mark Welch provided a summary of the penalties provided in Title 17 for other offenses. Specific penalties are not delineated,

however, the Title references petty misdemeanors, misdemeanors and felonies.

i. After significant discussion, the Commissioners voted to revise the White Paper to incorporate language defining any violation of the 50' No-Canvassing Zone a misdemeanor. A footnote will be included indicating that the Commissioners expressed concern regarding the possible arrest of a first offender. While that is not the intent, such language opens the door to that possibility.

5. Discussion of new White Papers:

a. Early Voting:

i. After significant discussion regarding the information presented in the White Paper, it was unanimously recommended that the Commission support allowing voting on the Saturday preceding the Tuesday election provided that municipalities condense the number of polling places and shorten the hours of voting on the Saturday so as to avoid overtime and minimize expense. It was further decided that the Commissioners would support this measure only if the State pays the associated cost and the additional day of voting does not constitute an unfunded mandate to municipal governments.

b. Voter Roll Cleanup

i. After significant discussion it was decided that Commissioner Ruggiero will revise the White Paper to include items discussed and present the final paper for action at the next meeting.

c. Closing Times of Polling Places

i. Discussion was deferred to the next meeting due to time

considerations.

6. The next workshop will be held on Tuesday, November 20, at 2 P.M. in Room 203 in the State House.

The meeting concluded at 2:50 P.M.

Minutes taken by: Paul Caranci