

New York

305 Fifth Ave., 5th Floor
New York, NY 10001
Tel: 212.633.1405

Boston

33 Chestnut Hill Ave, Suite 303
Boston, MA 02135
Tel: 617.232.5885

Washington, D.C.

1010 Rhode Island Ave., NW
10th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202.559.1543

dem.demos.org

info@dem.demos.org

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Via e-mail

Re: Oppose H.R. 3463 Terminating the Election Assistance Commission and federal financing for presidential election campaigns and party conventions.

December 1, 2011

Dear Representative:

Dēmos respectfully urges you to oppose H.R. 3463 when it comes to a vote on the House floor today. This legislation would terminate the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) and federal financing for presidential election campaigns and party conventions.

Dēmos is a non-partisan public policy research and advocacy organization committed to building an America which achieves its highest democratic ideals – a nation where democracy is robust and inclusive, with high levels of electoral participation and civic engagement; an economy where prosperity and opportunity are broadly shared and disparity is reduced; and a strong and effective government with the capacity to plan for the future.

At a time when public support for Congress is at an all-time low, the last thing the House of Representatives should do is intentionally diminish our democracy, but that is exactly what these two measures would do. A vote to abolish public financing would winnow the already slim domain for non-special interest money in presidential elections, giving increased resonance to the perception that our politics caters to the wealthy and well-connected, not to the average American. Instead of reinforcing this idea, members should combat it by passing the Fair Elections Now Act, which would expand robust public financing to Congress. For more information on how to improve the presidential system and on the Fair Elections Now Act, please visit www.publiccampaign.org.

The Election Assistance Commission receives less attention than presidential public financing, but for those who work to improve our nation's election system, it does invaluable work. The EAC ensures the efficacy, reliability, and trustworthiness of our nation's election systems. For example, the Commission plays a major role in collecting accurate and comparable election data. With our nation's complex and diversified election administration system, central data collection is essential to accurately assess its state and therefore to improve our citizens' trust and confidence in election results. The Commission also develops and fosters the training and organization of our nation's more than 8,000

election administrators. The EAC's award-winning web page has become the "go to" site for election administrators, advocates, and academics.

Moreover, the Commission is charged with developing standards for voting systems, and this precedent-setting work has been recognized by nations around the world. Several countries are so impressed with our system that they have signed agreements with the EAC for technical assistance as they developed their own voting system standards and certification procedures. The EAC's certification program is helping state and local governments to save money by using its oversight role to coordinate with manufacturers and local election officials to ensure that the existing equipment meets its durability and longevity potential. This saves state and local governments from the unnecessary expense of new voting equipment.

Importantly, the EAC has played a central role in improving the accessibility of voting for the country's more than 37 million voters with disabilities. Although we still have a way to go to achieve the Help America Vote Act's mandate to make voting accessible, the EAC's leadership is essential to continuing the effort to offer all Americans the right to vote "privately and independently."

Some have proposed that the EAC's functions could be assumed by the FEC. We believe that would not be wise. The FEC is dysfunctional. It is overwhelmed by its current responsibilities. The FEC is starkly divided on partisan lines, making it particularly inappropriate for election administration responsibilities. And the FEC is increasingly unable to make decisions or even to agree on staff-negotiated recommendations.

Rather than abolishing the EAC, Congress should provide the EAC with resources and a renewed commitment to sponsoring and encouraging information sharing among state and local officials, EAC committees, the non-partisan voting rights community, technical experts and others.

Elections are the lifeblood of a democracy. We strongly urge the House to respond to the public dissatisfaction with the state of our democracy by strengthening the Election Assistance Commission and the presidential public financing system – instead of terminating them.

Sincerely,



Miles Rapoport
President