



January 17, 2008

The Honorable Rush Holt
U.S. House of Representatives
1019 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Holt:

I am writing to commend your efforts to work with the National Association of Counties in developing legislation to offer a voluntary federal reimbursement and incentive grant for the purchase of paper ballot voting systems and emergency paper ballots, to fund demonstration audits and for other purposes.

The National Association of Counties supports the approach of this legislation, which is to offer voluntary cost reimbursement. We are neutral on the specific incentives because we do not support or oppose any particular voting system or any one method of counting or auditing ballots. We have appreciated the opportunity to review your draft language and to offer meaningful input prior to introduction. We appreciate that you have incorporated many of our suggestions, including providing the option for individual counties and other jurisdictions to apply, allowing counties to select from a menu of incentives rather than a single option, providing for actual cost reimbursement, and generally expanding flexibility for jurisdictions that opt to participate. The costs of administering elections for local, state and federal office continue to spiral and many counties would welcome the opportunity to apply for federal reimbursement of expenses they are already incurring.

We anticipate that our members – as well as other stakeholders – will have an opportunity to vet and weigh in on the specific incentives as the legislative process unfolds this year. We look forward to working with you through this process and will assist you, along with the members of the House Administration Committee and other members of Congress, in identifying and addressing their differing perspectives. We will encourage the House Administration Committee to adopt the incentive grant structure that you are proposing in lieu of one-size-fits-all mandates.

NACO recognizes that there will be few opportunities to appropriate funds for any new incentive grant prior to the Presidential election in 2008. In the absence of such funding, enactment of this legislation would provide jurisdictions with no assurance of reimbursement. However, we applaud your efforts to pursue this approach and look forward to working with you to seek appropriations for reimbursement and incentive grants for election administration expenditures that counties are already pursuing in addition to fully funding the Help America Vote Act.

If you have any questions about our position on this or on other proposed legislation, please contact Alysoun McLaughlin, Associate Legislative Director, at 202-942-4254 or amclaughlin@naco.org.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry E. Naake". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Larry E. Naake
Executive Director