

Carter-Baker Commission on Federal Election Reform Stresses Urgency of Reform

***Former President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State James Baker Present
Bi-Partisan Election Reform Report to President Bush and Members of Congress***

Washington, DC (September 19, 2005)—Former President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State James A. Baker, III will conduct meetings with President Bush and Congressional leaders today to discuss recommendations in the final report of the Commission on Federal Election Reform, which they co-chaired.

The 21-member Commission, which conducted public hearings in Washington and Houston, offers 87 recommendations to strengthen the country's electoral system and build confidence among voters in the political process. The Commissioners met with political leaders Monday in order to stress the need for change before the 2008 presidential election.

"Elections are the heart of our democracy," Carter said. "The Help America Vote Act of 2002 made an historic contribution, but one law is not enough. The American people are losing confidence in the system, and they want electoral reform. We have forged a comprehensive package of reforms that represent the best path toward modernizing our electoral system, and we hope that the President, the Congress, and the states will consider them seriously."

"We hope that this report will help transform the sterile debate between Democrats and Republicans on election reform issues and provide the impetus for our federal and state leaders to take action now, when we still have plenty of time before our next presidential election," Baker said.

The 21-member private commission is organized by American University. Comprised of former Members of Congress, scholars and nonpartisan leaders, the group identified "five pillars" of election reform—voter registration, voter identification, voting technology, increased access to voting and nonpartisan election administration—and recommended ways to strengthen them. Highlights include:

- To address the most serious problem of inaccurate registration lists, the Commission recommends that states, not local jurisdictions, organize and update their lists, and that the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) take the lead in making the lists interoperable so as to eliminate duplicates when people move between states.
- To enhance ballot integrity, states should require voters to present a REAL ID card at the polls and provide non-drivers with a free photo ID card for voting, but during a transition, citizens without a card should be permitted to vote with a provisional ballot.
- States should make voter registration and IDs accessible to all eligible citizens by using mobile offices and other means to register more voters and issue photo ID cards.

- Congress should pass a law to require voter-verifiable paper audit trails on all electronic voting machines, and the EAC needs to take additional steps to ensure those machines are secure and accessible for people with disabilities.
- The U.S. Election Assistance Commission and state election management institutions should be strengthened and reconstituted on a nonpartisan basis.
- The presidential primary schedule should be reorganized into four regional primaries.

The full report is available on the Commission Web site at <http://www.american.edu/Carter-Baker>.

The Commission's Co-Chairs will have a press conference on Capitol Hill at 1:30 pm in the Hall of Columns. President Carter will also be speaking at American University at 4 pm, and that will be open to the media.

American University's Center for Democracy and Election Management (CDEM) organized the work of the Commission in association with the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University, The Carter Center and *electionline.org*, sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts. General sponsors include Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Omidyar Network. CDEM Director Robert A. Pastor is executive director of the Commission and serves as a Commission member.

In addition to Carter, Baker and Pastor, Commission Members include:

Betty Castor, the 2004 Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate in Florida.

Tom Daschle, former U.S. Senate Minority Leader from South Dakota.

Rita DiMartino, former vice president of congressional relations for AT&T.

Lee Hamilton, president and director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and a former Member of Congress from Indiana.

Kay Coles James, former director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

Benjamin Ladner, president and professor of philosophy and religion at American University.

David Leebron, president of Rice University in Houston, TX.

Nelson Lund, professor of constitutional law at George Mason University in Arlington, VA.

Shirley Malcom, head of the Directorate for Education and Human Resources Programs of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Bob Michel, former U.S. House Whip and House Minority Leader from Illinois.

Susan Molinari, president and CEO of the Washington Group, a government relations and lobbying firm, and former Member of Congress from New York.

Robert Mosbacher, chairman of Mosbacher Energy Company and past chairman of the Republican National Committee.

Ralph Munro, former Washington secretary of state and board member for various voting and Internet technology companies.

Jack Nelson, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and former Washington bureau chief for the *Los Angeles Times*.

Spencer Overton, professor specializing in voting rights and campaign finance law at The George Washington University Law School in Washington, DC.

Tom Phillips, former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Texas.

Sharon Priest, former Arkansas secretary of state and current chair of the Arkansas State Election Improvement Study Commission and the State Board of Election Commissioners.

Raul Yzaguirre, presidential professor of practice in community development and civil rights at Arizona State University and former president of the National Council of La Raza.

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