

Statement of Benjamin W. Hovland
Nominee, Election Assistance Commission
United States Senate Committee on Rules and Administration
November 28, 2018

Good afternoon Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and members of the committee. Thank you for holding this hearing on my nomination to serve on the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC). I also want to thank Senator Schumer for submitting my name to the President for consideration, and to thank the President for nominating me.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce my wife, Kelly, and our children, Harper and Henry. I am so pleased and proud to have them with me here today. Additionally, as Kelly and I met working at the Missouri Secretary of State's office, I clearly owe more to election administration than most. I would also like to thank my mother, Barbara, whose health did not allow her to travel here today, but I know is proudly watching the webcast. Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family who were able to be here today, especially my mother-in-law, Janet, and my sisters-in-law, Abbey and Katie.

It is an honor to be considered for this position and to testify regarding my qualifications and interest in serving as an EAC Commissioner. As you know, the EAC's mission is to help election officials improve the administration of elections and to help Americans exercise their right to vote.

I have dedicated my career to these same goals. Following law school, I worked at the Missouri Secretary of State's office. While there, I was involved in the Secretary of State's efforts to increase access to the polls and improve the voting experience for Missourians. During that time, I was fortunate to learn a great deal about election administration from my co-workers and election officials, both in Missouri and around the country.

My time at the Missouri Secretary of State's office also inspired me to start volunteering as a poll worker, a service I enjoy and have continued to do whenever possible. In addition to greeting and assisting my neighbors as they exercise their right to vote, the experience of serving as a poll worker has provided helpful perspective on the amazing work that goes into administering our elections, and the difficulties some eligible Americans face while trying to vote.

Following my time at the Missouri Secretary of State's office, I moved to Washington, DC and began working with a non-partisan advocacy group to improve election administration and voter access around the country. This experience helped me to understand the many benefits and challenges of each of the 50 states administering elections in a unique way.

For the last five years, I have had the privilege to work at the United States Senate for this Committee. Working for the Rules Committee has provided an incredible opportunity to learn more about this great institution and the importance of looking for bipartisan solutions. Additionally, like many others who work in the election field, I have learned far more about election cybersecurity than I ever expected in the last two years.

While the need to improve election cybersecurity continues, the 2018 election reminded us of the more traditional challenges of election administration: long lines, voting machine breakdowns, poll worker issues, ballot design, and the need for contingency plans. The combined result is that being an election official is a difficult, often thankless job that does not end on Election Day. I believe we can and should do more to assist the officials that run our elections.

The Election Assistance Commission was created to help election officials across the country with the challenges they face. If confirmed, I am committed to working on commonsense, good government solutions that fulfill the Commission's mission to assist election officials and help Americans vote.

Members of the committee, I thank you for your consideration of my nomination, and will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.