

**Colorado Voter Access & Modernized Elections Commission**  
**Preliminary Report to the Colorado General Assembly**  
**February 17, 2015**

*Note: The following report is preliminary and does not include Commission recommendations. A final report will be submitted to the General Assembly after the final report is received from the Bipartisan Policy Center.*

**Introduction**

This commission was created by Colorado Revised Statutes §1-1-115 upon the passage of House Bill 13-1303, the “Voter Access and Modernized Elections Act” (“HB 1303”). C.R.S. §1-1-115(6)(c) requires the commission submit a report evaluating the use of technology during the 2014 general election and include technical recommendations for the 2016 general election.

Colorado’s flexibility in conducting elections is thought to be unique in the nation. The new election model allowed for all active voters to receive a ballot by mail, in person voting option for two weeks prior to and on Election Day, with an opportunity to register to vote or make an address change up to and on Election Day. In previous partisan elections, those who missed the registration cut-off or did not correct their address prior to going to the polling place were required to vote a provisional ballot. As a result of the change in model, there was an improvement in voter turnout and a substantial reduction in provisional ballots issued from previous general elections. While many states’ turnout number declined, Colorado’s improved and was the fourth highest in the nation.

The commission previously conducted needs assessments on voting and registration system technology and the current state of technology. A report with recommendations based on the two needs assessments was submitted to the Colorado General Assembly on January 15, 2014. Both needs assessments and the 2014 report can be found at <http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/CVAMEC/index.html>.

Two subcommittees were established by the commission to carry out its duties, in response to the first needs assessment. The commission created the Business Practice Subgroup in response to the recommendation that business practices regarding elections must first be aligned prior to developing the technology to support those practices. The Technology Subgroup, led by the Secretary of State’s office, considered various options to implement the voter registration changes adopted in HB 13-1303, and worked with the Business Practice Subgroup, the Secretary of State’s office, and county clerks to develop, test, and implement a secure web-based application to support VSPCs in Colorado (“VSPC web app”).

**Evaluation of 2014 General Election**

The Business Practice Group (BPG) conducted a survey of counties, gathered testimonials regarding clerk and recorders’ experiences during the election, and compiled various statistics captured by the counties during the 2014 General Election. The survey’s objective was to gather information about the 2014 General Election and compare it across all county tiers. The Business Practice Subgroup’s report can be found at Appendices A through H.

The Secretary of State has contracted with the Bipartisan Policy Center to conduct an evaluation of the VSPC web app. The VSPC web app performed well during the testing phase and no issues were reported during the two weeks VSPCs were open prior to Election Day. On Election Day, however, the VSPC web app was not functioning smoothly, with ongoing service interruptions reported throughout the state. The Bipartisan Policy Center has issued a draft report, found at Appendix I. The final report will be submitted by March 15, 2015.

With the support of the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Colorado County Clerks Association, Robert Stein and Andrew Menger from Rice University with Greg Vonnahme from University of Missouri- Kansas City conducted a survey of Colorado voters to learn about their experiences with the new election model. The survey asked voters if they received a ballot by mail, how they chose to return their mail ballot (or vote in person), whether or not they utilized the voter registration law changes, and asked them to assess their satisfaction with their election experience. The survey of voters found that the overwhelming majority of voters (95%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their voting experience. The Pew Charitable Trusts Colorado Midterm Election Survey is included with this report as Appendix J.

### **Recommendations for 2016**

Both the Business Practice Subgroup report and the draft Bipartisan Policy Center report include recommendations for 2016 and areas for further study. None of the recommendations made by the Business Practice Subgroup or Bipartisan Policy Center have been endorsed by the commission.

The commission will issue recommendations related to technology as part of its final report, to be issued after the final report of the Bipartisan Policy Center is received.

### **Members of the Colorado Voter Access & Modernized Elections Commission**

Suzanne Staiert, Commission Co-Chair, Deputy Secretary of State, Secretary of State Appointee  
Elena Nunez, Commission Co-Chair, Colorado Common Cause, Governor's Appointee  
Hilary Hall, Boulder County Clerk and Recorder, County Clerks' Association  
Jennifer Levin, Disability Law Colorado, Secretary of State Appointee  
Bob Rankin, Colorado House of Representatives, Joint Technology Committee  
Jayson Sime, America Votes, Governor's Appointee  
Sheila Reiner, Mesa County Clerk and Recorder, County Clerks' Association  
Martha Tierney, Heizer Paul, LLP, Representing the Colorado Democratic Party  
Max Tyler, Colorado House of Representatives, Joint Technology Committee  
Richard Westfall, Hale Westfall, LLP, Representing the Colorado Republican Party  
Michael Brown, Governor's Office of Information Technology, Chief Information Officer or designee