



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **NALEO Educational Fund and Election Administration Officials Celebrate 15 Years of Progress on Anniversary of Help America Vote Act**

*HAVA allowed for significant progress modernizing election equipment over the past 15 years, but renewed investment in dependable and secure election infrastructure is now needed*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Election administrators from across the country and National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund Executive Director Arturo Vargas today released statements in commemoration of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) being signed into law by President George W. Bush.

HAVA was passed by Congress 15 years ago to overhaul the nation's voting process. For the first time, HAVA provided major federal funding for election officials to purchase more modern voting equipment and to improve various aspects of election administration that created significant challenges during the controversial 2000 Presidential election cycle.

In addition, HAVA imposed new mandatory minimum standards for states to follow in several key areas of election administration, created the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) as an independent bipartisan agency to assist state and local officials, made changes to improve military and overseas voting, and authorized other election reforms. The law also requires states to provide provisional ballots to those voters who are not on the registration list or whose registration may be in question.

While HAVA has allowed the nation to make great strides on the election administration front, the work is far from over. As the nation's election infrastructure continues to age in many jurisdictions, new investment and innovations will be necessary to ensure that our elections utilize the best and most secure technology available to protect the integrity of the results.

"Free and fair elections are the foundation of our democracy. The landmark Help America Vote Act (HAVA) established a modern blueprint for improved accessibility and administration of our nation's elections. As a result of HAVA, California replaced old voting systems, enhanced voter registration opportunities, provided funding to improve polling place accessibility, and assisted military and overseas voters in casting ballots. As we celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of HAVA, we must also recognize the urgent need to reinvest in election innovation to ensure the transparency, security, accessibility, and integrity of our elections," said Alex Padilla, California Secretary of State.

"In order for our democracy to work, we need to make sure all eligible voters can vote while ensuring the integrity of our electoral process. The Help America Vote Act was instrumental in

helping states modernize their elections infrastructure. It also ensured that no one would be turned away from the polls by requiring provisional ballots. HAVA's investment in state elections systems, along with the protections afforded in the Voting Rights Act, have been important improvements to our democracy," said Nellie M. Gorbea, Rhode Island Secretary of State.

"The passage of the Help America Vote Act has resulted in countless improvements and innovations in New Mexico's voting processes and systems, which has increased access to the ballot box for traditionally underrepresented communities. This includes utilization of a 100 percent paper ballot system, voting convenience centers, online voter registration, and increased outreach to encourage voter participation. I am thrilled to celebrate the anniversary of HAVA today because it paved the way for a lot of these innovations," said Maggie Toulouse Oliver, New Mexico Secretary of State.

"The Maricopa County Elections Department is proud of the progress we have achieved since the enactment of the Help America Vote Act. In just the last year, we have made massive improvements to the security and usability of our voting systems. Ensuring citizens' confidence in and access to our election infrastructure to promote civic engagement is a key part of our mission. We are committed to investing in security and collaborating with government on all levels to continue improvements of the elections infrastructure," said Adrian Fontes, Maricopa County Recorder.

"The conduct of our nation's elections have been at the forefront of voters' minds for years. Laws, such as HAVA have helped to increase voter trust through a sturdier infrastructure and a continuation of best-in-class practices for local elections offices," said Michael Ertel, Seminole County Supervisor of Elections.

"For our democracy to thrive, our nation's citizens must be able to exercise their right to vote and maintain their faith in the integrity of our election systems. HAVA has allowed our nation to make significant progress on this front in the last 15 years, providing for the modernization of outdated election equipment and creating a set of federally mandated minimum standards that address many of the high-profile issues that arose during Election 2000. The law has also provided voters with the right to cast provisional ballots and ensured that state and local election officials who are on the front lines administering elections have support from an independent bipartisan agency. All of these changes have made the right to vote much more accessible to Latinos and all eligible voters," said Arturo Vargas, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund Executive Director.

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***About NALEO Educational Fund***

*NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-partisan, non-profit organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.*