



U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION
1225 NEW YORK AVENUE, N.W., SUITE 1100
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

OFFICE OF THE CHAIR

Commissioner Michael J. Astrue
Social Security Administration
440 Altmeyer Building,
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Via Facsimile 410-966-9973

September 19, 2008

Dear Commissioner Astrue:

We were recently notified that the Social Security Administration (SSA) has scheduled its National Computer Center Annual Building Shutdown October 10 – 13, 2008 and that online system services will be shut down during this time. I urge the SSA to reconsider the date of its annual shutdown.

Forty-one (41) states have voter registration deadlines between October 6 and October 20. Historically, states experience high levels of activity as registration deadlines approach. The loss of access to SSA's online system means election officials will not be able to compare social security information, as required by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), and may prevent them from processing these registration applications. In some states, the inability to compare new registrants to SSA's database may result in voters having to produce additional identification information on Election Day or having to cast provisional ballots.

As we approach the November 4th election, Americans are registering to vote in record numbers, and it is important that election officials are given the tools and support to process these applications. Election officials are working hard to keep up, and they cannot spare even one weekend without access to SSA's online system, especially at this crucial time.

I understand that SSA has a mission to accomplish, but given the important role that SSA has been entrusted with under HAVA, I just want to make sure the agency is aware that the timing of its annual shutdown may have consequences on the voter registration process.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter, and we stand ready to assist the SSA to make sure that the voter registration process is not impacted by this situation. Please contact me if you have questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rosemary E. Rodriguez".

Rosemary E. Rodriguez
Chair
U.S. Election Assistance Commission