April 10, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush
President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

It has been a great honor and privilege to serve as one of four initial appointees to the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC). I am deeply honored at the trust you placed in me in October 2003 in nominating me to this important and historic agency charged with implementing what is, in my view, one of the most significant federal laws passed in recent history – the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). However, after much deliberation and thought, I write today to respectfully submit my resignation from the EAC, effective June 30, 2006.

I am leaving the EAC strictly for personal and family considerations. My wife, Beth, and I have been blessed with two wonderful children – Sofia Grace and Lorenzo Elder – and we have decided that it is in the best interest of our family to return home to Austin, Texas and focus on our future. Moreover, the recent and unexpected death of my mother has reinforced our desire to be closer to our immediate family.

It has been more than three years since I was first approached by former Senator Tom Daschle to serve on the EAC. After a longer than expected confirmation process, I have now served as an EAC commissioner for nearly two and a half years. During that time, the EAC has made significant progress in helping to improve all facets of election administration. Notably, in its short history, the EAC has: (1) fully distributed historic and unprecedented federal funds to every eligible jurisdiction; (2) adopted the first set of revised voluntary voting system guidelines governing the accessibility and security of electronic voting equipment; (3) released the first set of voluntary guidance regarding statewide voter registration lists; (4) commissioned significant research and data collection designed to fulfill our obligation to serve as a “national clearinghouse” of election administration practices; and, in the months ahead, is (5) poised to transfer the national voting system certification program from the National Association of State Election Directors to the EAC, marking the first time in our country’s history that the federal government will be involved in the certification of voting system hardware and software.

I am proud to have been significantly involved in the many accomplishments of this fine agency. I am also pleased to have emphasized, throughout my tenure, the importance of achieving a proper balance of responsibilities between federal, state and local governments in achieving the promise of HAVA. Let me be clear in stating my support for the great tradition in our country of having the process of election administration be an obligation largely
reserved to state and local governments. And yet, I also believe there is a compelling need for the EAC to remain as a permanent part of the election administration landscape – to work with administrators, advocates and academics alike in collaboratively improving all aspects of election administration, including the technology we use, the procedures which govern our elections, and the people involved in this process. The EAC represents a success story, owing largely to the bipartisan support of the United States Congress, and in particular, to the leadership of Senators Christopher J. Dodd and Mitch McConnell and Congressmen Steny H. Hoyer and Bob Ney. I am grateful for their constant support and guidance, and that of their staff, over the past several years.

It should also be noted that the achievements of the EAC have occurred in large measure because of the hard work and professionalism of an exceptional group of dedicated agency employees. I am privileged to have had the opportunity to work alongside such outstanding public servants. Likewise, the ongoing commitment to fairness and equality exhibited by state and local election administrators from throughout the country has ensured that today, the mechanics of our great democracy has a renewed sense of focus on issues pertaining to both “access” and “integrity” in the process – two goals which should not be regarded, in my view, as mutually exclusive.

There is clearly more much work to be done to achieve the level of improvement that was expected when HAVA was overwhelmingly passed by Congress. As a commissioner, I have been vocal in expressing my concerns regarding what I view as a disturbingly negative trend in the confidence of the America public in the integrity of our election outcomes. It is my sincerest hope that, in the months and years to come, I will be able to utilize the privilege of my garnered experience at the EAC to continue to offer sound and realistic solutions to improve the perception of fundamental fairness in the conduct of our elections. Still, I firmly believe we have already made significant progress since the passage of HAVA and the creation of the EAC. And, this progress should be attributed not to any one political party or philosophy, but to the collective efforts of so many individuals who have put aside partisan interests for the sake of furthering an American agenda. I am most proud to have been a part of that effort.

Finally, only in our great country could the child of an auto mechanic and homemaker – growing up in South Texas with few financial resources but an abundance of love and support – rise through the ranks to eventually serve at the request of not just one, but two, U.S. presidents. I am most appreciative for the chance to serve my country in this regard and in doing so, to once again fulfill my life-long dream of public service. That dream does not end today. Perhaps in many ways, it is just beginning.

Respectfully,

RAY MARTINEZ III
Commissioner
United States Election Assistance Commission