

Special Committee on Voter Confidence Minutes (Working Session)

October 11, 2022 at 9:00 A.M.
State Archives, 9 Ratification Way, Concord NH

The meeting started at 9:06 a.m according to notice. Three members of the public were in attendance. All members of the committee with the exception of member Andrew Georgevits were in attendance.

The Committee discussed the latest draft of the report, amended by Co-Chair Richard Swett following the previous meeting. A draft summary of testimony put together by Co-chair Swett and members Olivia Zink and Ken Eyring was also included.

The Committee discussed how detailed the summary of testimony should be and whether a reference to past meeting minutes and film would suffice. Committee member Ken Eyring said the summary needs to support the statements made in the findings section of the report as referring to the minutes and video would be time-consuming for the public.

The Committee agreed a summary of testimony should be posted on the Secretary of State's website. Committee member Jim Splaine suggested including a disclaimer with any summary of testimony posted online.

There was discussion on comparing testimony to findings. Members agreed the more transparency, the better. Members also discussed whether the report should be published before or after the election.

The Committee reviewed the draft findings in the report. Topics of discussion included election-day registration, affidavits, the Election Procedure Manual, audits, absentee ballot processing and civics education.

In addition, the Committee discussed publicizing election complaints, redistricting, and cross-check systems.

Former secretary of state Bill Gardner came in to speak to the Committee and vigorously dispute a recent study published by the New York Times that ranks New Hampshire as the most difficult state to vote in.

Mr. Gardner applauded the Committee for its work and emphasized the importance of having dialogue. He said voting is one of the only things in life that is equal.

In 1996, Mr. Gardner noted NH became a state exempt from the National Voter Registration act while Oregon had all-mail voting. Since then, NH has had a higher voter turnout than Oregon. Mr. Gardner emphasized that states with the highest voter turnout should be recognized. A

state that ranks in the top 5 states in voter turnout should not be labelled as a voter suppressive one, he added.

Mr. Gardner also discussed student voting, affidavits, US Constitution stipulations on absentee voting, and some positive experiences engaging in dialogue with people about New Hampshire's electoral system. He pointed out that in NH, everyone who works at polling places lives and votes in that community, which is not the case in every state.

Mr. Gardner explained how NH came to adopt election-day registration at the polling place and handed out a chart of state-by-state voter turnout. He said many people live in echo chambers and lack sufficient information on the electoral process.

Mr. Gardner also presented polls from Oregon that found people of that state have less confidence in elections than the people of NH. He cited a poll that found that most NH voters find it easy to vote in NH. Mr. Gardner said New Hampshire's story is unique and local election officials play an important role.

The next working session is scheduled for 11/1 from 9:00 – 1:00 p.m. in the State Archives Research Room. The subcommittee will next meet 10/17 on Zoom at 9 a.m. Co-chair Cook added the Committee will decide the date of the press conference announcing the completed report at the next meeting.

Committee member Amanda Merrill moved to adjourn the meeting, member Douglass Teschner seconded it, all voted in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 1 p.m.