



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chris Whitmire
803-734-9070
cwhitmire@elections.sc.gov

State Election Commission Celebrates 50 Years

Celebrating the Commitment to Ensuring Every Vote Matters and Every Vote Counts

COLUMBIA, SC (December 27, 2018) – Beginning January 1, the South Carolina State Election Commission (SEC) will be celebrating 50 years of ensuring every eligible citizen has the opportunity to register to vote, participate in fair and impartial elections, and have the assurance that their votes will count. That commitment began on January 1, 1969, when the SEC was formed by the General Assembly as an independent state agency charged with overseeing South Carolina’s elections.

After 25 General Elections and more than 12,000 other state and local elections, the SEC is celebrating its rich history of service and the importance of having elections run by nonpartisan election professionals. Prior to 1969, the Secretary of State oversaw state elections. The General Assembly created the S.C. State Election Commission as an independent state agency to remove control of the state’s elections from a partisan, elected official. South Carolina is unique in that regard with only 11 other states having similar structures.

James Ellisor was the first Executive Director of the SEC and was serving as the Deputy Director of Elections under the Secretary of State in 1968. “South Carolina did the right thing when it wasn’t a common or popular thing to do,” Ellisor said. The move also changed the makeup of the State Board of Canvassers, which decides election protests. At the time, the board consisted of the Secretary of State, Comptroller General, Attorney General, State Treasurer and Commissioner of Agriculture. Ellisor continued, “Governor Robert McNair and others were concerned that five elected officials from the same political party were deciding state and federal election protests. They recognized the need for an independent agency in which voters could have trust and confidence that any contest would be decided on its merits and not politics.”

Current SEC Executive Director Marci Andino notes that while the election landscape certainly has changed over the decades, the core mission has not. “With the level of technology in elections today, the cyber security required to protect the state’s election infrastructure, and the public scrutiny of the election process, the election environment has changed dramatically,” Andino said. “But through all that, we’re still working towards the same goal – making sure voters are able to register and vote and have confidence that the process is fair and impartial.



Over the years, the SEC has held fast to that independent and nonpartisan mandate with extraordinary consistency in leadership. The agency has had only four executive directors over 50 years. In other states, it is common for election administrators to change as new secretaries are elected. Andino worked for all three previous directors. “Our structure as an independent agency has allowed for a remarkable level of consistency, stability, and transfer of institutional knowledge,” Andino said.

The State Election Commission is made of five board members, an executive director, and 26 staff. In addition, there are approximately 500 county election officials and 20,000 poll managers who serve throughout South Carolina.

Key milestones and accomplishments over the last 50 years:

- **1968** – Legislation passes to create the SEC
- **1968** – James B. Ellisor named as Executive Director (1968-1992)
- **1968** – South Carolina becomes the first state in the nation to implement a computerized statewide voter registration system
- **1969** – Legislation creating SEC takes effect January 1
- **1986** – South Carolina implements voter registration by mail making registration easier and more accessible
- **1986** – South Carolina implements the Uniformed and Overseas Citizen Absentee Voting Act improving the ability of military and overseas voters to cast ballots from remote locations
- **1992** – SEC and county boards begin conducting party primaries previously conducted by political parties
- **1992** – Lynn McCants named as Executive Director (1992-1993)
- **1994** – James F. Hendrix named as Executive Director (1994-2002)
- **1995** – South Carolina implements the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 establishing the S.C. Department of Motor Vehicles and other state agencies as voter registration locations
- **2003** – Marci Andino named as Executive Director (2003-Present)
- **2005** – South Carolina implements a uniform, statewide electronic voting system realizing an initiative started by former Executive Director James Ellisor to replace paper ballots
- **2008** – SEC and county boards begin conducting presidential primaries previously conducted by political parties
- **2010** – South Carolina implements the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act expanding access to voter registration and voting for military and overseas citizens



- **2012** – South Carolina becomes one of the first states in the nation to implement online voter registration making registration easier and more accessible
- **2014** – SEC and county boards begin conducting partisan candidate filing previously conducted by political parties
- **2017** – U.S. Department of Homeland Security designates elections as Critical Infrastructure
- **2018** – SEC requests proposals to replace statewide voting system
- **2019** – SEC celebrates 50th Anniversary

For more information on the South Carolina State Election Commission and other items related to voter registration and elections, visit scVOTES.org.

###