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Preliminary Statement of the OAS Electoral Observation Mission for the November 3, 2020 General Elections in the United States Of America

The full Preliminary Report is available [here](#).

Following an invitation from the United States Department of State, the Organization of American States deployed a limited scope Electoral Observation Mission for the General Elections of November 3, 2020. Led by the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Luis Almagro, the OAS Mission comprised 28 experts and observers from 13 countries.

Due to the decentralized nature of electoral administration in the United States, the Mission required the authorization of individual states in order to observe their voting processes. The Mission therefore contacted the authorities in fourteen states and the District of Columbia to request access during the pre-electoral period and on Election Day. The size of the country and challenges deriving from the COVID-19 pandemic did not allow the OAS to deploy a larger or more widely-dispersed Mission. In determining the states in which it hoped to observe, the Mission applied the following criteria: 1) states that allow international observers; 2) plurality of electoral systems and organization; 3) geographic representation; and 4) political trends. Ultimately, restrictions resulting from COVID-19 as well as other factors outside of the control of the Mission, limited the states to which it was able to deploy.

As noted in the report of the OAS Mission to the 2016 general elections in the United States, some states do not allow or lack specific provisions for international observation of their electoral processes. The OAS would welcome consideration by these states of the benefits of receiving international observers and steps to reflect this in their local legislation.

Prior to Election Day the Mission visited and engaged with state and electoral officials, political party representatives and other stakeholders in Georgia, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan and the District of Columbia. The Mission also observed the early voting process and political campaign activities in these jurisdictions. On Election Day the Mission was present and observed the final voting process in the same four states and the District of Columbia.

The Mission also met with federal authorities, other electoral observation missions, organizations working in the field of democracy and elections, representatives of the private sector and civil society actors, among others. Experts attached to the Mission analysed key aspects of the electoral process, including electoral organization and technology, electoral justice, political financing, the political participation of women, postal voting, electoral boundaries and freedom of expression/media.

Mindful of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mission implemented a series of precautionary measures in order to safeguard its members and the stakeholders with which it met. As far as possible, meetings with stakeholders were held virtually, using different online platforms. For all in-person engagements, including the observation of Early Voting and on Election Day, members of the Mission utilized Personal Protective Equipment, respected social distancing recommendations and complied with the safety guidelines of electoral authorities when visiting polling places. The Mission's specialists conducted the majority of their work remotely.

PRE-ELECTORAL CONTEXT

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