

## Observers: US elections were well-managed, despite efforts to undermine trust

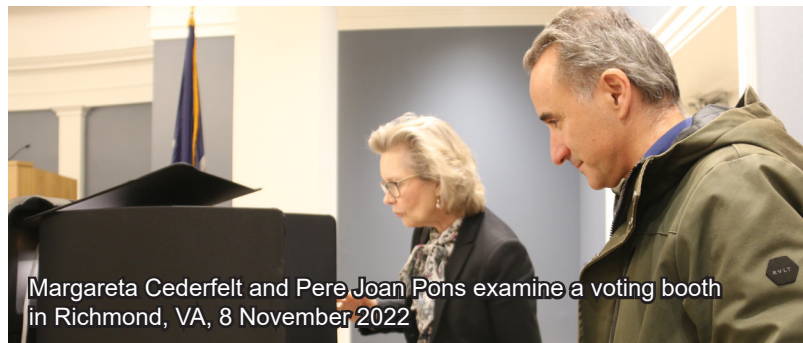
The 8 November mid-term congressional elections were competitive and professionally managed, with active voter participation, international observers said in a statement released today. Candidates could campaign freely, but many contests were highly polarized and marred by harsh rhetoric, and partisan redistricting resulted in many cases in uncompetitive constituencies, the statement says. Efforts to undermine voters' trust in the electoral process by baselessly questioning its integrity can result in systemic challenges, they said.

The statement, delivered at a press conference in Washington by OSCE Special Co-ordinator and PA President Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden), also noted that disclosure mechanisms for campaign finance are generally comprehensive, but loopholes in the regulatory framework make the impact of money in politics less transparent. The electoral legal framework is complex and diverse, observers noted, with states adopting and applying their own laws and regulations on most aspects.

The head of the OSCE PA delegation of observers, Pere Joan Pons (Spain), stressed that as a robust and well-established democracy, it is crucial that the United States continues to improve its electoral system by increasing the franchise, enhancing election security, and countering misinformation. The challenges to democracy that the U.S. faces are common to many OSCE countries and we must all work together to ensure that the citizens have trust in their democratic processes, Pons said.

Following the 2020 population census, the 435 seats in the House of Representatives were reapportioned among the states, and electoral districts were redrawn, leading to a total of 78 legal challenges filed against congressional district maps, often alleging partisan or racial gerrymandering. In designing the maps, algorithms are sometimes used that take into account politically favorable variables, the observers pointed out, and as currently implemented, redistricting does not fully ensure competitiveness.

Harassment, threats and instances of violence against candidates, their families and election officials were of concern, as was voter intimidation. In this regard, observers welcomed the efforts of Congress to allocate funds for election security, includ-



Margareta Cederfelt and Pere Joan Pons examine a voting booth in Richmond, VA, 8 November 2022

ing to counter threats against election administrators, and a joint taskforce of the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation that was created to gather information on threats and to address these at the federal level.

Regarding campaign finance, the observers noted that transparency is undermined by a lack of disclosure by tax-exempted organizations involved in the campaign. Many in the diverse media landscape made efforts to present accurate information, but polarization and widespread disinformation affected voters' ability to inform themselves. Voter ID requirements were deemed in line with good practice, but IDs were not equally accessible to all eligible citizens in some states.

The OSCE PA observers worked closely with the Limited Election Observation Mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, led by Tana de Zulueta. More than 100 OSCE parliamentarians, supported by some 30 staff members, deployed for election day observation in California, Virginia, Maryland, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Nevada, New York, Missouri, and the District of Columbia. This was the ninth OSCE PA observation mission in the United States since 2004, and the largest one ever deployed. The OSCE PA delegation was supported on the ground by Secretary General Roberto Montella, Head of Elections Andreas Baker, Elections Administration Officer Iryna Sabashuk, Election Advisor Stephanie Koltchanov, and several other members of the International Secretariat.

## OSCE PA Autumn Meeting to take place 24-26 November

The 20th Autumn Meeting of the OSCE PA will take place from 24 to 26 November in Warsaw, in the premises of the Polish Parliament. Information and links for registration of Parliamentary delegations of Partners for Co-operation Delegation and Official Observers to the OSCE PA, have been sent to their OSCE PA contact points. For more information, please visit: <https://bit.ly/2ZFxFro>

## OSCE PA Special Representative in Vienna participates in 2023 CiO briefing



Miodrag Pančeski represents the OSCE PA at a briefing for the 2023 OSCE Chairmanship, 8 November 2022

The OSCE PA participated in an introductory briefing for the incoming 2023 OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia organized by the OSCE Secretariat this week. Providing an opportunity to present the Assembly's working methods, as well as the procedures and modalities of co-operation between OSCE structures, the meeting was a useful forum to ensure smooth and mutually supportive teamwork in challenging circumstances for international peace and security next year.

The Parliamentary Assembly was represented by Ambassador Miodrag Pančeski, its Special Representative in Vienna, who shared information on the work of the PA and its planned activities for 2023, offering co-operation and support in protection and promotion of the OSCE principles and commitments throughout the year. Amb. Pančeski stressed that the Assembly looks forward to establishing good co-operation with the Chairmanship in promoting and protecting OSCE principles and commitments.