

News from Copenhagen

OSCE PA

Number 453 Current Information from the OSCE PA International Secretariat

7 November 2012

OSCE PA concludes successful U.S. election observation mission



Alfred Dubs speaks with a poll worker in Philadelphia.



Joao Soares speaks with reporters at a polling station in Washington.

OSCE PA observers of the 6 November general elections in the United States reported today that they were well received everywhere and that election day proceedings went smoothly. With more than 100 deployed to observe election activities in North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Washington, D.C., parliamentarians met with key officials and political leaders on the local, state and national levels, as well as with journalists, political experts, poll workers and voters. Observers had no difficulty accessing polling locations.

“We were warmly welcomed at all polling stations in Philadelphia,” reported Alfred Dubs (United Kingdom). “Indeed, people there seemed positively pleased that an international team had come from Europe to observe their elections. We were impressed by the way the elections were conducted in a fair and proper manner.”

The full post-election statement incorporating the observers’ findings will be delivered in Washington on behalf of the OSCE by Special Co-ordinator Joao Soares on Thursday morning.

A day of briefings on 3 November, attended by the full U.S. observation delegation, included discussions on election administration, the political campaign, voter identification issues, campaign financing and the media environment.

Observers heard from leading experts on the U.S. electoral system, including former Chairman of the Republican National Committee Frank Fahrenkopf who provided an overview of the political campaign and discussed the role of the Commission on Presidential Debates, which he co-chairs. Bill Sweeney, President of the International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES) and former Executive Director of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, also briefed the observers.

A panel discussion on controversial voter ID laws included representatives from both sides of the debate, including Hans von Spakovsky of the Heritage Foundation and Jon Greenbaum of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Observers were also thoroughly briefed on the U.S. campaign finance system by Steven Walther, Commissioner of the Federal Election Commission, David Keating, President of the Center for Competitive Politics and Sheila Krumholz,

Executive Director of the Center for Responsive Politics.

Following the full day of briefings, many election observers attended a rally in Northern Virginia featuring President Barack Obama and former President Bill Clinton. The next day, observers attended a rally featuring presidential candidate Mitt Romney.

The deployment team in Philadelphia had another day of meetings on Monday with local political leaders including elected officials, judges, political party activists and civil society representatives.

The observer team in Raleigh, North Carolina, was received and accredited by the State Board of Elections. Despite some initial confusion about the OSCE PA’s credentials, which the Board of Elections quickly resolved, the observers had access to all polling stations. The team was briefed by representatives of both the Republican and Democratic parties of North Carolina, as well as by a number of academics. The observers reported that they were also well received by voters who openly shared their experiences and views with the parliamentarians.

Observer teams in the Washington Metropolitan area also met with a variety of election officials, party representatives and civil society, and had full access to polling stations. In Washington, observers worked closely with IFES and also visited the national call center of the Election Protection Coalition, an NGO that offers legal support to voters in the event of voting problems. In Maryland and Virginia, observers were briefed by election officials and visited campaign offices, in addition to election day observation at polling stations.

Around 60 observers attended the debriefing Wednesday morning. Their full observations will be included in the post-election statement on Thursday.



Philadelphia team with District Attorney Seth Williams.