Thank you—and welcome to the School of Public Affairs at American University.   The School of Public Affairs (SPA) at American University emerged from FDR's vision of increasing "practical contacts between the collegiate and educational world and the operations of government." Since its inception, SPA has sought to cultivate a culture of impact:

• to empower those who seek knowledge

• to conduct and apply research

• to build a bridge between academic thought and policy planning

Beyond leading international and national rankings in the field of public administration, AU is perhaps most visible "downtown" for its excellent centers, including the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies, led by James Thurber. The CCPS brings together public policy practitioners and academics to share their research, knowledge and experiences in a series of advanced institutes, conferences and workshops on applied politics in areas ranging from executive politics, to legislative politics, contemporary public policy and elections, among others.

2016 will be a busy year for the center, so stay tuned! The center's schedule is already packed, and so those of you who are local should remember your way to campus—and those from out of town should stay in touch online.

Jim could not be here today, and I am pleased to stand in to welcome you on his behalf. As scholars of congressional and presidential politics, we recognize the critical role of elections as a means of linking citizens to government.   While the outcomes and consequences of our elections are not under our control (perhaps a good thing!), much about the way we run elections is. And I am especially mindful of the importance of quality data on the conduct of those elections to citizens, elected officials and policy-makers. It is only with the careful collection, management and analysis of such data that we can offer citizens the highest quality electoral experience possible. The EAC's Election Administration and Voting Survey, of course, plays a key role in this regard.

As we convene today to discuss how to improve and advance the quality and impact of election data on the work of scholars, administrators and policy-makers, I am mindful of an observation provided in a textbook on social science data analysis, long before the "big data" revolution (when I was in graduate school). That observation goes something like this:

Be ever mindful that what becomes the high-quality data used by policy-makers and academics begins by one lonely individual answering a single question by filling in a blank, checking off a box, coloring in a

grid or writing a response. Perhaps in an agency office, perhaps in a private residence, perhaps online. But that is the starting point for the "big data" that we are responsible for, as that act is repeated over, and over again . . .

How we ask these questions, collect these responses and try to make sense of them in a way that improves elections is the focus of today's conference. We have much work to do—and I trust that today's discussions will allow us to do it all the better.