



September 25, 2012

James Condos
Vermont Secretary of State
c/o Kathy Scheele, Director of Elections
128 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05633

Re: Voting Rights for Members of the U.S. Armed Forces

Dear Secretary Condos:

The right to vote may be the most sacred right of American citizenship—and no Americans have done more to earn their right to vote than the men and women in uniform, who risk their lives defending the freedoms this nation holds dear. As an American, and particularly as the former United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs, I am committed to free and open elections and the voting rights of members of the U.S. armed forces.

I am writing to express my concern regarding your office's attention to the voting rights of men and women in uniform, and to urge you to take immediate action to correct recent violations of military voting rights.

As you know, the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voter Act ("UOCAVA") requires election officials to transmit absentee ballots to military voters at least 45 days before a federal election. In this election cycle, your office and the municipal election officials you oversee were required to ensure the transmission of absentee ballots to military voters no later than September 22, 2012. Although the Romney-Ryan campaign sent a letter to your office on September 10, 2012 expressing concern over your office's preparedness and directing your attention to the upcoming UOCAVA deadline, your office's delays caused 53 municipalities to violate the 45-day ballot-transmission deadline for the November 6, 2012 general election.

According to multiple independent studies, the full 45-day period is necessary, due to delays in international mail, to ensure the effective voting rights of military voters stationed overseas. A period of less than 45 days does not allow sufficient time for members of our armed forces to receive, complete, and return their absentee ballots.¹ Your office's violations therefore may deprive service members of their fundamental right to vote.

¹ See Military Postal Service Agency, *2010 Analysis of the Military Postal System Compliance with the MOVE Act* at 2-1, available at

I urge you to do everything in your power to correct your office's violations of military voting rights. Specifically, you should (a) immediately take steps to ensure the transmission of absentee ballots to all military voters, if you have not already done so; (b) extend the deadline by which military voters must mail completed absentee ballots to election officials; and (c) notify each military voter who has received or will receive an absentee ballot of the extended deadline for returning completed absentee ballots.

The Voting Section of the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, which is copied on this letter, is responsible for enforcing UOCAVA violations, and may assist you in taking the foregoing steps. Although your office was obligated to meet the UOCAVA deadline in this election cycle, taking these steps with the U.S. Department of Justice will help ensure that no members of our armed forces, many of whom risk their lives on a daily basis to defend our freedoms, lose their right to vote because of your office's failure to meet the UOCAVA deadline.

If I may be of any assistance as your office and the U.S. Department of Justice attempt to correct your office's violations of military voting rights, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,



Anthony Principi
Former U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs
National Chair, Veterans and Military Families for Romney Coalition

Cc: Nelson Hermilla, Chief
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice
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Washington, DC 20530

http://www.fvap.gov/resources/media/2010_MPSA_after_action_report.pdf; U.S. Election Assistance Comm'n, *Report on Best Practices for Facilitating by U.S. Citizens Covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act* at 2 (Sept. 2004), available at <http://www.eac.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/Best%20Practices%20for%20UOCAVA%20Voters%20Report%202004.zip>

www.MittRomney.com

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