

## OAKLAND COUNTY COMMISSIONER URGES CHANGES IN VOTING LAWS TO INSURE THE COUNTING OF BALLOTS CAST BY U.S. SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN

### **“Every single vote should be counted!”**

That is the mantra in every election cycle, and the 2008 elections were no different. In every close race, demands are made by all candidates that every single vote that was legally cast be counted. In Minnesota, they are still counting. No winner has yet been declared in the race for the United States Senate, and the incumbent Senator, Norm Coleman, has taken the matter to court to get thousands of disputed absentee ballots tallied. The hue and cry has made national news. And in the razor-thin presidential election of 2000, the cry from Florida was heard around the world.

Yet, in that year, and in more than half of the states in 2008, ballots legally cast by thousands of U.S. Servicemen and Servicewomen went uncounted, untallied – cast aside.

Why? Because in these states, election officials didn't allow enough time to send out absentee ballots for the troops to vote and return those ballots by election day. And in sixteen states, Michigan included, the process is set up in such a way as to make absentee voting by service people almost impossible.

According to the Pew Research Center on the States, the current Michigan voting process for service people overseas – and, for that matter, all Americans living and/or working outside of the United States – takes at least 57 days. The count starts from the date the service person or citizen electronically sends a request for a ballot, until that ballot is returned and counted. This timetable allows for absolutely nothing to go wrong. According to Pew, at least 13 more days are needed for the process to work fairly and properly.

In the last election, ballots were to be sent out on September 8<sup>th</sup>, and returned and counted by election day, November 4<sup>th</sup>. Do the math. In order for that timetable to work, every step of the process had to be done on time, with no glitches. No hold up in getting out ballots, no delays in the postal service, and all citizens and troops getting the ballots marked up and in the mail within two days...even those troops serving on the front lines in Afghanistan or Iraq. But Michigan absentee ballots were not mailed out on September 8<sup>th</sup>, because the Democratic Party didn't complete its nomination process until September 7<sup>th</sup>. So the ballots couldn't even be printed by September 8<sup>th</sup>. This is not a partisan issue; it is a common sense issue that affects all Michiganians outside the country who wish to vote.

That is why I have placed a resolution before the Oakland County Board of Commissioners urging them to demand that the state legislature change the process to make sure all votes are counted. It would only take two changes in the current process to make that happen, and neither would cost taxpayers a cent – in fact, one would even save them money.

First, send blank ballots out earlier, and accept completed ballots later. Second, eliminate the requirement that ballots be sent out and back via the U.S. Postal Service. Allow the secure electronic transmission of blank ballots to the troops. How hard is that?

Personally, I think it is dreadful that the votes of those men and women who have volunteered their time and their lives to protect our freedom are not counted.

If our young men and women are willing to leave their families and give their all to fight for me, you can bet I'll give all I have to fight for them. Let every one of us make enough noise to get this legislature to change the laws now. It is the right and decent thing to do.

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