



Ranking Member Morelle Opening Remarks at Committee on House Administration Hearing, “Serving and Voting: Oversight of the Federal Voting Assistance Program”

The following remarks were prepared for delivery during the Committee on House Administration Subcommittee on Elections hearing on Tuesday, June 24, 2025, at 10:30 a.m. ET. The hearing titled, “Serving and Voting: Oversight of the Federal Voting Assistance Program” took place in room 1310 of the Longworth House Office Building.

Good morning.

Thank you, Chairman Steil, and thank you to the witnesses here today.

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act or UOCAVA is a critical component of our efforts to make sure every American – no matter where they may live – can vote.

The law provides protections for millions of voters, such as requiring states send ballots to voters at least 45 days ahead of federal elections, and the availability of a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot—a back-up ballot that allows overseas and military voters to still cast a ballot in federal elections if their ballot does not arrive in time.

While UOCAVA is a good start, there is work to be done.

According to the Pentagon, in 2022, 15 percent of military voters reported that they either did not receive the ballot in time, or the ballot never arrived, and the voter participation rate for service members was 26 percent.

Additionally, the overall voting rate for overseas citizens in 2022 was an estimated 3.4 percent, due, in part, to real or perceived obstacles to casting a ballot from overseas.

At an April hearing, we heard testimony about servicemembers and their spouses never receiving their ballots, others paying out of pocket for a courier service to return their ballot from abroad when they could not access the mail system, and families stationed in Japan whose mail routinely takes 6-8 weeks to arrive.

We could and should be working in a bipartisan way to improve access to the ballot for military and overseas voters.

But instead, Republicans have only advanced policies that severely hinder ballot access and would disenfranchise servicemembers, their families, and millions of other overseas voters.

The SAVE Act and the President's illegal, anti-voting executive order would fundamentally disrupt American elections and severely impact the ability of military and overseas voters to vote.

The Republican agenda would end mail and online voter registration. The Republican's plan also requires voters to register in-person, at their local office, something common sense tells you many military and overseas voters cannot do.

House Republicans passed the SAVE Act despite overseas voters asking them not to.

In April, I wanted to invite a witness—a military spouse currently stationed overseas who could have given voice to the experience of overseas voters and whose testimony we could have easily facilitated.

But House Republicans did not want to hear from her, and they denied the request.

I am grateful to the witnesses at today's hearing and thank you for your service to our country.

I had hoped we would also hear from voters these laws impact.

Pavan Parikh is the Clerk of Courts in Hamilton County, Ohio, he also served on the Ohio Ballot Board, and he is also a JAG officer in the U.S. Army Reserve who has served overseas.

A local official serving his community and the elections process, who has served his country in uniform.

He would have made a great witness, but my colleagues denied our request to have him appear.

I hope the Committee can hear from him – and others like him – very soon.

In over two years of being in the majority, this is the first hearing held by Committee Republicans focusing on military and overseas voters.

The VOTES Act, championed by Elections Subcommittee Chair Laurel Lee and Congressman Maxwell Frost, is a bipartisan bill that would increase military voter access.

We should move this bill forward. As I said in April, Democrats would happily waive this Committee's notice requirements to call the VOTES Act up right now, to send it—once again—to the full House.

Democrats have also put forward numerous policies that would increase access for military and overseas voters—such as ample notice and cure periods for ballot errors, online voter registration, and improvements to UOCAVA—while Republicans capitulated to the rampant mis- and disinformation President Trump spread about voting from abroad during the last election

As is always the case, he never has any proof.

We should be focused on ways to improve access for military and overseas voters, not making it nearly impossible for them to register, or discounting their lawfully cast ballots because of a mail system outside of their control.

If we want to get serious about protecting military and overseas voters, we will listen to them.

We will advance legislation to help them.

We will respect them by telling them the truth—that their ballots are not fraudulent.

Before I yield back, Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to insert into the record a letter from U.S. Vote Foundation, Secure Families Initiative, Blue Star Families, the Association of Americans Resident Overseas, American Citizens Abroad, and the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, as well as a letter from Vet Voice Foundation, urging opposition to the SAVE Act, and outlining the ways in which it would create barriers to the ballot box for military and overseas voters.

Thank you, and I yield back.

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