



Written by [Kurt Hyde](#) on November 5, 2012

Are Military Voters Being Suppressed?

Numerous news sources are reporting reduced requests for absentee ballots by military personnel and their families this year compared to 2008. A [Human Events](#) article dated September 27 noted significant drops in applications for absentee ballots by military voters in swing states such as Ohio and Virginia. The article reported:



In the pivotal swing state of Ohio, roughly 9,700 absentee ballots had been requested by military and overseas voters as of Sept. 22, compared with well over 32,000 in 2008 total ballots cast for those groups. In Virginia, another swing state with a significant military presence, the nearly 12,300 military and overseas ballots requested so far are something less than 30 percent of the more than 41,700 absentee military and overseas cast four years ago.

The September 22 date is significant because that was 45 days before the election. Forty-five days is the lead time established by the federal government as sufficient for an absentee ballot to be mailed to a military voter and have ample time to be completed and mailed back to be counted. All military voters are strongly encouraged to get their absentee ballots requests well in advance of this 45-day deadline.

Who Would Be Motivated To Suppress Military Voters?

Military voters are a strong conservative and Republican demographic group and have been for many years. On Oct 7 of this year, [Military Times](#) released the results of its presidential poll of 3,100 active and reserve troops and reported: "Military Times Poll: Romney bests Obama, 2-1." This year's poll is consistent with their poll of four years ago when the results were published in the October 28, 2008 issue of *The Air Force Times*. Even in the electoral disaster for Republicans in 2008 with John McCain at the top of the ticket, the poll indicated 68 percent of those polled said they would vote for McCain and only 23 percent indicated they would vote for Democrat nominee Barack Obama.

The military voters are also a conservative demographic group within the Republican Party as witnessed by their campaign donations. Ron Paul's donations from active military far surpassed the other Republican candidates during the nomination process. The obvious beneficiaries of suppressing the military vote would be the more liberal candidates.

Military Voters' Experiences in the Past

Florida 2000

While the liberal news media was focusing its attention on the "hanging chads" in the Florida recount in



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the presidential election of 2000, another vote counting activity was largely ignored — the military absentee ballots. Author and television newscaster Bill Sammon reported numerous examples in his book, *At Any Cost: How Al Gore Tried to Steal the Election*, of how much effort was expended disqualifying military absentee ballots. Here's an example from Duval County:

At 4:11 A.M. — more than nineteen hours after it began — the nightmarish battle over Duval's military ballots finally came to an end. Duval was the last of Florida's sixty-seven counties to complete the arduous task. When the canvassing board announced that the ballots of 149 soldiers, sailors, and airmen had been disqualified, a pair of jubilant Gore lawyers exchanged high-fives.

A Republican, visibly shaken by this sight, demanded to know how they could celebrate the disenfranchisement of U.S. military members risking their lives around the world. One of the Gore lawyers glibly replied: "A win's a win."

Another example from Florida in 2000 that was cited in Sammon's book was the ballot cast by Navy Lieutenant John Russell. His case made national news when his ballot was disqualified because it didn't have a postmark. Lieutenant Russell's ballot envelope didn't have a postmark because it didn't need a stamp. He mailed his absentee ballot from the U.S. Navy ship to which he was assigned. It arrived in Duval County, Florida, before election day, so there was no question regarding whether or not it was mailed in a timely manner. Still, it was disqualified because of a lack of a postmark.

Val Verde County, Texas, 1996

Military absentee ballots made the difference in the Val Verde County, Texas, election in 1996. What happened as a result of that election has been virtually ignored by the liberal news media, but was given major coverage in the military news sources. A February 3, 1997 *Air Force Times* article entitled "Federal Lawsuit Ignites A Political Firestorm / Troops And Spouses Who Voted Absentee Face Grilling" listed details of what was required by all voters who voted absentee, most of whom were military:

They thought were simply exercising their right to vote, but about 800 troops and troops' spouses now find themselves under court order to answer questions about their criminal records, bank accounts and organization memberships.... The questions are part of a 21-page, 54-question deposition that has been sent to voters who cast absentee ballots in Val Verde County, Texas, home of Laughlin Air Force Base and about 150 miles west of San Antonio.

The article went on to say: "They are also asked approximately how many nights, if any, they have spent in Val Verde in each of the last four years; whether and where they have been a member of a parent-teacher association or any other organization; and whether they had a subscription with any Val Verde newspaper at the time of the election."

The lawsuit was filed by a federally funded organization, Texas Rural Aid, with a goal of overturning the election results.

Federal law allows military people to change their residence to any state while they are serving in the military. Of course, the U.S. Constitution does not grant that power to the federal government. Many people change their state of residence to Texas when they are stationed at military bases in Texas because Texas doesn't have a state income tax. They register to vote in Texas and keep Texas as their state of residence so they won't be required to pay state income tax if they are transferred to a state that has a state income tax. In some cases they'd need to pay state income tax.

The article quoted Gorge Kobel, one of the plaintiff attorneys saying about the 54-question deposition to



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each absentee voter: “It’s intended to ask questions that should be dealt with to determine if they should be considered residents.” But this lawsuit, when compared to lawsuits regarding voter ID law, raises an inconsistency: If it’s fair to require these military voters to answer the 54-question deposition under oath to determine if they are *bona fide* residents of a county, how can courts disapprove of requiring voters to show a photo ID to determine if they are who they say they are and not phantom voters?

Federal Government Makes Matters Worse

In July of 2009, Senator Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) introduced S1415, The Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE Act). S1415 never passed, but most of the MOVE Act became law when key provisions of it were placed into Subtitle H of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2010 (HR 2647) in committee. This is disturbingly similar to the way in which sub-sections 1021 and 1022, dealing with indefinite detainment without trial, were slipped into the NDAA for 2012.

Perhaps the worst part of this bill was the section entitled Technology Pilot Program which would allow a “Presidential designee” to implement new technologies in voting, some of them being:

the Presidential designee may consider the following issues:

- (1) The transmission of electronic voting material across military networks.
- (2) Virtual private networks, cryptographic voting systems, centrally controlled voting stations, and
other information security techniques.
- (3) The transmission of ballot representations and scanned pictures in a secure manner.
- (4) Capturing, retaining, and comparing electronic and physical ballot representations
- (5) Utilization of voting stations at military bases

The Obama Administration wasted no time in taking the wording above to be permission to attempt an Internet voting project for military and overseas voters. Fortunately, their pilot program was shot down when a team of computer science students at the University of Michigan proved it could be hacked from the outside.

The even bigger danger, which has been largely ignored by the mainstream media, is the role of the “Presidential designee.” Whoever runs the show also hires the people who have the master passwords. The threat of an inside job is far greater than any threat of being hacked from someone on the outside. As long as one person has that much authority, no vote in that system is safe from being altered and no “ballot box” database is safe from being stuffed.

Three years after passage, it has become obvious that the MOVE Act or Sub-Title H of the NDAA for 2010, whichever you prefer to call it, is a failure. Even if it were constitutional, it creates dangers to voting integrity sufficient to warrant its repeal.

What Is The Solution?

Too much of the absentee ballot process is not done in the open. It isn’t that hard to identify where the military voters’ absentee ballot requests and absentee ballots are being delayed or discarded. The information just isn’t available to the public.

Let’s consider a military voter stationed inside the United States. He mails his absentee ballot request



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to his local elections office, which in some states is at the county level and in some states elections are run by the city or town. There are only two places where his request can be discarded or significantly delayed — The U.S. Postal Service or his local elections office. If he is stationed in a remote location or on a ship, there might be an additional link in the transportation.

Today, the military voter doesn't have the tools to learn where in the process his absentee ballot or request for one might be discarded or delayed, but he could if he were allowed to appoint a monitor. The monitor might be a friend, a spouse, or another relative — anyone the voter trusts. The monitor's contact information would be on the outside of the envelope. When he mails his request, he notifies his monitor. When his request is received at the local voting office, the local voting office contacts the monitor. The local voting office also contacts the monitor when the blank ballot is mailed and the monitor is in communication with the military voter. The process is continued until the completed ballot is received at the local elections office. The monitor will be allowed to be present and witness the absentee ballot count.

Using the procedure outlined above is not expensive in these days of texting, cellphones, and e-mail. If there is any significant delay or if the ballot or request is lost, the military voter and his monitor will know where it happened. This alone will be a deterrent to keep a government employee, who might be delaying or discarding military absentee ballots as a political errand for the benefit of a politician who got him his job, from doing so because there will be evidence pointing in the general direction.

Counting the absentee ballots in public on election day would also open the process. Access to the public is the best antidote to vote fraud.

Photo: In a Nov. 3, 2008 file photo, Chief Warrant Officer Randall Watson, of California, Missouri, browses through voter materials at Camp Bondsteel in the Kosovo capital of Pristina: AP

Images



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