



ISSUE BRIEF: Electronic ballot options for UOCAVA voters

Background

One of the major objectives of *H.R.1 – For the People Act of 2019* is to expand voter access; federal voting rights statutes protect the ability of eligible voters to cast ballots that can be counted, and laws that restrict ballot access conflict with constitutional principles and congressional mandates.

Democracy suffers when ballot security initiatives suppress eligible votes by blocking or creating unnecessary hurdles for eligible voters, inadvertently disrupting the voting process, or by outright interference with voting rights.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) promoted accessibility, including efforts to promote and accelerate the introduction of electronic systems throughout the U.S. election process. Some states have invested in building secure portals for use by overseas voters. More than 30 states also provide at least some UOCAVA voters with the option to return ballots by email, fax, or a web portal.

The risk of manipulation to electronic cast-vote records or ballot images is exaggerated. There is no evidence that any electronic ballot has ever been compromised due to malicious actors or faulty hardware or software.

Legislation

HR1 Subtitle F – Promoting Accuracy, Integrity, and Security Through Voter-Verified Permanent Paper Ballot would require durable voter-verified paper ballots.

Impact

Unfortunately, the reliance on the U.S. postal system or foreign postal service to deliver elections materials includes inherent flaws and potential risks. International mailing systems, particularly those in developing countries, present serious challenges for overseas voters and can make voting impossible.

Remedy

Democrats Abroad endorses the expansion of email-returned ballots, and asks that there be an exclusion to the paper ballot mandate included in H.R. 1.

Democrats Abroad suggests that the email-returned ballot process allows for risk limiting audits. By hand counting a statistically meaningful sample of the votes cast, the risk-limiting audit can determine whether the original vote tally was correct. These audits can be conducted publicly and can provide voters with confidence that a counting error or malicious attack did not change the outcome.

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