

Wayne Allard

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SENATE PASSES ALLARD MILITARY VOTER AMENDMENT AMENDMENT IMPROVES VOTING STANDARDS FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL

Washington, D.C. – The U.S. Senate on Tuesday evening unanimously approved an amendment offered by U.S. Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO) to the Defense Authorization Bill (S. 1438) that will enhance the voting ability of absentee military voters. Allard’s amendment, The Military Voter Support Amendment, will strengthen military personnel’s ability to vote by addressing many of the problems which currently impede their ability to cast a vote or have that vote counted while serving their country in the military.

“At the very moment we are asking our service men and women to wage a new war on terrorism we need to ensure that they will continue to enjoy the rights and freedoms they dedicate their lives to protecting,” Allard said following the Senate’s vote on his amendment. “This amendment will help ensure that our men and women in uniform do not have their right to vote questioned or even compromised while they are serving our country.”

The Military Voter Support Amendment will help ensure that technical faults beyond the control of the voter would not endanger the legitimacy of their ballot. In addition, it would improve voting ability by increasing voting access for recently separated military personnel. The amendment also grants the Secretary of Defense flexibility in conducting a demonstration program for an electronic voting program and makes states more accountable for improving the voting ability of its absentee voters.

“I hope this legislation proves to our service men and women we value their service to our country and we want to ensure their voice is heard at the ballot box,” added Allard.

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Allard's Military Voter Support Amendment enhances the voting ability of absentee military voters in four areas:

1) Prohibits a state from disqualifying a ballot based upon lack of postmark or witness signature alone. The previous provisions in the bill merely said States have to provide military voters a "meaningful opportunity to exercise their voting rights." The Allard amendment strikes this and substitutes language saying that a State cannot discard a ballot for lacking a notarized signature, address, postmark, or reasonably similar signatures.

2) Guarantees residency for military personnel while they travel on official duty.

3) Military voters who are discharged and move before an election but after the residency deadline cannot vote through the military absentee ballot system, and sometimes are not able to fulfill deadlines to establish residency in a State. This amendment allows them to register through the absentee process and vote in person at their new polling site.

4) Following each election the Pentagon Federal Voting Assistance Program makes recommendations to each State on ways to improve the voting ability of absentee voters by State statute changes. This amendment brings more attention to bear on these improvements (and hopefully generates more state legislature interest) by requiring the States to report on their implementation of these suggestions to the Secretary of Defense.

Allard's amendment now will be considered by a Conference Committee that will work out differences between the House and Senate defense bills. Allard, a member on Senate Armed Services Committee, will be a member of the committee.

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