

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 13, 2012

The Honorable Leon Panetta  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Panetta:

In 2009, the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE Act) was enacted to improve all aspects of voting procedures and assistance for military personnel and their families. However, as identified in a recent Department of Defense (DoD) Inspector General report, DoD is not in full compliance with the law and, countless military personnel and their families will continue to be disenfranchised unless corrective action is taken immediately.

Specifically, the MOVE Act required DoD to designate a specific office on active duty military installations to provide troops and their family members, on a standing basis, the opportunity to register to vote, update existing voter registration or request an absentee ballot—essentially providing the same opportunity that is available to civilians at their local driver license center. This could be easily completed during transition periods like moving from one installation to another, or when deploying overseas.

Instead of implementing the MOVE Act as Congress intended, DoD completely disregarded the 2010 implementation deadline required by law. Then, when DoD began coordinating voter assistance, many offices were opened in obscure locations not conducive to an efficient administrative process for transitioning personnel or their families. By taking such a careless approach to improving voter assistance, our concern is that DoD is not sufficiently utilizing its available resources to ensure our servicemembers are allowed to exercise one of the most important rights they defend every day—the right to vote.

In fact, the DoD IG determined that the Department had not established all of the installation voting assistance office's (IVAO) as required. The IG report goes on to state, "Results were clear. Our attempts to contact IVAO's failed about 50 percent of the time." DoD officials assert that a lack of funding by Congress is to blame for the poor implementation of the voting assistance offices, however, this couldn't be more disingenuous

as the Department's own budget requests for the Federal Voting Assistance Program has not included any specific funding to carry out the MOVE Act. There are no excuses for the poor execution by DoD, and there is certainly no room to blame Congress for the inability of DoD to stand up the IVAO's required by law.

For troops and their families who seek to vote in federal elections, arguably the largest hurdle has been receiving their blank absentee ballots before Election Day. Due to the transient nature of military service, troops and their families move regularly between U.S. military installations and overseas locations. As such, they are often absent from their registered voting jurisdictions on Election Day.

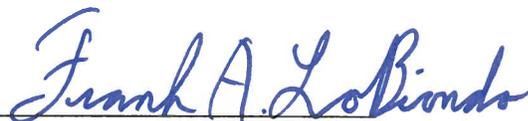
The time to address this important matter before the election is expiring and, if immediate action is not taken, tens of thousands of military personnel and their families—if not more—will become disenfranchised and their voices will not be counted during this election cycle. We implore you to make every effort to ensure that every servicemember has the ability to register to vote, update existing registration, and request an absentee ballot in order to participate in this November's election.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and we look forward to hearing from you in a timely manner.

Sincerely,



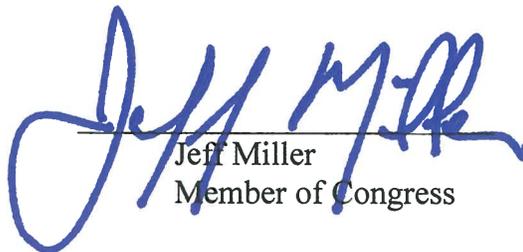
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Member of Congress



Frank LoBiondo  
Member of Congress

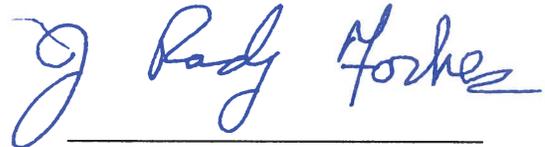


Allen West  
Member of Congress

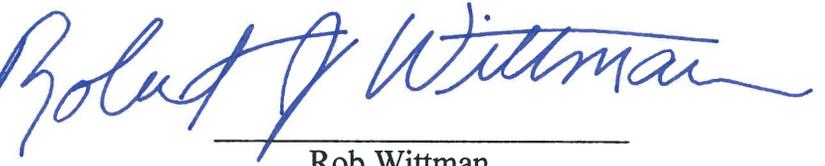


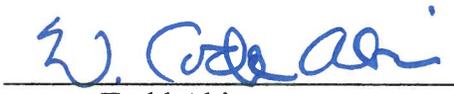
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