

WASHINGTON – Today, the Committee on House Administration’s Subcommittee on Elections heard from election officials and advocacy groups about the successes and failures of the 2008 election. Witnesses who testified before the Subcommittee agreed that, despite unprecedented turnout, the election went better than many had anticipated. However, witnesses also highlighted some problems, specifically those experienced by military voters serving overseas and Congress’s failure to prevent them.

Today’s hearing, led by Subcommittee Chair Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., and Ranking Republican Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., included testimony that addressed impediments to military voting from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), the PEW Center on the States and a former Civil Rights Division attorney at the Department of Justice.

EAC Chair Gineen Bresso Beach cited a [2007 EAC survey on uniformed and overseas voters](#) that found untimely delivery to be one of the largest reasons states rejected overseas military ballots. “Overseas and military voters deserve better,” Bresso Beach noted. “Improving the transmission of ballots would help increase voting rates.”

Doug Chapin with the PEW Center on the States highlighted another study released by PEW in January of 2009 titled, [No Time to Vote: Challenges Facing America’s Overseas Military Voters](#). According to PEW’s study, only half of U.S. states currently have ballot transmission processes that allow enough time for military personnel to cast a ballot.

Eric Eversole, former DOJ attorney, cited multiple instances where military voters were disenfranchised in the 2008 elections due to poor ballot transmission processes. One example Eversole cited was from Minnesota where 78% of the public was able to vote, but only 15.7% of military votes cast in the 2008 election were counted because they arrived after state deadlines. In his testimony, he stated, “while nationwide data is still being collected by the Election Assistance Commission, the data that is available paints a bleak picture for the military voter.”

“One point we all heard, once again, is that the failure to pass common-sense reform last Congress disadvantaged our overseas military voters by not protecting their right to vote at the same time they were making sacrifices to protect that right for us,” Congressman McCarthy noted after today’s hearing. “This Congress and Subcommittee can’t just sit idly by; action is needed to protect our military personnel’s votes.”

“Bleak Picture” for Military Voters

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Subcommittee member Gregg Harper, R-Miss., joined McCarthy, who introduced the Military Voting Protection Act (MVP) in April of 2008, by pledging to alleviate the challenges facing overseas military voters before the 2010 election.

For more information, please contact the Committee press office at (202) 225-8281.