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July 29, 2008

The Honorable Robert A. Brady, Chair
The Honorable Vernon Ehlers, Ranking Member
Committee on House Administration
U.S. House of Representatives
1309 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for Veterans Voting Support Act

Dear Representatives Brady and Ehlers:

We write to offer our strong endorsement of the Veterans Voting Support Act. This important legislation would eliminate barriers that make voting difficult for the men and women in uniform who have bravely served our country. We urge prompt passage of the bill, so that it may be signed by the President in time to ensure that veterans are able to vote without difficulty in the Fall elections.

The Veterans Voting Support Act breaks down barriers to voting by veterans and honors our commitment to protect the rights of those who have fought for us all. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has refused to designate VA facilities as voter registration agencies, and this important bill will right that unfortunate, bureaucratic wrong.

The legislation would require the VA to make voter registration services available at VA facilities in states that request it, including providing voter registration forms and assisting veterans with submitting registrations. It would require the VA to help veterans request and cast absentee ballots, and would open VA facilities to non-partisan groups and election officials, so that they could provide veterans with information on registration and voting. All these services would go a long way to ensuring that veterans are able to exercise their most fundamental right as citizens: the right to vote.

In a year that has seen extraordinary levels of political participation — with unprecedented numbers of citizens demonstrating their desire to vote for the first time — it is crucial to eliminate unnecessary barriers to registration. Only by doing so will it be possible to ensure that every eligible citizen who wants to vote can vote.

Ensuring access to registration and voting is especially important for the veterans served by the VA. We all owe a great debt of gratitude to those who have fought for our democracy, and risked their lives, around the globe. For them, voting must be made easier, not harder. They have done their duty and served their country with valor, and now it is time for our country to fulfill its duty to them and honor their service. By making sure they have ready access to the registration rolls and the ballot, this legislation will make sure that their voices are heard.

Passage of the Veterans Voting Support Act will uphold the VA's patients' rights rule, which expressly protects "the right to register and vote."¹ Our veterans deserve no less.

Very truly yours,



J. Adam Skaggs
Counsel, Democracy Program



Wendy Weiser
Deputy Director, Democracy Program

cc: Rep. Michael Capuano
Rep. Artur Davis
Rep. Susan Davis
Rep. Charles Gonzalez
Rep. Zoe Lofgren
Rep. Dan Lungren
Rep. Kevin McCarthy

¹ 38 C.F.R. § 17.33(a)(4)(iv).