

# Liberals blocking soldiers' vote

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Will America's fighting men and women stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere get to vote in the upcoming November elections?

Fearful that they will lose control of Congress, liberals are taking measures to make sure they won't.

Consistently members of the U.S. military have voted as a block for conservative candidates for the last half-century. Liberals know this.

Nationwide, they do their best to ensure that conservative neighborhoods don't have convenient polling places. They make it as difficult as possible for conservative voters to be able to cast their ballots.

And this November, look for them to do whatever possible to block members of the military from getting to vote.

Sure, it's against federal law. But since when does that matter? Recently the outcome of a special Congressional election in New York's 20th Congressional District depended on whether liberals could illegally exclude about 1,000 overseas military ballots.

Liberal officials reared that if they were counted, they would have tipped the race in favor of Republican candidate James Tedisco.

Tedisco and Democrat Scott Murphy were in a dead heat, with 77,225 votes each.

Democrats on the state elections board blocked GOP attempts to allow overseas military voting in the special election. Overseas ballots take weeks to reach voters and be returned unless special measures are taken to speed things up.

Elections officials refused to do anything to speed things up or to mail the ballots out early enough.

The result was that as many as 90 percent of the ballots were tossed in the trash without ever being counted.

Discarding those ballots violated federal law, but the Obama Administration made sure that the Justice Department filed only a weak lawsuit in response, seeking a brief, cosmetic extension of time for returning the ballots.

That extension could only result in a handful of the wrongfully-excluded military ballots being counted. The Justice Department could easily have sought and obtained broader, more meaningful relief, just as it did repeatedly during the Bush Administration.

But the Obama Administration didn't want the military votes, for partisan political reasons.

And so another Obama campaign promise was violated – his pledge to defend “the right of every American to vote.”

The incident is just one case of the continuing politicization of the Justice Department under Obama.

And now according to journalist Jana Winter, military voters from at least six states will be unable to participate fully in a Defense Department pilot program.

That will substantially reduce their opportunity to vote in November.

Why? Because at the behest of the Obama Administration, a private election software company is dragging its feet and demanding exorbitant fees to supply states with their own voting data.

That's what state officials participating in the program told Fox News.

One state – Nebraska – has backed out of the program entirely.

“The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), the Defense Department agency charged with helping military and overseas civilians vote, in 2009 announced the Electronic Voting Support Wizard pilot program,” reports Winter, “which was supposed to improve and expedite the delivery of absentee ballots to military servicemen and women who have historically had problems with traditional mail delivery or with receiving their ballots due to frequent relocation.

In March, says Winter, the Defense Department asked vendors that specialize in electronic voting systems to propose a plan for developing and delivering online ballots down to the precinct level – meaning that a military member could log on in Afghanistan and be directed to his or her exact local, county, state and federal election ballots to expedite voting.

“Five vendors won the opportunity to work with the states to develop online balloting systems that overseas voters can access through the Internet and either mark on-screen or by hand and then print out,” writes Winter. “For voters from states that allow for e-mail and fax returns, an on-screen marking option provided overseas voters with a way to download, mark and submit ballots quickly and easily without paper and printer.

“On-screen marking especially benefits servicemen and women on the front lines or in remote locations who may not have immediate access to a printer or the postal service. Each vendor then submitted bids to work with individual states on the pilot program.

The final pairings were made on July 9, leaving states a little more than two months to develop, test and roll out the program before the Sept. 18 deadline mandated by federal law, which requires them to have the system in place 45 days before Election Day, Nov. 2.

Several election software systems used by states participating in the pilot program have handed over their ballot data quickly and at no cost, according to documents and interviews with election officials.

But some states haven't been able to give vendors the information they need to develop the platform – seriously jeopardizing their chance of participating in the pilot program – because ES&S, the nation's largest election systems company, which manages more than half of all elections in the U.S., is being slow and demanding exorbitant fees to hand over the databases, officials said.

“ES&S is not the vendor of pilots that was tasked with making this online marking tool,” said John Groh, senior vice president of ES&S, which is based in Nebraska. “I am a for-profit business and if I don't profit, we go out of business.”

Groh told Winter that his company is busy working for paying customers – states and counties for whom ES&S is running primary elections across the country.

“Members of the military, particularly those involved in conflict overseas, should be provided with the opportunity to exercise their franchise,” notes an article in Fordham University's *Urban Law Journal*. “Unfortunately, throughout history military personnel have been prevented from doing so due to both procedural and logistic hurdles, resulting in their franchise being effectively ‘hollow.’

“These difficulties came to the forefront of public awareness during the 2000 presidential election controversy in Florida when the ballots submitted by individuals living overseas – especially military voters – were seen as crucial to the election outcome as the margin of

potential victory was so small that the ballots could turn the election from one candidate to the other.

“Headlines at the time included: ‘Odds Against Gore Absentee Gains; Republican-Leaning Counties Appear to Have More Uncounted Overseas Ballots’ and ‘Bush’s Lead Swells with Overseas Votes.’”

“For many Americans, however, the controversy surrounding the votes of military personnel and overseas voters, despite its importance, may have seemed both bewildering and esoteric,” reports the law journal. “The debate centered not on the rather uncontroversial proposition that military members living overseas should have the right to vote, but on minute details: whether certain overseas absentee ballots were valid, and could therefore be counted, if they lacked postmarks; whether ballots were properly received within statutorily defined time periods; and whether ballots were legitimate if missing a signature or lacking other statutorily defined characteristics.

“Such matters are likely beyond the interest of the typical American.

“Despite the apparent focus on minutia, these legal skirmishes fought within the broader context of the recount battle impacted substantive issues concerning whether military absentee ballots could be counted, the resolution of which swayed the outcome of the 2000 presidential election.”

“This tension is not new and, as it relates to military voting, has centered for years on the laws and procedures that individuals are required to follow before they can vote,” continues the journal. “The often competing federal and state statutory frameworks put in place to govern voting are critically important because they ultimately determine who can vote, in what manner they can vote, and the requirements that such votes must meet in order to be counted.”

But it’s whether or not our fighting men have the right to vote – or have their ballots included.

“In the past, many states used hurdles, such as poll taxes, reading tests, and flat-out intimidation to systematically exclude minorities and the poor from voting,” notes the journal.

And now the Obama Administration wants to make sure that the military will not be heard in the November elections.