



Republicans Introduce Bill to Ensure All Active Duty Overseas Military Ballots Are Counted in Elections

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WASHINGTON - Today, Committee on House Administration Ranking Member Rodney Davis (IL-13) introduced his bill, the Counting All Military Votes Act, along with 24 Republican original cosponsors. On traditional military bases, there are? designated *Express Mail Labels*? for Military Absentee Voting?to expedite and track absentee ballots for successful, on-time delivery. These *Express Mail Labels*, administered by military postal operations under the Department of Defense (DoD), however, are not currently accessible to deployed active duty military serving on? our embassies, consulates, and/or in diplomatic posts.

Counting All Military Votes Act corrects this problem by ensuring that? the absentee ballots of all deployed active duty military? the personnel serving overseas are shipped by? *Express Mail*, as currently mandated? under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). Here's what a few of the original cosponsors had to say about the bill:

"Every American has the right to vote, including when serving overseas as the deployed active-duty military. Currently, our military serving overseas on posts not under the Department of Defense is unable to expedite their ballots to ensure arrival prior to election day," said Ranking Member Rodney Davis. *"Counting All Military Votes Act will guarantee all of our militaries bravely serving overseas have access to the expedited mailing of their ballots, so they can depend on their votes being counted and their voices being heard in our nation's elections."*

"Those who make our freedom and way of life possible certainly deserve to have a say in choosing our government," said Representative Mac Thornberry (TX-13), Ranking Member of the Armed Services Committee. "I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the Counting All Military Votes Act."

"The brave men and women who serve in the U.S. military are responsible for protecting our most sacred freedoms. But many of those serving overseas, including at diplomatic posts, are unable to expedite their ballots for arrival before Election Day," said Representative Michael McCaul (TX-10), Ranking Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. "It is only right that Congress do everything we can to ensure their votes are counted and their voices are heard. This legislation will make it easier for these 10,000 additional service members to also send in their ballots before an election and I'm proud to be one of its original cosponsors."

"As a U.S. Army veteran who served 47 years ago in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, one of the rights we fought so hard for was the ability to vote for our elected representatives in a democracy. Our troops have to go through a complex process to cast their vote while overseas, and many find it difficult to have their vote counted. Today, I'm proud to join my colleagues in supporting the Counting All Military Votes Act to ensure all of our men and women serving abroad in the Armed Forces have their votes counted," said Representative Phil Roe (TN-01), Ranking Member of the Veterans Affairs Committee.

"No matter where they are serving, our men and women in uniform deserve every opportunity to exercise their right to vote," said Representative Jack Bergman (MI-01), Lt. Gen. USMC (ret). "I'm proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation to ensure our service members deployed overseas can cast their vote and have their voices heard."

"Our Constitution guarantees Americans the right to vote," said Representative Mike Bost (IL-12), U.S. Marine Corps. "No one is more deserving of ensuring that right is protected than our military men and women overseas. These service members are committed to keeping American diplomats and citizens abroad safe, and they deserve peace of mind in knowing that their ballot will be counted in a timely manner."

"The men and women who put on the uniform risk their lives each and every day to protect the rights and liberties we hold dear as a nation. The very least we can do is ensure those serving around the world are able to exercise the rights they work so hard to defend, especially their right to cast a vote at the ballot box," Representative Brian Mast (FL-18), SSG U.S. Army (ret.), said. "This bill is a common-sense solution to a problem that never should have existed in the first place."

"Our nation's service members put their lives on the line to protect the freedoms and liberties that make this country the greatest in the world, including our most fundamental of rights – the right to vote," said Representative Lee Zeldin (NY-01). "While deployed, these brave men and women have the opportunity to vote absentee but are sometimes serving beyond the mandated ballot transit time of no more than 7 days. I'm proud to join Congressman Rodney Davis in introducing legislation that would ensure all of their voices are being heard and their ballots are received on time."

Background:

Currently under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), the mandated transit time of an absentee ballot is no more than (7) days, and this is achieved through the unique *Express Mail Label*, currently only used for absentee ballots originating from overseas military postal operations. For diplomatic postal operations at embassies and consulates, absentee ballots of active duty military serving overseas can be sent through a "Diplomatic Pouch" service, but the average transit time is much longer than (7) days. The only other option for guaranteed tracking and expedited delivery is to mail the absentee ballot through a private courier service at the personal expense of the voter.?

The Counting All Military Votes Act provides the necessary fix for lawful access to the *Express Mail Label* for military absentee voting to all deployed active duty military personnel that are serving overseas by:

1. Instructing the Department of State (DoS) to coordinate with DoD to administer the *Express Mail Label* for military absentee voting to the active-duty military stationed at our embassies and consulates.
2. Clarifying the definition of an "absent uniformed service voter" to include "active duty member serving at a diplomatic or consular post."?