



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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RICHMOND VA 23219

*Air Force Association
American Legion
AMVETS
Association of the United
States Army
Disabled American
Veterans
Fifth Baptist Veterans
Ministry
Fleet Reserve Association
Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans
of America
Korean War Veterans
Association
Legion of Valor of the
U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Order of the
Purple Heart
Military Officers Association
of America
Military Order of the
World Wars
Navy Mutual Aid Association
Navy Seabee Veterans of
America
Non-Commissioned
Officers Association
Paralyzed Veterans of
America
Reserve Officers Association
Roanoke Valley Veterans
Council
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National
Guard Enlisted
Association
Virginia National Guard
Association
Women Marines Association*

DATE

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Position Paper 2019-03 Electronic Return of Voted Ballots by Overseas Military

OBJECTIVE: Enfranchise Virginia's Overseas Uniformed Service Personnel's votes by enacting Electronic Return of Voted Absentee Ballots by encrypted means or through special secure web access portal, as a pilot program.

BACKGROUND:

- a. Currently an overseas voter can electronically register and receive an absentee ballot per the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). By current Virginia Code the ballot must be returned via "snail" mail.
- b. Mail from overseas is subject to delays when returned by "snail" mail. Many votes are not counted due to ballots reaching local registrars after Election Day, if at all.
- c. For 2010-2014 general elections, deployed Virginians requested 5,050 ballots, of which 2,231 (44%) were returned by mail or in person in time to be counted, 134 ballots were rejected and not counted, and 2,675 (53%) were not returned.
- d. In 2018, Senate Bill 559 passed the Senate, but was tabled in the House.

DISCUSSION:

- a. Virginia is one of only 19 states that do not offer any kind of electronic return for its resident military members deployed overseas.
- b. In 2018, Everyone Counts a U.S. founded and owned encrypted voting software company provided a Rough Order of Magnitude Cost Projection to install a secure pilot test program statewide for \$400,000 if run state-wide, but a limited pilot can be done for \$100,000. The company's software is platform independent and encrypted to secure the integrity of the submitted ballots.
- c. As indicated by the National Association of Counties, the Fiscal Year 2018 Federal Omnibus Spending bill 2018 allocated millions of dollars in grants to states for election cybersecurity.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly enact legislation and provide budget support of a pilot program at the Virginia State Board of Elections for \$100,000 and funding for one FTE, for a limited pilot program for the electronic return of absentee ballots by Virginia's deployed military service members.