



PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN SPENCE ON FLORIDA DISQUALIFIED MILITARY ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Today, U.S. Representative Floyd Spence, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, issued the following statement on the disqualification of military absentee ballots in Florida:

“I am deeply concerned about the significant number of absentee ballots from military personnel that are being disqualified in Florida. From all accounts, many of these ballots are being challenged due to circumstances beyond the control of the individual military voter and may, in part, result from sloppy Department of Defense procedures.

“I am especially disturbed by the apparent attempt to orchestrate a campaign in Florida to disallow absentee military votes during the election. The right to vote is one of our most cherished privileges in a free society. I find it outrageous that anyone associated with a major political party would engage in a targeted effort to deny this right to the very men and women in uniform who may be called upon to risk their lives to protect it for all citizens. I was pleased to learn that the Attorney General of the State of Florida has now called for those absentee ballots to be counted. That is the only fair and just course of action.

“The House Armed Services Committee is currently engaged in a thorough review of these incidents to identify more precisely the circumstances surrounding the manner in which military ballots were handled during the election. Congressman Steve Buyer, Chairman of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, is currently in Florida to conduct a preliminary investigation to ensure compliance with existing federal law. I have also asked the General Accounting Office to conduct a review of the military absentee ballots that have been rejected by local election officials to ensure that the Committee has a thorough understanding of the circumstances that caused the ballots to be disqualified and whether those judgments were consistent with federal law. The unique and demanding nature of military service requires that every precaution be taken to ensure that service members are afforded the right to vote and that their votes are properly counted by appropriate local jurisdictions.”

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