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Overseas Vote Foundation and National Defense Committee Applaud Constructive Reports from the Pew Center on the States and NIST

New Pew Report Highlights Need for Modernization in Technology and Process Management in Overseas Military Voting

WASHINGTON, D.C. – January 6, 2009: Overseas Vote Foundation (OVF) and the National Defense Committee (NDC) praised today's "[No Time to Vote](#)" report released by The Pew Center on the States, especially in light of the December 2008 NIST report, "[A Threat Analysis on UOCAVA Voting Systems](#)."

Combined, the reports make clear that there is every need for, and no reason to oppose, the electronic transmission of absentee ballot applications by military and overseas voters, and electronic transmission of blank ballots back to those voters. The reports underscore the wide variation in practices, processes and technology adoption across the states and how this directly affects the ability of military voters to successfully vote from overseas.

"Military voters are faced with the fact that it *does* matter in which state they cast their ballot. It could make all the difference whether a ballot makes it back to the local election official in time to be counted. NDC is relieved to see these facts come out into plain sight, so they can be addressed," said Bryan O'Leary, Senior Fellow, NDC.

According to the Pew report, Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Georgia, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Wyoming are states identified as *not* providing enough "time to vote" for overseas military voters. Three other states, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Vermont were deemed "at risk" with less than 5 days extra time to complete the voting process.

"Simply put, states rule. State legislation and technology adoption make a dramatic difference in whether our military can effectively vote from overseas," stated Susan Dzieduszycka-Suinat, President & CEO, OVF.

Key factors pinpointed in the voting process as those that significantly slow it down: 1) reliance on US and military mail systems; 2) late ballot sending; 3) and tight voted-ballot return deadlines. In addition, the report emphasizes that, "In states where laws and practices have been

cobbled together over decades, the problem is a failure to take into account how the system works as a whole....” and that, “Even one weak link could break the chain.”

OVF and NDC cautioned that the situation could be significantly worse than presented by Pew because the report assumes voters know about and use the electronic alternatives for voting materials transmission. “Where the Pew report appears optimistic is in the assumption that overseas military voters actually use the electronic options available in the states that offer them, and that such electronic options are universally available. Given the constraints of the study, that is an understandable and stated assumption in Pew’s methodology. But OVF’s preliminary research results indicate that only a fraction (less than 10%) of military voters are using electronic options to return voted ballots,” stated Dzieduszycka-Suinat.

OVF’s research parallels the 2006 voting analysis completed by the Defense Manpower Data Center that only 2-3% of military personnel received their blank ballots by e-mail and only 1% received them by fax. Further, 96% of military personnel cast their ballots by postal mail. Finally, DMDC’s analysis shows that while less than 20% of military personnel did not have daily access to either a military or personal e-mail account, 53% did not have daily access to fax machines.

“Every state should immediately allow for the e-mailing of blank ballots to military voters,” urged NDC’s O’Leary. “The NIST report proves that blank ballot transmission to voters does not pose significant security risks, while the Pew report details how not providing that electronic alternative systematically disenfranchises the military voter from states that refuse to do so.”

Military and overseas voting experts are available to discuss with the press and interested parties both the NIST and Pew reports, as well as the broader problems facing military and overseas voters.