

# SECRETARY of STATE

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September 10, 2008

Ms. Polli Brunelli  
Director  
Federal Voting Assistance Program  
Department of Defense  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1155

Dear Ms. Brunelli:

Thank you for your letter of August 19 that was co-signed by Under Secretary Chu and Department of Justice officials. Although Washington State has made changes in elections administration since the 2004 Presidential Election that will increase our ability to better serve UOCAVA voters, our state has a long history of providing these voters with services intended to help them participate in all elections. Washington counties take seriously their obligation to serve UOCAVA voters, and several of our largest counties have developed sophisticated programs aimed at assisting these voters fully participate in the elections process.

The most significant change began last year when our state primary was moved forward from September to August to allow us to meet the desired UOCAVA ballot mailing times for general elections. Another recent, and related, change to state law requires Washington counties to mail UOCAVA ballots at least 30 days before any election. Since certification occurs 15 days after primaries and special elections and 21 days after general elections, UOCAVA voters' ballots have at least 45 (primary election) or 51 days (general election) of total transit time. Washington State will also count a ballot from any UOCAVA voter that is voted by Election Day and received by certification of the primary or general election.

Washington counties use email and fax processes to expedite delivery of blank ballots to UOCAVA voters. These processes have been in existence for several years and are not new to Washington. UOCAVA voters are allowed to return voted ballots by fax, but must waive the right to secrecy.

As suggested in your letter, many of our counties are using the expedited delivery service offered by the U.S. Post Office and other carriers to deliver absentee ballots to UOCAVA citizens around the world.

State law also allows UOCAVA voters to request ballots even if they are not registered. Administrative rule allows us to register UOCAVA voters who return a federal post card application, a federal write-in absentee ballot or an absentee ballot with a valid

signature. And unlike non-UOCAVA voters in our state, UOCAVA voters can be registered any time up to Election Day.

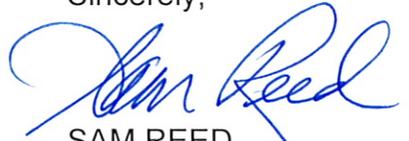
Since Washington State is predominantly a vote-by-mail state, and ballot requests from UOCAVA voters are treated as voter registration applications, we neither track those ballot requests, nor review them after two federal elections. These UOCAVA voters simply become registered, absentee voters like most of our other citizens.

The Office of the Secretary of State works closely with county election officials to ensure ballots and voters' guides are mailed out to UOCAVA voters 30 days (or more) before each election. This includes requesting confirmation from all 39 counties as to when each shipped UOCAVA ballots. We will certainly ensure that the ballots for existing UOCAVA voters are mailed no later than October 4, 2008, but because we register and mail ballots to UOCAVA voters up to Election Day, we cannot provide a final, accurate count until after the election.

Finally, in July and August our office partnered with county election officials and the Washington National Guard to ensure 3,500 members of the state's largest National Guard unit, the 81st Heavy Brigade Combat Team, were registered before being deployed to Iraq this September. Please find enclosed a summary of this extraordinary effort to serve our state's military voters.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office. Thank you for your diligence on these important issues. In Washington, with our many military bases, we strongly believe in protecting and effectuating the voting rights of our military and overseas voters.

Sincerely,



SAM REED  
Secretary of State

Enclosure