



## **H.R. 1667**

### **The Vote by Mail Act of 2007**

#### **What does it do?**

The Vote by Mail Act would provide grants to states to help them offset the costs of adopting Vote by Mail election systems. It would also provide the Government Accountability Office (GAO) with funds to study the costs and benefits of Vote by Mail election systems.

#### **Why is it needed?**

Americans have lost confidence in their election system, in large part due to a wide variety of polling place problems. In recent elections, issues such as long waiting times, voter fraud, lack of paper trail and voter intimidation have received substantial media coverage. Vote by Mail can help assuage voter concerns about these while also reducing the strain on poll workers.

Under current law, some states and jurisdictions may conduct certain elections by mail balloting. However, this is only under limited circumstances, and at present they receive no federal funding to assist them in making the adjustment to vote by mail. The funds appropriated in this bill act as seed money to assist states that wish to make the transition.

#### **How much money would a state get from the grant?**

It depends on whether they institute mail voting statewide or only in certain counties or municipalities. Those states that choose the former will receive \$2 million. Those that choose the latter will receive \$1 million. The program allows for up to \$18 million to be granted; any unspent funds from one year may be carried over to the next.

#### **Where is the accountability?**

To be sure that Vote by Mail will achieve the results that are expected, the bill allocates \$200,000 for the GAO to evaluate the benefits. The GAO study will compare Vote by Mail to traditional voting methods in regard to subjects such as voter fraud, accuracy of voter rolls and election results, voter participation by potentially disenfranchised groups, public confidence and cost savings.

## **Which Members of Congress have cosponsored H.R. 1667?**

Reps. **Berkley** (NV-1), **Farr** (CA-17), **Frank** (MA-4), **Lofgren** (CA-16), **McGovern** (MA-3) and **Norton** (DC) have joined bill sponsor Rep. **Susan Davis** (CA-53) as cosponsors. The identical bill in the U.S. Senate, S. 979, is sponsored by Senator **Ron Wyden** (OR) and cosponsored by Sens. **Cantwell** (WA), **Kerry** (MA) and **Obama** (IL).

## **Who else has endorsed H.R. 1667?**

Many major community and interest groups are in favor of the Vote by Mail Act. Among them are: the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), Common Cause, National Association of Letter Carriers (AFL-CIO), National Association of Postal Supervisors, National Association of Postmasters of the US, Progressive States Network and the League of Rural Voters.

## **What does a secure Vote by Mail program involve?**

The widely lauded Oregon model uses a system for electronically recording each voter's registration and signature. The signature on each mail ballot is then individually verified against that voter's electronically recorded signature.

## **Do states have to adopt Oregon's model wholesale?**

No. However, to obtain a grant, states must demonstrate that the Vote by Mail system they intend to implement includes a similar, secure signature verification process.

## **What states and territories have restrictions on voting by mail?**

Almost half of all states, and all unincorporated organized territories, have restrictions on voting by mail. They are: Alabama, American Samoa, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Guam, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, Northern Mariana Islands, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, U.S. Virgin Islands, Virginia and West Virginia.

## **Where can I find out more about H.R. 1667?**

Please contact Lisa Sherman with Rep. Susan Davis at (202) 225-2040, or via email at [lisa.sherman@mail.house.gov](mailto:lisa.sherman@mail.house.gov)