

TOM DAVIS, VIRGINIA,  
CHAIRMAN

DAN BURTON, INDIANA  
CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, CONNECTICUT  
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, FLORIDA  
JOHN M. McHUGH, NEW YORK  
JOHN L. MICA, FLORIDA  
MARK E. SOUDER, INDIANA  
STEVEN C. LATOURETTE, OHIO  
DOUG OSE, CALIFORNIA  
RON LEWIS, KENTUCKY  
JO ANN DAVIS, VIRGINIA  
TODD RUSSELL PLATTTS, PENNSYLVANIA  
CHRIS CANNON, UTAH  
ADAM H. PUTNAM, FLORIDA  
EDWARD L. SCHROCK, VIRGINIA  
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TENNESSEE  
NATHAN DEAL, GEORGIA  
CANDICE MILLER, MICHIGAN  
TIM MURPHY, PENNSYLVANIA  
MICHAEL R. TURNER, OHIO  
JOHN R. CARTER, TEXAS  
MARSHA BLACKBURN, TENNESSEE  
PATRICK J. TIBERI, OHIO  
KATHERINE HARRIS, FLORIDA

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074  
FACSIMILE (202) 225-3974  
MINORITY (202) 225-5051  
TTY (202) 225-6852

[www.house.gov/reform](http://www.house.gov/reform)

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA,  
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

TOM LANTOS, CALIFORNIA  
MAJOR R. OWENS, NEW YORK  
EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK  
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, PENNSYLVANIA  
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, NEW YORK  
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, MARYLAND  
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, OHIO  
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS  
JOHN F. TIERNEY, MASSACHUSETTS  
WM. LACY CLAY, MISSOURI  
DIANE E. WATSON, CALIFORNIA  
STEPHEN F. LYNCH, MASSACHUSETTS  
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, MARYLAND  
LINDA T. SANCHEZ, CALIFORNIA  
C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER,  
MARYLAND  
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
JIM COOPER, TENNESSEE  
BETTY McCOLLUM, MINNESOTA

BERNARD SANDERS, VERMONT,  
INDEPENDENT

September 22, 2004

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing regarding recent press reports that the Department of Defense (DoD) has chosen to block access to the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) website ([fvap.gov](http://fvap.gov)) for American overseas voters using certain internet service providers (ISPs) in as many as 25 countries, including Great Britain, Spain, France, and Japan.<sup>1</sup>

In an apparent effort to prevent hacking attacks, DoD is now restricting access to the FVAP site for selected ISPs. As a result, any of the three to six million Americans living abroad who access the internet using any one of these blocked ISPs, including such major providers as BT Yahoo Broadband in Great Britain, Telefónica in Spain, Wanadoo in France, and Yahoo Broadband in Japan, are prevented from reaching the FVAP website.

The FVAP website is a potentially valuable resource that allows both private American citizens and members of the military serving overseas to request absentee ballots and access other voting assistance information, including voting instructions and messages from candidates running for elective office. Without access to the FVAP website, the process for requesting absentee ballots overseas becomes significantly more difficult, requiring the overseas voter to directly contact his or her local election official or the U.S. embassy in the country of residence. We are particularly concerned that Americans living abroad may be prevented from requesting an absentee ballot in the weeks leading up to the October 2, 2004, deadline in most states.

We appreciate the Department's need to protect the security and stability of its information systems. However, these concerns can be properly addressed in ways far more

---

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., *Pentagon Restricts Overseas Access to U.S. Voter Registration Site*, Associated Press (Sept. 21, 2004); *Pentagon Blocks Site for Voters outside U.S.*, International Herald Tribune (Sept. 20, 2004); *French Internet Provider Confirms US Block on Government Sites*, Agence France Presse (Sept. 20, 2004).

effective than blocking access for selected ISPs, and can be addressed in ways that do not result in the potential disenfranchisement of millions of overseas Americans. There are security solutions already used by the DoD, such as distributed computing, that can be used safely to allow global access to the FVAP site with minimal potential security and stability risks.

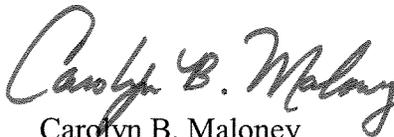
In a briefing for staff of the Government Reform and Armed Services Committees just this past Friday, Charlie Abell, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, reiterated the Department's commitment to providing the FVAP website as an accessible resource for American citizens living abroad.<sup>2</sup> We respectfully request that you act immediately to restore access to the FVAP website for Americans living abroad who wish to exercise their fundamental right to vote.

We thank you for your attention this very important matter.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman  
Ranking Minority Member



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress



Wm. Lacy Clay  
Member of Congress

Enclosure

cc: Charlie Abell  
Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense  
for Personnel and Readiness

---

<sup>2</sup> Charlie Abell, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, briefing for House Government Reform Committee and House Armed Services Committee staff (Sept. 17, 2004) (excerpts from briefing memo attached).



## Eligible Absentee Voters



- 1.4 million military
- 1.3 million military dependents of voting age
- .1 million Federal civilian employees overseas
- 3.7 million overseas civilians, not affiliated with the Government

*More than six million potential voters*



# Voting Assistance Programs Underutilized



## Actions Taken

---

- Federal Voting Assistance Program website ([www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov)) reengineered to a comprehensive, one-stop source for information.
- Toll free phone access to FVAP increased from 58 to 66 countries.
- Actions taken to increase FVAP awareness:
  - Through: DeCA, Exchanges, Post/Base Theaters, DoDEA, AFRTS, Pentagon Channel, Installation Newspapers, Command Information forums.
  - Communicating a positive message in the press (National and local).
  - Presentations at mobilization sites and Family Readiness Groups.
  - Overseas Citizens Voters' Week, Jul 4-10, 2004 (C,JCS video)
  - Armed Forces Voters' Week, Sep 3-11, 2004
  - Absentee Voting Week, Oct 11-15, 2004
- Governors informed of the program and encouraged to support.
- Unit Voting Assistance Officers provided standard products to enhance training.
- Best "practices" compiled and disseminated.