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Subject: Military Voting Background Info

Here is a package of information and some potential talking points/background information on military and overseas voting and Pew's role for the governor's folks. Feel free to tweak the talking points or to include/exclude any of the information according to your wishes. I didn't include anything about the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) or the Uniform Law Commission (ULC) as I didn't think you would want to, but let me know if you need it or if you need anything further. Thanks. ST

The press release we issued when Gov. Haley signed S 404/recognizes bill sponsors (Sen. Campsen and Rep. Clemmons) and other key supporters:
http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/news_room_detail.aspx?id=85899360643

Pew's Military and Overseas Voting brief/December 2010:
http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/Military_Overseas_Voting_brief.pdf

Pew's initial report on the challenges faced by overseas military voters/January 2009:
http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/NTTV_Report_Web.pdf

Additional background/talking points from House and Senate Subcommittee Testimony:

Pew has been studying the issue of military and overseas voting for more than three years. Rear Admiral [Ret.] James J. Carey began working with us after our 2009 No Time to Vote report showed that service members overseas face significant challenges to casting a ballot that would be counted.

Congress' enactment of the 2009 Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act removed some of the obstacles for federal elections. And, in 2010, the Uniform Law Commission adopted the Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act (UMOVA), which addresses additional challenges and expands the opportunity for military and overseas voters to participate more easily in all elections—not just federal. Pew has been working with states since 2009 to both implement the MOVE Act and to ensure that these individuals can exercise their right to vote in all federal, state and local elections.

According to 2009 Department of Defense statistics, South Carolina

ranks 14th in the nation for military personnel who claim the state as their home of record, legal residence and/or duty location. South Carolina already had many strong statutes in place to protect the rights of service members and citizens overseas, but the South Carolina Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voters Act/S 404 further streamlines the process and removes additional obstacles to ensure that they are fully enfranchised. S 404 provides for minor adjustments to the elections process that would help ensure that these voters could fully participate in all South Carolina elections-not just federal elections.

On the front end, it allows for email transmittal of ballots and ensures that ballots for all elections are sent at least 45 days in advance. South Carolina already has these processes in place for federal elections. On the back end, it removes the witness requirement (only for these voters) as recommended by the Uniform Law Commission and Federal Voting Assistance Program, and allows the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) to be used for all elections as a back-up measure for voters who don't receive their official ballots in time. These minor improvements would increase the chances that military and overseas voters from South Carolina would have the opportunity to vote and have their votes counted.

We commend Sen. Campsen and Rep. Clemmons for championing this important legislation and garnering broad bipartisan support for it. We thank the leadership and the respective Committee Chairs in both chambers for ensuring that the legislation continued to move through the process. And, finally, we thank Adjutant General Bob Livingston for his critical support of it.

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