

# Military Voters Disenfranchised: Record Low 2012 Turnout Expected

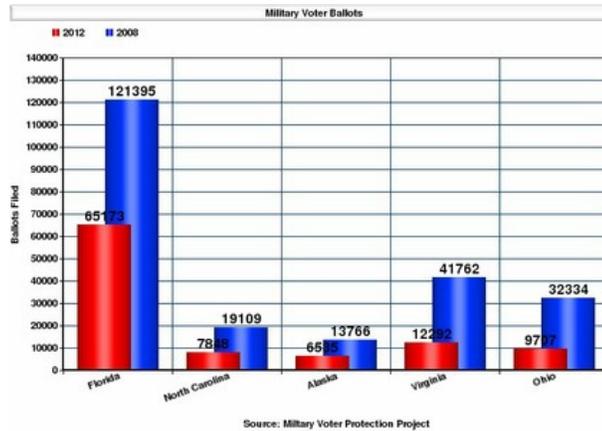
By W. E. Messamore | 10/25/2012 | Ballot Access, Elections 2012, Issues, Legislation, President, War and Foreign Policy | 38 Comments  
 Read Time: 3 - 4 minutes



Photo: US Air Force / Author: Master Sgt. Scott Reed

Despite a law passed by Congress in 2009 after low absentee voter turnout in the 2008 elections among US military personnel deployed overseas, the Military Voter Protection Project [released statistics](#) earlier this month which revealed that requests by military voters for absentee ballots had dropped significantly since 2008 to a record low.

The most significant drops were in the key battleground states of Virginia and Ohio, [which both saw](#) requests for absentee ballots by military personnel deployed overseas drop 70 percent:



Graph: usnews.com / Info: Military Voter Protection Project

The drop in military voter ballot requests happened despite the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (or MOVE Act), which Congress passed in 2009 following the 2008 election's low military voter turnout. The law created a program called the Federal Voting Assistance Program, tasked with creating voting assistance services for active duty military members serving at overseas military installations.

But the FVAP hasn't set up a single military voter assistance office at a number of military installations overseas according to findings in an August DOD Inspector General report. Part of the problem is a bureaucratic tangle of funding hurdles, but [US News and World Report](#) published an article this month reporting that part of the problem is resistance from the Department of Defense itself.

The Pentagon's failure to implement the 2009 act of Congress will likely leave thousands of military voters disenfranchised in the 2012 election. Some

Republicans are charging the Obama Administration with active voter suppression of military voters, who tend to lean Republican. Strong turnout among military voters overseas could make all the difference in swing states where the poll numbers are close. Over the weekend, The Hill [reported](#):

*"However, congressional Republicans have hammered the Pentagon for not following through on the requirements outlined in the 2009 legislation, leaving thousands of military personnel unable to cast their vote.*

*The military vote tends to sway Republican, and with recent polls showing President Obama and GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney in a virtual dead heat, strong voter turnout by American service members could be the difference between a second term for Obama or a Romney White House."*

In response to the military voter disenfranchisement controversy, US Senator John Cornyn (TX) said in a letter to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta:

*"The price of DoD's failure to follow the law will likely be paid this November by military service members and their families, whose voting rights were to have been safeguarded by this provision."*

Cornyn described the hurdles deployed military personnel face to vote in elections back home:

*"Many overseas service members are forward-deployed in units with high operational tempos and in austere environments, both of which make it harder for them to hand-carry their completed ballots to a post office or postal clerk by the deadline."*

The 2009 MOVE Act holds the Pentagon responsible for making sure America's soldiers have ballot access while working in this high-stress, dangerous environment overseas. Just in time for the 2012 election, the public is learning that the law has not been implemented, leaving thousands of military voters disenfranchised despite the universal refrain from policymakers and power players in both parties that it's a priority to "Support the Troops."



## 38 Comments

[Leave Your Comment](#)



**Michael Higham** 10.25.2012 @michaelhigham  
36053 Rank: Active Contributor

It sounds like there are many hurdles to get through for military, overseas voters. No matter what, the government needs to do all it can to count their votes. It'd be terrible if military votes broke out into partisan-based battle for votes.

Reply



**Terri Harel** 10.26.2012 @tharel  
20414 Rank: Active Contributor

and they're the ones that have the best insight to what is going on overseas, obviously. Their voice and vote counts a lot and should mean a lot to the american public.

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

You're kidding right?  
Failure to request a ballot is NOT disenfranchisement.  
it's self-disenfranchisement.

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

Troops in the field may have better insight into that particular field.  
It's just not credible to suggest that "they have the best insight to [sic] what's going on overseas."

Reply



**Jane Susskind** 10.25.2012 @jsusskind  
66979 Rank: Active Contributor

Implementing laws that enable members of the military to vote with ease should be including in politicians' pledge to "support the troops" – It's imperative that the people defending our country get a say or not we should be abroad.

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

This IS a law enabling the military to vote.  
Should be mandatory?

Reply



**Hai** 10.25.2012 @hailife  
150 Rank: New Member

Americans, who are defending our democracy, should be able to vote as conveniently as anyone else. We need to reduce the barriers that discourage participation and implement tools to make voting easier, such as online voting. This article just brought me back to the 2004 election. I was on a mission that took me from Ramadi to Baghdad to Al Asad (where I saw the news about the pending results from Ohio), then back to Ramadi (where my absentee ballot from DC finally caught up to me) a couple days after the election . I've still kept that unopened ballot just to remind myself of the  
that the right to vote shouldn't be taken for granted.

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

Now that's a real problem in the real world.  
Probably not all that common.  
Also applies, most likely, to others in remote places —  
peace corps, travellers, political prisoners, etc.

Reply



**Peyton Farquhar** 10.25.2012

ure this wasn't an accident. It was by design.

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

There's no evidence this is a problem.  
The Justice Dept sued Vermont over  
191 ballots sent out late....  
Some of those weren't even requested until  
quest deadline had passed.

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

Really?  
A conspiracy theory that the Pentagon  
soldiers from voting?

Reply



**Don Wilma McPhail** 10.25.2012

nding in the way of the military vote should be imprisoned.

Reply



**Roger Handley** 10.25.2012

ha out and it will not happen again.

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

as passed because of what happened under Bush.

Reply



**Galen Ray Richards** 10.25.2012

Well we are not a democracy we are a constitutional Republic but what needs to be done is every single military persons vote should be counted this election or bring the troops home. They are the right to vote, freedom, and they deserve better.

Reply



**Joe Hubka** 10.25.2012

should just about guarantee an Obama win!

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

Based on the numbers involved?  
jest.

Reply



**Margaret Bell** 10.25.2012

Planes fly every day. There is no reason any military member shouldn't be able to vote. That is no excuse. They have plenty time to get them to them and back where they belong in time to be

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

A. What makes you think that's NOT happening?  
al's post above.

Reply



**Bryant Amper** 10.25.2012

ot fighting for the right to vote or "freedom" they are being used as pawns for the benefit of oligarchs and plutocrats.

Reply



**Bryant Amper** 10.26.2012

genius, Obama signed the 2010 NDAA – of which the MOVE Act was part – the failure to implement it is the fault of the States.

Reply



**Debbie LeBlanc** 10.26.2012

military should overthrow the government.

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

A. The military is part of the government.  
B. The comment is treasonous.  
ng is a different issue.]

Reply



**Peggy Shannon Crawford** 10.26.2012

O excuse for this! States who are late mailing ballots to military overseas should/must allow more time for those votes to be returned and counted.

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

This assumes it's the states that do the mailing.  
NOT true for Vermont.  
pre to check.

Reply



**Leila Baroody** 10.26.2012

is whatsoever for Congress not to facilitate military voters!

Reply



**Ken Willey** 10.26.2012

primary Ron Paul received the majority of military donations. He was also the only peace candidate. Now there is no peace candidate, and military voting is at an all time low. Coincidence?

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

This is pretty cagey.  
requests are down....

Reply



**Chandler Stalvey** 10.26.2012

pened

Reply



**Dean Klein** 10.26.2012

who is responsible for this? Obama.

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

the Justice Dept suing Vermont is proof.

Reply



**Karen Stiefel Hart** 10.26.2012

E VOTE!

Reply



**Kim Connor Rudnick** 10.26.2012

at his way done intentionally :(

Reply



**William Boardman** 10.26.2012 @williamboardman  
13020 Rank: Active Contributor

elief is based on what evidence?

Reply



**John** 10.26.2012

Beliefs don't have to be based on evidence William Boardman, we call those facts. He can believe whatever he wishes. If there is no evidence, it could mean something did not happen, but the absence of evidence is not absence of a crime. With the way you think and have been commenting on this thread, nothing should ever even be looked into, until theres absolute proof it is happening. I guess criminals who hide their tracks just are not of concern to you. Based on your comments on other articles, I can see why.. you vote them into office. That is neither here nor there though..

The fact is that military turnout is looking low, there is obviously a reason, and in this case multiple, and some of them include piss poor support for soldiers who are abroad. Others like myself

and a few I know, are disenfranchised because the candidates are both the same, and no independent has a chance. We will still be writing in though, for whatever it is worth... like my squad when we were on patrol during an earlier election.. "Boy, if voting made a difference, it would be illegal."

Reply



**Ian Dawes** 10.26.2012 @iandawes  
8046 Rank: Active Contributor

This is an interesting dynamic, did the members of the military that were overseas during 2010 get counted in the Census? If they did not then the State/districts that are their usual place of residences are typically already under represented.

Reply



**Alex Gauthier** 10.26.2012 @alexg  
40950 Rank: Active Contributor

I think of that. it's hard to believe this hasn't been figured out by now. soldiers more than anyone are more closely tied to the country

Reply



**marvin winters** 10.29.2012

What We are seeing in our nation that the very folks who protects our basic rights under the terms for which our nation was founded find neither party who currently holds office deserves their votes. We have had both sides take our nation to financial failure, and loosing our once core for which the world looks to us for open, freedom, and the right to basic human rights. On our policy over seas its a simple one. We as a nation consume more of every thing. We do not know how to conserve on so much. We have been a pampered, and out right spoiled nation for so long.

To ensure all the freedoms and the goods we crave that requires a forward precense over seas to ensure the flow of all the goods, or matrials needed.

Its just not about oil. Wake up and understand we as a nation bring on the best and worst in not only us, but those in other countries we must put our armed forces down on to ensure of our needs.

Now we are drawing down our forces around the world, and reducing our Armed Forces at the same time.

Listen and take to heart the following. Vetarns are returning to a stressed country on so many levels.

Our job growth is in the tank, The Fed's are passing the money issues on to the States, Then the States are passing the money issees on to the County level.

Lets take San Diego County. One of 58 counties in CA. It has a suplus in its accounts. One of three by the way.

Add to that we have the largest Armed Forces in all the United States stationed here.

We are drawing down our forces. In turn our women and men are coming out to the local job markets.

Now add in the fact over 50% of all the troops suffer from either TBI- PTSD- or missing limbs.

Then having to go through a very long trail to recieve treatments. Which can take up to 18 months in many cases because of the back log in the VA or the Active Duty side of the house.

So now you have them in the Counties They are making home.

They fall into depression, angry at the issues they are facing, many drink, or do drugs, and yes kill them selfs more often now than at any other time in our history. Then throw in family fights, and yes even blowing up at other folks who get hurt or killed.

This is a very real bad issue which is a national threat to our nation with in it self.

Just some thoughts on how for down we as a nation have hit bottom. Wake up as a poeple and throw out our men and women who sell us out to folks who do not have our interest in their minds and hearts.

ed and put the color of our skin aside along with which faith we are. We are all one people for which this nation stands for.

Reply