

## Brady Applauds VA Policy Revision

Policy reversal expands VA facility access to election officials and non-partisan groups

Washington, DC (September 9, 2008): House Administration Committee Chairman Robert A. Brady applauded today's policy reversal by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The newly implemented policy allows state and local election officials and non-partisan groups to access VA facilities to assist officials in registering veteran voters who are receiving care. The newly announced policy revises a prior VA directive that prohibited these groups from providing registration assistance to VA facility residents.

"The recent policy change implemented by the VA and Secretary James B. Peake acknowledges the importance of ensuring that every reasonable effort is made to ensure that our veterans have full and unrestricted access to the electoral process," said Brady. "State and local election officials and non-partisan groups play an invaluable role in empowering and enfranchising voters. Prohibiting their access was a terrible misjudgment and I am pleased that it has been corrected."

The new policy requires that voter registration information be posted in VA facilities. It also requires that patients receive documentation outlining their voting and registration rights upon their admission.

Brady and other Congressional leaders have spearheaded efforts to encourage the revision of the VA's registration policy. In addition, a bi-partisan cross-section of Secretaries of State had expressed strong opposition to the VA prohibition. The House Administration Committee, chaired by Brady, responded to their concerns on July 30 when it passed out of Committee HR 6625, the Veteran Voting Support Act. This Brady-introduced legislation designates VA facilities as voter registration agencies and prohibits the Secretary of Veteran Affairs from restricting non-partisan organizations and state election officials from providing voter information and assistance to veterans at VA facilities. The legislation attracted more than 50 co-sponsors.

"At a time when we are calling upon Americans to heed the call of national service, it is unfathomable that the institution charged with serving our veterans would have implemented a policy that, in effect, restricted their access to the electoral process," said Brady. "I am pleased that the virtually universal calls for them to reconsider, were finally acknowledged."

"I'd like to thank Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner for his early support and participation in our efforts," said Brady. "I'd also like to applaud the work of Representative Diane Watson (D-CA), who has been a tireless advocate on this issue. While this policy revision represents a tangible step in the right direction, the new policy still falls short of ensuring unfettered access to registration for our veterans in VA facilities. Moving forward, we will review the VA action and determine whether it is necessary to proceed with our legislative recourse."

The Committee on House Administration, under Brady's direction, maintains oversight of Federal election related issues as well as the Federal Elections Commission (FEC) and the Elections Assistance Commission (EAC). Additionally, Brady serves on the influential House Armed Services Committee.

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