



**DEFENSE HUMAN RESOURCES ACTIVITY
FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**
4800 MARK CENTER DRIVE, SUITE 03J25-02
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22350-4000

January 30, 2017

Commissioner Edgardo Cortes
Virginia Department of Election
1100 Bank Street, First Floor
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Commissioner Cortes:

I am writing today with regard to General Assembly of Virginia Senate Bill 1490 and the use of the Common Access Card (CAC) digital signature on election materials. As you are aware, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) is the Department of Defense program charged with administering the federal responsibilities of the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act*, or *UOCAVA*. Our mission is to help ensure Service members, their eligible family members and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so.

UOCAVA voters, particularly those stationed or residing overseas, face complexities in the voting process that in-person or State absentee voters do not face. Many of these voters already have limited access to resources necessary to successfully submit their registration, absentee ballot requests and official ballots back to their State. While we welcome and applaud this progress for those who are deployed in combat or hostile fire areas, we would be remiss if we did not raise your awareness that complexities remain for those deployed but not necessarily to a combat zone. For example, those deployed on ships or on humanitarian assistance missions will often face equal or less infrastructure than those who are in combat zones. Additionally, a deployment may mean that at certain times a Service member will be in a combat zone, but only briefly before continuing the mission elsewhere.

The Department of Defense, as a credentialing authority, issues CACs containing digital signatures to military personnel, Department of Defense civilian employees, eligible contractor personnel and certain other individuals, allowing these individuals to sign documents securely and electronically. By accepting CAC digital signatures, States would make it far easier for military members serving away from their home jurisdiction to register and request an absentee ballot - and it would ensure that election officials can verify an individual's identity using the best technology possible. Unlike general digital signatures, the Common Access Card issuance process requires individual authentication prior to its issuance. This is an important distinction for consideration and demonstrates the role of the Department as a trusted agent in this process.

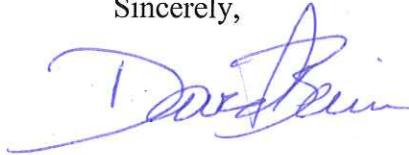
The Council of State Governments Overseas Voting Initiative Technology Working Group recently released recommendations relating to CAC usage to complete election activities such as submitting a Federal Post Card Application to register to vote, requesting an absentee ballot and indicating *UOCAVA* voting status via a State's online election portal. We are attaching a copy of these recommendations for your reference. FVAP fully understands the need

for signature comparisons between the original ballot application and the returned ballot. While we will be working with the CSG to formalize technical guidance, we will support moving forward with this independently should this legislation become enacted and assist with its implementation as this would prove helpful for other States considering the same approach.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact my POC on this, Ms. Meghan Kelly, FVAP State Affairs Specialist, at meghan.kelly@fvap.gov or (571) 372-0742.

Thanks for all you, your staff and colleagues in the Virginia Department of Elections do to support and assist our military and overseas voters. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Beirne", with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Beirne
Director

Enclosure:
As stated