

# GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON STRENGTHENING UTAH'S DEMOCRACY

## RECOMMENDATION FOR OVERSEAS MILITARY VOTING REFORM

*SPONSORED BY ACTING CHAIR KIRK JOWERS*

Whereas Utah must endeavor to make voting readily accessible to the brave men and women who protect our freedoms abroad;

Whereas, a respected 2009 study found that Utah was one of only 16 states that does "not provide enough time to vote for military personnel stationed overseas";

Whereas, Utah's overseas military voters now must request, receive, and submit absentee ballots through the mail *unless* they are deployed in a hostile fire zone or other area where mail service is unreliable;

Whereas, Utah law requires overseas military voters who request, receive, and submit absentee ballots by mail to request an absentee ballot no later than 20 days before an election, postmark their absentee ballots no later than the day before the election, and ensure that their ballots are received by noon on the day of the official canvass period;

Whereas, Utah currently provides overseas military mail voters only a 34-day period between when overseas absentee ballots are sent out (as late as 20 days before an election) to when votes are counted (up to 14 days after an election);

Whereas, Utah's overseas military mail voters need a minimum period of 52 days from when overseas absentee ballots are sent out to when votes are counted because up to 26 days are needed for ballots to travel by mail;

Whereas, the Commission believes that distributing absentee ballots earlier would increase the number of overseas military ballots counted;

Whereas, the Commission believes that voting in Utah would be more accessible for many overseas military voters if all such voters could submit absentee ballot requests and receive blank absentee ballots electronically (fax, email, or other electronic means).

In order to make Utah's voting system more accessible to overseas military voters, the Commission hereby recommends that the Utah Code be amended to: (1) allow all overseas military voters to request absentee ballots electronically; (2) move forward the deadline for voters to request absentee ballots and county clerks to send absentee ballots from 20 days before an election to 31 days before an election; and (3) provide for the electronic transmittal of blank absentee ballots to overseas military voters.

**APPROVED 12-0 (7 ABSENT)  
JULY 31, 2009**

### VOTING TO APPROVE

Acting Chair Kirk Jowers, Representative Rebecca Chavez-Houck, Randy Dryer, Meghan Holbrook, Senator Scott Jenkins, Dan Jones, Tom Love, Dick Richards, Dee Rowland, Ken Verdoia, LaVarr Webb, Doug Wright