

**Opening Statement of
Chairman Robert A. Brady of Pennsylvania**

**Committee on House Administration
CHA Oversight Hearing on
Overseas**

April 15, 2008

**11:00 AM
1310 Longworth House Office Building**

The hearing will come to order. Good morning Members of the Committee, witnesses, and guests. Today's hearing will focus on the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA).

Our men and women fighting overseas make many sacrifices to guarantee the freedoms that we enjoy. Our nation can never fully repay that debt, but we can ensure that the freedoms they are fighting for are given to them as well as to us at home. The UOCAVA assures the right of uniformed and overseas Americans to participate in Federal elections by allowing for the use of absentee ballots and-- in the case that they are not received in a timely manner--the use of a federal write-in absentee ballot. UOCAVA covers all eligible Americans living abroad in addition to our military voters.

I believe more can be done, which is why I called this hearing today to find out what the Department of Defense and others are doing to ensure that every eligible man and woman who qualifies under this Act can register, receive and submit a ballot for federal office. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates that there are close to 6 million eligible UOCAVA voters. The EAC estimates that only 33% of ballots requested by these citizens were cast and counted in the 2006 general election. That means that almost 70% of the ballots requested are not being counted for office. I would like to hear from our witnesses their proposed solutions to correct this problem.

In 2007, Committee staff journeyed to several naval and air force bases and United States embassies to talk to our men and women in uniform and civilians about their voting experiences. Many had positive things to say, but a few wondered why they are unable to receive and submit ballots electronically. Why can't states adopt standard rules for voting in federal elections?

The EAC has issued several recommendations on administering UOCAVA. I am interested in hearing if any of these recommendations are being implemented, or if other solutions are being weighed to ensure that all eligible Americans, here and aboard, have the opportunity to register and cast ballots in federal elections.

Lastly, it should be noted that Overseas Americans will enjoy their voting bloc at the Democratic National Convention in August with 11 delegates. This is another step to include all Americans in the process. We can and must do better, especially for our men and women fighting for democracy not only in Iraq and Afghanistan, but for all American soldiers around the world. I look forward to hearing from all the witnesses today.