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November 17, 2009

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
United States House of Representatives
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Elections
Committee on House Administration

Dear Congressman McCarthy,

Thank you for releasing your draft legislation encouraging states to implement an online voter registration system. The online voter registration system in Washington State has been very well received by voters and election administrators in our state.

I strongly support the online voter registration legislation released on November 5, 2009. I agree with the comments that online registration can increase accuracy and reduce administrative costs of a voter registration system.

Each voter registration file must include a valid signature from the voter, so I am pleased to see that the draft legislation requires a signature from the state database the public uses most: the state driver's licensing agency. The provision linking the registration to the driver's license or state ID is consistent with the existing mandates of the Help America Vote Act that a voter registration applicant must provide either a driver's license number or the last four digits of his or her social security number as part of the application.

The draft legislation provides states with flexibility. Online voter registration systems can be implemented with existing voter registration deadlines, eligibility criteria, and National Voter Registration Act list maintenance practices.

I want to reiterate my previous comments that online registration should never become the only method available for registering to vote. Paper forms, motor voter registrations, agency-based registrations, and other methods that states currently use should continue to be available. Online registration is simply one additional tool to get people registered in a convenient, accessible, and efficient manner. It is also a reflection of the extent to which the public now conducts its personal and professional business online.

Thank you for bringing this legislation forward and for the opportunity to comment. Please call on me if I can provide additional information, (360) 902-4151.

Sincerely,



SAM REED
Secretary of State

cc: Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren, Chair
Congressman Charles Gonzalez
Congressman Gregg Harper
Congresswoman Susan Davis
Congressman Artur Davis