

September 1, 2020

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Dear Election Officials,

It is well documented that states are facing a record shortage of poll workers this year due largely to the impact of COVID-19, as those at higher risk for coronavirus complications do not plan to volunteer on Election Day. Power the Polls, an initiative aimed at recruiting low-risk and diverse poll workers, estimates that the United States currently needs about 250,000 more poll workers nationwide. The primaries earlier this year illustrated the risks of understaffing, with voters in Georgia, Kentucky, and other states left waiting in line for hours to cast their ballots amidst a public health crisis. Some jurisdictions have even turned to the National Guard to ensure sufficient staffing, placing further stress on servicemembers already tasked with the grueling battle against COVID-19.

In light of this shortage, we write on behalf of 10 military service organizations representing thousands of military families to request an accommodation to allow military servicemembers and their families to serve as poll workers, even if they are not registered to vote in the state where they seek to volunteer. Under the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA) and the Military Spouse Residency Relief Act (MSRRA), servicemembers and their families may vote in their state of residency, even when they are stationed on military orders in another jurisdiction. Meanwhile, most states require poll workers to be

registered voters in that state in order to serve. This scenario prevents many servicemembers and their families from serving as poll workers, even during this record shortage.

Military families are diverse and service-oriented. According to the 2018 Blue Star Families Annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey, 71% of military and veteran families volunteered within the past 12 months and 97% believe that voting in an election is an important responsibility. Military family voters are no strangers to voting via absentee ballots, but support the right of all Americans to vote regardless of whether it occurs in person or by mail. Military families intimately understand the cost of our democracy, having watched, waited, and worried as their servicemembers deploy to all corners of the globe. These families, already willing to sacrifice everything, should not be denied the opportunity to further serve our democracy as poll workers.

States should act immediately to amend the laws and regulations preventing servicemembers and military families from serving as poll workers simply because they vote in one state as permitted by law, while serving our country in another state on military orders. Removing these barriers to service sends a message of meaningful support for servicemembers and military families and encourages poll worker participation, not only during this record shortage but for all future elections.

Sincerely,

Blue Star Families

Homefront Rising

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)

Military Spouse JD Network (MSJDN)

Modern Military Association of America (MMAA)

National Military Family Association (NMFA)

National Military Spouse Network (NMSN)

Partners in Promise (PiP)

Secure Families Initiative (SFI)