



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

March 14, 2017

Michael Haas
Administrator
Wisconsin Elections Commission
212 East Washington Ave., 3rd Floor
Madison, WI 53707-7984

Dear Mr. Haas:

I am writing today regarding Wisconsin's requirement that a witness signature and address from another United States citizen accompany a returned absentee ballot, including the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB), from military and overseas voters. 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.

Based on recent research and voter feedback received during the 2016 election, we have concerns with Wisconsin's requirement that *UOCAVA* voters returning their official absentee ballot or FWAB must provide a witness signature and address from another U.S. citizen. It is important to recognize that *UOCAVA* voters, particularly those stationed or residing overseas, face complexities in the voting process that in-person or State absentee voters do not face. In 2016, FVAP completed research of known overseas civilian voters during the 2014 federal elections. Of these known overseas voters, nine percent of those living in Europe, South Asia and the Western Hemisphere indicated they did not know any other U.S. citizens residing in the same country. Additionally, traveling to the nearest State Department Embassy or Consulate may require substantial time, energy and cost. Based on these findings, overseas citizens will face real challenges in finding a witness who meets the requirements specified under Wisconsin law.

FVAP stands willing and ready to work with Wisconsin in finding possible solutions that would meet the intent of this requirement without placing a burden on a significant portion of the overseas citizen community. Please contact Nate Bacchus, FVAP State Affairs Specialist, at nate.a.bacchus@fvap.gov with any questions, concerns or comments you may have.

Thanks for all you, your staff and colleagues in the Wisconsin Election Commission do to support and assist our military and overseas voters.

Sincerely,

David Beirne
Director