



The National Defense Committee

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## 17 Computer Scientists: Invest More in Military Internet Voting

*Letter: Internet voting only option for military “to achieve first class voter status”*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – January 23, 2013: On the eve of Overseas Vote Foundation (OVF) Seventh Annual Summit, 17 noted computer scientists, **“collectively and enthusiastically encourage federal and state agencies to immediately identify resources to...promote and award scientific research that can assist military voters to attain first class voter status,”** through internet voting systems.

Led by Dr. Alec Yasinsac, Dean of the University of South Alabama School of Computing, and retired Lieutenant Colonel from the U.S. Marine Corps, these computer scientists declared the only way for military voters to gain “first class voter” status with the **“same electoral rights and privileges as any other citizen”** is through **“remote electronic voting that provides for electronic delivery of military members’ voted ballots.”**

These computer and internet security specialists further declare that while legislative requirements such as the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act of 2009 (MOVE Act) **“incrementally improved military voting access...voting access for military members is [still] dramatically more complicated and less successful than for their civilian counterparts.”** Because of those inherent legislative limitations, the computer scientists declared **only remote electronic voting that provides for electronic delivery of military members’ voted ballots, i.e. internet voting, can overcome the “complex, rigorous absentee voting system,”** under which, **“military voters are disproportionately disenfranchised because their ballots do not arrive in time.”**

Bob Carey, Executive Director of the National Defense Committee and former Director of the Federal Voting Assistance Program, heralded this key development. **“These compassionate computer scientists have spoken the truth about internet voting – not only are military voters different from the rest of the voting population requiring special assistance, but that such military-only systems can, ‘manage electoral risk by limiting these systems only to military voters’”.**

The computer scientists’ letter specifically addresses the concerns of computer scientists who have opposed even pilot programs for internet voting, declaring that **“focused research...could lead to reasonable solutions that are sufficiently secure for use by the military”.** The scientists also **“strongly reject”** the slippery slope argument, that **military internet voting will lead to adoption for the general electorate; “...nothing less than first class voter status is satisfactory for military personnel.”**

Carey highlighted the gutting of the internet voting research budget in the Department of Defense, which was charged by Congress in 2002 to develop an internet voting system for military personnel. **“The DoD internet voting research budget dropped from \$38.8 million in 2011 to \$9.6 million in the President’s 2013 budget proposal, a 75% cut. No wonder the computer scientists decried ‘there is very little sponsored research effort currently devoted to solving this problem.’ Congress needs to restore this funding and get the DoD back on track to field and internet voting system.”**

Bob Carey and Dr. Yasinsac are both available to discuss with the press and interested parties the issues of internet voting, as well as the broader problems facing military voters.