



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1683

Resolution calling upon the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure that veterans in VA facilities are able to exercise their right to vote.

By Council Members Gerson, Brewer, Comrie, Felder, Fidler, James, Koppell, Liu, Palma, Sanders Jr., Seabrook, Vann, Weprin and Mark-Viverito

Whereas, Voting is one of the most precious fundamental rights for American citizens; and

Whereas, Voting is especially significant to those who have risked their lives to defend our county's freedoms; and

Whereas, Many injured or ill military veterans live in VA facilities, federally funded nursing homes or shelters; and

Whereas, Often, these veterans move to such facilities from their homes or previous addresses where they were registered to vote, rendering that registration invalid; and

Whereas, Some veterans, especially those wounded or disabled, find it difficult to travel and cannot get to registration sites; and

Whereas, In May of 2008, the Veterans Health Administration issued a directive banning nonpartisan voter registration drives at federally financed nursing homes, rehabilitation centers and shelters for homeless veterans; and

Whereas, In July, 2008, S.3308/H.R.6625, also known as the Veteran Voting Support Act, was introduced in the United States Congress; and

Whereas, The Veteran Voting Support Act is legislation that would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to permit facilities of the VA to be designated as voter registration agencies; and

Whereas, In addition the Act would require that any facility of the VA should offer assistance with absentee ballots; and

Whereas, The Act would further require that the Secretary of the VA permit a meaningful opportunity for non-partisan organizations to provide voter registration information and assistance at VA facilities; and

Whereas, This legislation would also require that the VA Secretary shall not prohibit any election administration official from providing voting information to veterans at any VA facility; and

Whereas, The legislation would require that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs submit to Congress an annual report on how the Secretary has complied with the requirements of this Act; and

Whereas, In September of 2008, due to increased pressure from veterans, advocates and elected officials, the VA reversed its controversial directive; and

Whereas, Despite this change of policy, many have expressed concern that the VA will need further prodding to ensure that veterans are guaranteed their most important right as American citizens; and

Whereas, According to testimony given by the Veterans for Common Sense at a Senate committee hearing on S.3308, as many as 100,000 veterans living in VA facilities may not be able to vote in the upcoming November 2008 election due in part to the VA's former policies; and

Whereas, Voting is essential to the core of American democracy; and

Whereas, We, as a nation, should demand that our military veterans are able to exercise the right that they have fought to protect; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure that veterans in VA facilities are able to exercise their right to vote.

JP
LS 6305
10/15/08