



*Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Election Laws  
In opposition to H.600 – An Act relative to UOCAVA voting  
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) opposes H.600, which would add “a secure website” as a portal for Internet voting by overseas voters (UOCAVA). Currently, there is no secure website for transmitting completed ballots from overseas, and we should not assume that technology will solve the myriad security and privacy issues that are unique to voting by Internet. With so much at stake in elections, we should not underestimate the sophistication and tenacity of hackers to penetrate and manipulate ballots on what is labeled a “secure website.”

The US Department of Defense (DOD) recognizes the issues with casting ballots by Internet and fax and recommends only blank ballot be sent to overseas voters by Internet. The completed ballot should be returned by post.

In 2011, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the federal agency that researched Internet voting, concluded that secure Internet voting is not currently feasible. There is no evidence that this has changed. Despite considerable efforts to improve security, penetration of websites occurs often. Large amounts of data have been stolen from the government, defense contractors, banks, corporations and even a popular maker of web protection software. Financial institutions absorb enormous losses from skilled cyber thieves which is offset by the savings from on-line banking.

The Wall Street Journal warned about Internet voting in [Hack the Vote: The Perils of the Online Ballot Box](#): “... online voting is fraught with danger. Hackers could manipulate enough votes to change the results of local and national elections, and a skilled hacker can do so without leaving any evidence.”

“The underlying architecture of the Internet, personal computers and mobile devices present numerous avenues of attack, making it impossible to safeguard a voting system with the security tools that are currently available. Methods of attack continue to become more sophisticated, well-resourced and damaging.”

In addition, the right to a secret ballot must be waived when voting by Internet and fax. This is inconsistent with the Massachusetts Voters’ Bill of Rights, which affirms “... the right to cast your ballot in a manner that ensures privacy.” LWVMA asserts “this is an important voting concept that keeps our democracy free.”

LWVMA urges the legislature to reexamine current law as well and eliminate the provision that allows overseas voters to cast ballots by Internet and fax. In 2010 a bill was passed hurriedly in

the legislature to support its being signed by the governor shortly before Veterans Day. Some legislators believed they were supporting the original text of the bill, which only allowed sending the blank ballot by Internet and fax and were not aware that it had been amended to allow returning the ballot electronically.

The League supports voting systems that are secure, accurate, recountable, accessible and transparent. The League has carefully studied voting systems and only supports those that are designed so that:

- they employ a voter-verifiable paper ballot or other paper record, said paper being the official record of the voter's intent; and
- the voter can verify, either by eye or with the aid of suitable devices for those who have impaired vision, that the paper ballot/record accurately reflects his or her intent; and
- such verification takes place while the voter is still in the process of voting; and
- the paper ballot/record is used for audits and recounts; and
- the vote totals can be verified by an independent hand count of the paper ballot/record; and
- routine audits of the paper ballot/record in randomly selected precincts can be conducted in every election, and the results published by the jurisdiction.

Voting by Internet does not meet League criteria and can compromise the integrity of our elections. Local election officials would be unable to detect electronic manipulation of Internet ballots. Therefore, we strongly request that you oppose passage of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.