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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **National and State Voting Rights Groups Urge Massachusetts Governor Not to Sign Internet Voting Bill**

BOSTON, MA – A coalition of national and state voting rights groups, including Voter Action, Verified Voting, Common Cause (National), ACLU of Massachusetts, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law of the Boston Bar Association, and Oiste, issued the following statement today:

### **Governor Patrick Must Protect Military Voters' Right to a Secure, Private Ballot**

To exercise their voting rights, Americans in uniform serving overseas must have better access to the process of casting a ballot. Equally important, the process of casting a ballot must be no less secure and verifiable for them than it is for voters at home.

In an effort to remedy longstanding deficiencies in the voting process for overseas and service voters, the General Court enacted House Bill 4310 on November 10. Most of H4310 is laudable, but Section 4 of the bill would create a high-risk voting system for overseas and service voters by allowing voted ballots to be returned via fax or e-mail.

*This provision is unnecessary to solve the real problems faced by overseas and military voters, and we urge Governor Patrick to return the bill to the Court with a recommendation to delete it.*

Facsimile or e-mail transmission of voted ballots requires military voters to sacrifice their right to a private vote, and it is also one of the least secure methods of ballot submission available. The National Institute of Standards and Technology's December 2008 report on overseas voting observed:

*The security challenges associated with e-mail return of voted ballots are difficult to overcome using technology widely deployed today.<sup>1</sup>*

The Pew Center on the States, in its 2009 report on overseas and military voters, indicates overseas and military voters can be afforded more time and opportunity to vote if States transmit and accept absentee ballot requests electronically, send blank absentee ballots

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<http://vote.nist.gov/uocava-threatanalysis-final.pdf>

electronically; and build at least 45 days into the process for ballots to travel between voters and election officials.<sup>2</sup> The Pew report notes:

*Simply sending blank ballots out via fax or e-mail can give military citizens abroad enough time to complete the process.*<sup>3</sup>

The report also notes that where time to vote is especially short and electronic return of ballots is permitted,

*“...voters essentially must choose between potentially risking the privacy and security of their ballots and being unable to complete the process in time.”*<sup>4</sup>

For voters at home, Massachusetts provides a secret ballot that can be verified, audited and recounted. Overseas and military voters can enjoy the same privacy and verifiability of paper ballot voting while dramatically improving their opportunity to vote. The best way to do so would be to afford them the opportunity to receive blank ballots electronically. This step alone will add considerable time to allow overseas voters to cast their ballots in a secure way. We urge Governor Patrick to extend this benefit without adding unnecessary risk.

Signed:

ACLU of Massachusetts  
Citizens for Election Integrity Massachusetts  
Common Cause (National)  
Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law of the Boston Bar Association  
Oiste  
Verified Voting  
Voter Action

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[http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Election\\_reform/NT\\_TV\\_Report\\_Web.pdf](http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Election_reform/NT_TV_Report_Web.pdf)

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Id., p. 4

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Id., p.15