

AMERICANS FOR



TAX REFORM

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

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ATR URGES SENATE TO ACT ON ELECTION REFORM

The United States Senate currently is holding up legislation that would encourage voter turnout in rural America. The legislation, H.R. 5174, introduced by Rep. Bill Thomas (R-CA), passed the House on 10/12/2000 297-113. Currently Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) has a hold on the legislation. The legislation is needed and supported by ATR because:

- DoD issued a directive in December 1999 prohibiting all facility commanders from allowing election polls on the military premises; these are polls in which civilians in remote communities supporting bases have historically been allowed to vote on the base. DoD cites a Civil War era law which prohibits troops at polling locations; the law was passed because troops were being used to intimidate voters.
- Election officials object to this directive because for many years polls have been run on armories, reserve bases, etc. Many isolated military bases have communities around them whose election officials are used to using the base for running their polls.
- Over 65,000 voters are estimated to be adversely impacted around the country; as one would expect, the adverse impacts are most acute in small, isolated communities dominated by a military facility.
- The Thomas bill does not repeal the law making intimidation with troops illegal. The bill does not require DoD to allow election polls on its military facilities. The bill only makes explicit that allowing such polls on military facilities is not illegal; thus, it actually protects DoD commanders who might feel at risk by the current law and DoD interpretation.
- DoD claims that their directive is still needed to protect against any possible claim of intimidation by troops against civilians. Mr. Thomas responds that local election officials and voters are not coerced by voluntarily coming onto the base to vote and that the bill provides more protection for servicemen than current law.

ATR urges the United States Senate, namely Senator Tom Daschle (D-SD), in the spirit of bi-partisanship, to allow a vote on this bill.