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STATE OF KANSAS

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KOBACH'S COLUMN

Kansas Secretary of State Kris W. Kobach

During my campaign for the office of Kansas Secretary of State, I promised that I would solve a significant problem in Kansas elections—the fact that our soldiers deployed overseas can vote in local candidate elections, but cannot vote on local ballot issues. Within weeks of becoming Kansas Secretary of State, I proposed SB 103 to expand voting opportunities for certain absentee federal services voters and military personnel or their family members. On April 7, 2011, Governor Brownback approved and signed SB 103 into law after the Senate passed the bill unanimously 38-0 and the House of Representatives passed it 123-1.

Two federal laws govern the voting process for military and overseas voters: The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) and the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act. With the enactment of SB 103, Kansas now allows military and overseas voters to vote on local ballot issues, as well as to vote for a federal write-in candidate. We have made a significant improvement in our election laws.

Before SB 103, Kansas law excluded from overseas absentee ballots elections involving local questions and political party precinct committee positions. After SB 103, these absentee ballots include all officers and any proposition or question for which the voter otherwise would be entitled to vote. Before, even citizens who paid Kansas property taxes but lived abroad could not vote on local mill levy increases or bond issues. Now they can. And now our military staff deployed overseas can also elect their precinct committee people back home.

The streamlined methods allowed by SB 103 enable U.S. citizens located outside the United States at election time to vote their absentee ballots as quickly and reliably as possible. Our military personnel are fighting to bring the right to vote to people overseas. It is the least we can do to ensure that their voting rights are every bit as complete as those of Kansans residing at home.

Your Secretary of State,
Kris Kobach

P.S. Did you know that news releases from our office are posted on our website? Visit www.sos.ks.gov, then on the left navigation pane click "About Us" / "Newsroom" / "News Releases" to view a list. Click on the Release Date to open and view the news release or Kobach's Column.