

Testimony in Support of **HB 2616**: Relating to Military Families and College Students to Serve as Poll Workers

Thank you, Chairman Proctor and Members of the Committee.

I'm here today as a proponent for HB2616 with the hopes that it can provide support to our hard-working election commissioners and clerks in their poll worker recruitment efforts.

In the 2018 general election, **around six in ten U.S. poll workers (58%) were ages 61 and older, including roughly a quarter (27%) over 70**, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of government data.

The United States Election Assistance Commission's survey data shows nearly 65 percent of jurisdictions reported that it was "very difficult" or "somewhat difficult" to obtain enough poll workers to work polling locations. For more populous areas, that difficulty increased to 88%.

For this reason, it makes sense that we might consider a small carve out for the armed service community and college students to participate as poll workers even though their voter registration or residency might be outside where they currently live.

Firstly, military spouses are an integral part of our armed forces community. They often face unique challenges and sacrifices in their personal and professional lives due to frequent relocations. Recent data shows that families are being uprooted on average every two to four years. The Institute for Veterans and Military Families survey showed that **72% of active duty personnel and their spouses required an absentee ballot because they were not registered to vote in the same place they resided**. By allowing military family members to serve as poll workers, we can provide them with a valuable opportunity to contribute to their local communities while also supporting the democratic principles that our armed forces protect.

Secondly, college students are the future leaders of our nation. We want them to possess a strong sense of civic duty and a desire to actively engage in the democratic process. Survey data has shown that **70% of college students register to vote in their hometown, while only 28% register at their school address**. By allowing college students to serve as poll workers, we can empower them to take an active role in shaping the future of our democracy. Additionally, this experience will provide them with valuable skills and insights into our electoral system, fostering a sense of responsibility and civic engagement that will benefit them throughout their lives.

By allowing military families and college students to serve as poll workers, we can address the pressing issue of a poll worker shortage in our state. The participation of these individuals will help ensure the smooth operation of polling stations, reduce waiting times, and enhance the overall efficiency of the electoral process.

I would like to emphasize that both the armed forces community and college students are highly motivated and capable individuals who bring unique perspectives and skills to the role of poll workers. Their diverse backgrounds and experiences will enrich the electoral process and our representative democracy.

Let me end by saying that this modification to the current law in no way should negate any other safeguard that we currently have in place to ensure that our elections are secure.

Thank you again for the opportunity to propose this bill for consideration.

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