

Murphy Scores Quick Victory for Veterans on Voter Registration

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - At midnight last night, the House of Representatives approved an amendment authored by Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) to thwart the Veterans Administration's (VA) efforts to stop nonpartisan voter registration activities at VA facilities.

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently adopted a voting assistance policy that has been roundly criticized for not permitting voter registration drives. Murphy began his push to stop the VA from implementing its new policy on Tuesday when he announced legislation to fix it; the bill was approved by the House Committee on Administration on Wednesday. With just a few days left before the House adjourned for August, Murphy crafted and passed an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2009 Military Construction and Veterans Appropriations bill to prevent the VA from spending taxpayer dollars to obstruct voter registration at VA facilities.

"The choice was simple - to stand up for the rights of our veterans, who have sacrificed so much for our nation, or to stand with Bush. I am proud that this House stood up last night and did the right thing for our veterans and for our democracy," said Murphy.

Murphy's amendment was included in the final version of the Fiscal Year 2009 Military Construction and Veterans Appropriations bill, which passed today, 409-4.

Nonpartisan voter registration drives are one of the most effective tools to ensure veterans are given the opportunity to vote. Across the country millions of voters are energized by these registration efforts, yet the VA is currently denying veterans this same opportunity.

Murphy introduced legislation on Tuesday to reverse the VA's new rule. The bill also addresses the need to help disabled veterans living in VA facilities with requesting an absentee ballot and assistance in completing the ballot. By not allowing nonpartisan organizations to assist these individuals, many of them may not be able to vote at all.

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