

WASHINGTON, DC – House Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer (MD) released the following statement regarding the “Secure America’s Vote Act of 2005,” which he introduced today:

“Today I am introducing the “Secure America’s Vote Act of 2005” (“SAVA”), an election reform bill that will build upon the achievements of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), of which I was a proud lead cosponsor.

“Since the 2004 election, I have devoted significant time to assessing the impact of HAVA. Generally, I have been pleased with HAVA’s performance. A recently-released report by the CalTech/MIT Voting Technology Project found that of the seventeen million new voters who participated in the 2004 election, ‘approximately one million of these ‘new votes’ can be attributed to reforms in voting machines and administrative practices over the past four years.’ [www.vote.caltech.edu/media/documents/vtp\\_wp21v2.3.pdf](http://www.vote.caltech.edu/media/documents/vtp_wp21v2.3.pdf)

“But clearly the 2004 election was not flawless.

“One deficiency was the inconsistent treatment of provisional ballots by states, which HAVA requires states to provide to voters whose registrations are in doubt when they appear at polling places. Provisional ballots were generally a success in 2004, but not an unqualified success.

“Unfortunately, some states in 2004 refused to count provisional ballots if they were not cast in the right polling precinct, even if they were cast in the correct county or voting jurisdiction, and for Federal candidates for whom voters were eligible to vote.

“Quite simply, HAVA provided that a voter’s provisional ballot should be counted if the voter is eligible to vote for the Federal candidates who are listed on the ballot, notwithstanding which precinct it was cast in.

“The good news is there are several states that are models for the proper handling of provisional ballots, with perhaps Washington State being the premier one. Washington counts provisional ballots that are cast anywhere in the state, as long as the voter is qualified to vote.

“Under the legislation I am proposing today, starting in 2006, a provisional ballot cast in a Federal election would be counted if the voter is eligible and casts the ballot in the correct county or township. Starting in 2008, provisional ballots would be counted if they are cast at any polling place in the state. Only those votes for Federal candidates for whom the voter is eligible to vote will be counted.

“Beyond improving provisional ballots, SAVA requires states to improve the security of electronic voting machines and the software used to run them.

“SAVA would also impose controls on the management of registration systems to ensure eligible voters are never removed from the rolls.

“Finally, SAVA will streamline Federal registration forms so that voters who affirm that they are U.S. citizens will not face unnecessary registration problems.

“I believe that our nation has made great strides in improving our election system since the debacle of the 2000 presidential election. However, there is still work to be done. I believe that the Secure America's Vote Act will help us move us even closer towards the goal of ensuring that every citizen's vote counts.”