Secretary of State
DEBRA BOWEN
State of California

May 1, 2008

The Honorable James B. Peake
United States Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Peake:

As California's chief elections official, I would like to request that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) designate itself as a "voter registration agency" for purposes of Section 7(a)(3)(B)(ii) of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993.

As you know, federal Executive Order No. 12926, 59 Fed. Reg. 47227 (Sept. 12, 1994) calls on federal agencies to agree, if requested by a state's top elections official, to be designated a "voter registration agency." The designation helps ensure that veterans who receive services from the agency's offices within the state have the opportunity to register to vote.

Offering the opportunity to register – or re-register – is particularly important for veterans who change their address as a result of accepting federal benefits, such as entering a VA nursing home, emergency housing, or rehabilitative care center.

My goal as Secretary of State is to provide voters with a simple and convenient registration process. The NVRA already requires state offices that provide public assistance or services to people with disabilities to offer people a chance to register to vote and assistance in completing the form. It makes sense for federal offices to offer the same opportunity.

Please feel free to contact me, or you may contact Jennie Bretschneider, Assistant Chief Deputy Secretary of State, at (916) 653-7244, if you have questions or need further information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Debra Bowen

Debra Bowen
Secretary of State

DB:elg:lf/jb

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cc:
The Hon. Dianne Feinstein, Chair, Senate Rules and Administration Committee
The Hon. Bob Bennett, Ranking Member, Senate Rules and Administration Committee
The Hon. Daniel Akaka, Chair, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
The Hon. Richard Burr, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
The Hon. Robert A. Brady, Chair, Committee On House Administration
The Hon. Vernon Ehlers, Ranking Member, Committee On House Administration
The Hon. Zoe Lofgren, Chair, Subcommittee on Elections
The Hon. Kevin McCarthy, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Elections
The Hon. Bob Filner, Chair, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
The Hon. Steve Buyer, Ranking Member, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
The Hon. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor of California
Secretary Thomas Johnson, California Department of Veterans Affairs
The Hon. Fabian Nunez, Speaker, California State Assembly
The Hon. Mary Salas, Chair, California State Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee
The Hon. Bill Maze, Vice-Chair, California State Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee
The Hon. Don Perata, President pro Tempore, California State Senate
The Hon. Mark Wyland, Chair, California State Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
The Hon. Gloria Negrete McLeod, Vice-Chair, California State Senate Veterans Affairs Committee