

I thank the gentlelady from California, and I rise in support of the Absentee Ballot TRAC Act. I commend her and Mr. McCarthy for crafting this commonsense measure, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

For the sake of good democracy, we must do all we can to have accessible, reliable, auditable voting. And we must do all we can to remove every reason for voters to believe that the voting system is not working well, to remove any doubt that they might have that votes are not counted as they intended.

Every year, some number of absentee ballots are requested by voters but not received, or delivered to voters but not returned to the election officials. The Election Assistance Commission's 2004 election administration voting survey reported that on average, only 89 percent of absentee ballots requested were returned. The 2006 Election Administration and Voting Survey reported that on average, a quarter of domestic civilian absentee ballots were rejected due to untimely receipt. And according to a survey of military and overseas voting in 2008 conducted by the nonpartisan Overseas Vote Foundation, more than 1 in 5 American voters living overseas, including military personnel, did not receive their ballots on time for them to be counted in the 2008 election.

Every such instance of nonreceipt or nondelivery must be treated as a probable instance of wrongful disenfranchisement because we can assume voters would not have requested the ballots if they did not intend to vote. And that's why I support this commonsense measure. It would reimburse States for establishing programs to track and confirm the receipt of absentee ballots and make available to the individual who cast the ballot information on the receipt of the ballot, and information about whether or not the ballot was counted. This would be done by means of on-line access using an Internet site of the official's office.

I commend this bill to my colleagues, and I thank the gentleman and the gentlelady for proposing it.