

**Solano County Registrar of Voters**  
**Absentee Ballot Instructions**  
**2002-2003 Grand Jury Report**

**I. REASON FOR INVESTIGATION**

The Grand Jury received a complaint that a voter had been denied constitutional voting rights to vote for local candidates and issues.

**II. PROCEDURE**

The Grand Jury:

- Interviewed the Solano County Registrar of Voters
- Reviewed Voter Registration procedures

**III. BACKGROUND:**

1. The complainant (a U.S. citizen) was outside the U.S. on an extended five-month vacation. An absentee ballot was requested, and received, from the Solano County Registrar of Voters with a letter enclosed. The letter stated that the recipient could only vote for Federal offices, not for any State or local office or issues. The complainant cast the absentee ballot per instructions.

2. The Grand Jury asked the Registrar's staff about the rights and limitations for casting an absentee ballot while outside the country. The answer given was "you can vote for all offices if you are registered and voted in the last General Election."

3. The Grand Jury was provided with a document titled "Voting Residency Guidelines for Overseas Citizens." This document defines the procedure for voting and where to find assistance.

4. The Grand Jury then reviewed the "60 Day – Special Absentee Voter" form. The Grand Jury examined all non-military applications for absentee ballots for the last general election.

**IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

*Each finding is referenced to the background paragraph numbers*

**Finding #1** - The citizen was properly registered and had voted in the last General Election. (2)

**Finding #2** – Upon review of the non-military absentee ballot applications it became clear that an error had been made regarding the instruction sent to this voter. (3)

**Recommendation** - The form currently used for non-military absentee ballot applications be modified to include additional question(s) as necessary to eliminate this type of error.

**V. COMMENTS**

The Solano County Registrar's Office appears to be operated in an efficient and open atmosphere. The staff was available to answer questions. When the error was discovered, they were

quick to accept responsibility and look for ways to avoid it happening again. In a subsequent follow-up, the Grand Jury was provided with a copy of the revised application form.

#### Affected Agencies

- Solano County Registrar of Voters
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