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**Prepared testimony of Rear Admiral (ret.) James J. Carey
On behalf of the Pew Center on the States
Before the Interim State Affairs Committee
Of the Texas Senate
July 14, 2010**

Chairman Duncan and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your committee today.

My name is James Carey, and I am a Navy veteran and retired flag officer who has been advocating for improvements in military voting for more than 30 years.

I served as a Commissioner and Vice Chairman of the U. S. Federal Maritime Commission under President Ronald Reagan and as Chairman/CEO under President George H. W. Bush.

In 2002, I established – and currently serve as the national chairman -- of the National Defense Committee (NDC), a grassroots membership organization of war veterans that addresses policy issues, including military voting rights that impact national defense, intelligence, homeland security and veterans.

In 2009, I partnered with the Election Initiatives team at the Pew Center on the States, a division of The Pew Charitable Trusts that conducts research, brings together a wide variety of partners, and analyzes states' experiences to identify what works and what does not to advance nonpartisan, pragmatic state policy solutions to the most pressing problems affecting Americans.

Specifically, I joined the team to help lead Pew's effort – begun in 2007 - to improve the voting process for the millions of Americans serving, working and living abroad.

I was especially proud to have been a part of Pew's campaign to enact the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act, which amended federal law to require states to assist Americans abroad with exercising their right to vote by sending their ballots sooner, transmitting them faster and offering them more opportunities and fewer obstacles to retuning them on time.

Many of the MOVE Act's provisions reflect the recommendations of Pew's research on military voting, which was released in January 2009 as a report entitled *No Time to Vote. No Time to Vote*

found that Texas was one of 25 states and the District of Columbia that did not give military voters enough time to receive, cast and return a ballot in time to be counted.

Consequently, Pew and I are reaching out to Texas and other states with the largest military and overseas populations to ensure not just that the MOVE Act is implemented for federal elections but also that it be extended to protect military and overseas voters in all elections.

Therefore, we respectfully ask the committee to recommend that the Legislature enact the following changes to the Election Code on behalf of Texas' military and overseas voters:

- Require election offices to transmit ballots to military and overseas voters at least 45 days before every federal, state and local election - including primaries, runoffs, and special elections as well as the general;
- Extend the 2008 pilot program for email delivery of blank (not voted) ballots to *all* military and overseas voters upon request;
- Allow the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot, or FWAB, to be accepted for federal, state and local elections. While the state has its own write-in absentee ballot, allowing voters to use the FWAB for all elections would simplify, standardize and streamline the voting process for Texans abroad;
- Permit the FWAB to serve as a ballot request and voted ballot as well as a permanent voter registration in order to give military and overseas voters “one-stop” access to the election process; and
- Follow the MOVE Act's lead and expand these protections to cover *all* military and overseas voters – and in particular Texas military members stationed outside of their county of residence, but in the United States, who still often face challenges in obtaining, casting and returning a ballot in time to be counted.

In 2010, Pew has worked with several states including Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Michigan, Ohio and Arizona to enact legislation to improve the election system for military and overseas voters. We stand ready to assist you in making these recommendations a reality for Texans. We already have a long history of cooperation with the Elections Division of your Secretary of State, and we are confident that they are as eager as you are to see these changes made on behalf of our fellow Americans living, working and serving abroad.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear today and thank you for protecting the right to vote for those who protect us.