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**Secretary of State Jim Condos Statement on Potential
Unprecedented Federal Intrusion in Our Polling Places**

As Vermont's Chief Elections Officer my responsibility is to ensure that our fundamental democratic voting rights are protected.

I recently learned of language included in Section 4012 of H.R.2825, which provides for the reauthorization of the federal Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which would allow armed Secret Service agents to enter polling locations – at the direction of the president.

To say that I am shocked would be a severe understatement.

Title 18 of the U.S. Code makes it a crime for a military or civil officer in the service of the United States to bring or keep their troops “at any place where a general or special election is held,” unless it is necessary to protect against an armed invasion.

I am deeply concerned that anyone would think it reasonable to allow Secret Service agents to intrude upon the citadels of our democracy at the discretion of the president, who may also be a candidate in that election.

Opening the door for the possibility that armed federal agents could be directed by the president to patrol polling places and voting centers is a dangerous and slippery slope, and would upend a history of carefully crafted protections which ensure that presidents cannot weaponize military or civil officers to suppress and intimidate voters at their neighborhood precincts.

This action is more emblematic of a totalitarian government than the democracy that I and other elected officials, including the President and members of Congress, have sworn an oath to protect.

It is imperative that Congress take immediate steps to remove this affront to our democracy from H.R.2825 and recognize that it should never have been included to begin with.

I have joined with 18 other Secretaries of State, both Democrat and Republican, requesting that Senators McConnell and Schumer take immediate steps to rectify this concerning development and remove this harmful proposal.

While it is disconcerting that we find ourselves in this position, it is my hope that our members of Congress will recognize this proposal for the true threat to our democratic process that it is. There is simply too much at stake.

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