



**DEFENSE HUMAN RESOURCES ACTIVITY  
FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**  
4800 MARK CENTER DRIVE, SUITE 03J25-02  
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22350-4000

January 30, 2017

Ms. Lori Augino  
Director of Elections  
Washington Office of the Secretary of State  
P.O. Box 40229  
Olympia, WA 98504-0229

Dear Ms. Augino:

In an effort to provide context and help address the concerns brought to your office's attention regarding the rate of undeliverable ballots sent to Service members stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, I wanted to share some of our current guidance, education efforts, and projects.

First, in an effort to keep military voters as up to date as possible with local election officials, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) prescribes a Department of Defense policy requirement to Unit Voting Assistance Officers for the distribution of Federal Post Card Applications (FPCAs). FVAP encourages and instructs military voters to submit a new and updated FPCA every year to maintain the most accurate information. Submitting a new FPCA will ensure that election offices have their most current address and contact information.

Secondly, the United States Postal Service (USPS) and the Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) took steps in 2014 to modernize military mail systems and now provide a proactive way to encourage military members to update their mailing address with election officials. In the past, MPSA may have had a separate listing of address changes that would result in delays as ballots were sent overseas before being redirected. Now, when standard-sized ballot envelopes are processed through USPS, the integration of MPSA and USPS address-change information will process a ballot for forwarding before transmitting it overseas.

As you know, State and local election officials often use the National Change of Address (NCOA) database to conduct maintenance on lists of registered voters. In the past, the NCOA database excluded overseas/APO and FPO address changes. The new system consolidated all address change information for APO addresses into the overall NCOA list maintenance service — meaning that local election officials can now leverage one source of data for the most current address information registered with either USPS or MPSA. As expected, the overall rate of undeliverable ballots sent to Military Post Offices from election offices in 2016 decreased significantly compared to previous election years.

Additionally, FVAP recently conducted a successful Military Ballot Tracking Pilot Program in partnership with USPS, MPSA, and several election officials for the November 8, 2016 General Election. The pilot program was the first of its kind to provide full tracking of a voter's blank and voted ballot throughout the domestic and overseas military postal systems. It



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is providing valuable data to help us identify areas for improvement including the ability to provide extensive information on where balloting materials are located and if corrective action is necessary (i.e., whether the voter needs to use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot as a backup ballot). While we are still collecting and analyzing the data on the conduct of this pilot, preliminary information is overwhelming positive thus far. Initial findings indicate that materials processed as undeliverable are actually a reflection of MPSA attempting to locate military personnel rather than a systemic problem.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I didn't point out that the State of Washington's rate of undeliverable ballots sent to military personnel remains below the national average, which is indicative of your election officials' reliance on best practices for list maintenance.

Thanks for all you, your staff and colleagues in the Washington Secretary of State's Office do to support military and overseas voters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "David Beirne", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

David Beirne  
Director