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New Research: FVAP Resources Increase Overseas Citizens' Likelihood of Returning Absentee Ballots

Resources help overcome inexperience with the absentee voting process

Alexandria, Va. — New research released by the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) indicates that citizens living outside the United States are more likely to return absentee ballots when they use an FVAP assistance resource. During the 2014 election, inexperienced voters particularly benefitted from the use of FVAP resources; their likelihood to return ballots increased by nearly 50 percent.

FVAP provides resources to citizens covered by the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* to help them overcome barriers they may experience during the absentee voting process. Previous analyses has shown that active duty military personnel who used FVAP resources were significantly more likely to register and vote, but the research had not been extended to the overseas citizen population until now.

"Overseas citizens are an understudied *UOCAVA* population and can be difficult to reach," FVAP Director Matt Boehmer said. "Over the last few years, we've leveraged an innovative technique to survey overseas citizens who voted in 2014, which provided us with important findings to understand more about this population. For those who do choose to participate, it is comforting to know that FVAP's resources have a pronounced impact on a person's likelihood of returning their ballot. We will use these findings to enhance targeted outreach campaigns to help these citizens understand the process and inform them of the tools and resources available to vote from anywhere in the world."

Inexperienced overseas voters are less familiar with the absentee voting process and are generally assimilating into a new environment, creating a greater need for voting assistance resources. The research note provides a review of previous analyses and details the data, methodology and results of the new study.

Key findings from this research:

- FVAP resources were associated with an increased likelihood of returning ballots, particularly among those without previous overseas voting experience. The likelihood of returning ballots increased by almost 50 percent among inexperienced overseas citizens who requested an absentee ballot.



- FVAP.gov was the most commonly utilized resource. All FVAP resources, including FVAP.gov, the online assistant and staff support, were positively associated with returning ballots, consistent with helping users overcome experience barriers to overseas voting.

PROBABILITY OF RETURNING A BALLOT BY EXPERIENCE & ANY FVAP RESOURCE USE

	Inexperienced	Experienced
No Resource Used	19%	29%
Any FVAP Resource Used	28%	38%

For overseas citizens, both the use of FVAP voting assistance resources and prior voting experience are associated with an increased likelihood of returning ballots. FVAP will leverage these findings to explore outreach campaigns targeting overseas citizens likely to benefit the most from these resources, particularly those in countries and demographic groups with low rates of resource usage or high rates of inexperience.

The infographic, executive summary and research note available at https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/ResourceUseResearchNote_20161031.pdf

View the full Overseas Citizen Population Analysis report at <https://www.fvap.gov/info/reports-surveys/overseas-citizen-population-analysis>

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