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FVAP Research: Marital Status Contributes to Voting Behavior Especially for Those Stationed Overseas

Alexandria, Va. — New research recently released by the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) validates initial research findings that military members who are married are more likely to vote than those who are unmarried. The differences in voting rates between married and unmarried active duty military (ADM) are positive and larger for ADM who are stationed overseas than for ADM living in the United States.

Previous research concerning marriage and voting propensity attributes the increased participation to the fact that spouses discuss politics with one another and naturally share information about the voting process. FVAP explored this notion and discusses in its research note the importance of family and friends for ADM to obtain voting information. The note provides a review of the previous research and details the data, methodology and results of the new study.

Key findings from this research:

- The gap between married and unmarried ADM is much larger for overseas ADM; in fact, overseas married ADM are only slightly less likely to vote than domestic married ADM:

AVERAGE PREDICTED VOTING RATES (FOR REGISTERED ADM), BY MARRIAGE AND OVERSEAS STATUS

	Domestic	Overseas
Unmarried ADM	63%	52%
Married ADM	72%	68%

- Overseas married ADM were 10.5 percentage points more likely than overseas unmarried ADM to have received voting information from family and friends, which indicates that spouses are the most likely source of this information.
- Although unmarried ADM do not have access to information from a spouse, they likely do obtain information from other social contacts. Gathering more information about their social networks may assist FVAP in marketing its services to all ADM, especially those who are unmarried.
- The data presents little evidence that spouses influence ADM voting through increased utilization of Department of Defense (DoD)/ FVAP resources. This may indicate that spouses are unaware of these resources, and thus a marketing campaign targeting spouses could positively affect awareness of the absentee voting process and their



likelihood of voting.

Spouses can have a strong direct influence on the ADM's probability of receiving voting information, as well as the probability of voting. This would suggest that information about voting resources provided to spouses may reach the ADM. FVAP is leveraging these research findings to inform its outreach efforts. To increase spouses' awareness of their absentee voting rights under *UOCAVA*, FVAP is ramping up its social media efforts targeting this key population. Digital and social media ads will encourage them to visit the military spouse page at FVAP.gov to learn more. In addition to developing an online marketing campaign targeted at spouses, FVAP coordinated with senior DoD leadership to establish relationships with the Services' respective Family Readiness Programs. FVAP is working directly with the Services' outreach coordinators to share military education and awareness outreach kits on absentee voting at the installation and unit levels.

The research note is available at

https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/2015_FVAP_ResearchNote4_20160105_final.pdf.

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