

# 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress



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# FVAP

FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



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# Executive Summary

This report fulfills the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) requirement for a report following a Presidential election under section 1973ff(b)(6) of title 42 of the United States Code (U.S.C.) and its annual reporting requirement under section 1973ff-4a(b).

During the 2012 general election cycle, FVAP made important strides to improve its processes, programs and tools. As a direct result of the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act amendments to the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), the Department of Defense (DoD) now offers a wide array of voting assistance tools. This is most notable with the finding of a statistically significant relationship between the use of DoD voting assistance resources and a voter's propensity for actually voting and returning an absentee ballot.

## State-Local Cooperation

FVAP awarded more than \$25 million in 35 grants to States and localities between October 2011 and June 2012. The Electronic Absentee Systems for Elections (EASE) research grants explored possible technological improvements for UOCAVA voters.

## Active Duty Military

FVAP completed its statistical analysis of voter registration and participation and found that the active duty military (ADM) rate of registration was slightly higher than that of the citizen voting age population (CVAP). In contrast, the ADM participation rate was slightly lower than that of the CVAP.<sup>1</sup> Overall, ADM registration and participation

1 - In an attempt to compare registration and participation rates, FVAP controlled for age and sex using industry standard statistical methods in order to normalize the active duty military population to be demographically similar to the CVAP. When comparing civilian and military voting rates, it is important to recognize that this adjustment does not capture all of the differences between the populations. Ongoing research shows that the military and civilian populations are significantly dissimilar regarding two additional characteristics, education and mobility. These four characteristics, when combined, may have a more significant influence on voting behavior and would allow for a more direct comparison to the CVAP. FVAP is



remained steady from 2008 to 2012.

- 79% of active duty military members were registered to vote in 2012, versus 77% in 2008.
- 55% of active duty military members participated in the 2012 General Election, versus 53% in 2008.

In terms of evaluating overall approach and effectiveness for the DoD network of voting assistance resources, including the FVAP.gov website, Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices and Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs), FVAP conducted additional analysis to identify the extent to which these resources displayed a positive relationship with a voter's experience:

- Of the active duty members who interacted with one of these resources and received an absentee ballot, 86% voted and returned their absentee ballots.
- Of the active duty members who received an absentee ballot, but never interacted with one of the resources, only 80% voted and returned their ballots.

FVAP verified the statistical significance of this finding and found, for the first time, a positive relationship between DoD activities and the likelihood of an active duty member actually voting and returning his or her absentee ballot.

## **Active Duty Military Spouses**

Military spouses requested ballots at much lower rates but received and returned at higher rates. The higher received and return rates are not surprising since spouses reside in the United States at greater rates and likely vote by "regular" absentee methods through their local election officials. External research consistently shows that marital status is an important predictor of voting participation. People who are married



vote at consistently higher rates than those who are unmarried. FVAP survey data strengthen this point:

- The overall voting participation rate for ADM members was 55% but the voting participation rate for married ADM members was higher at 61%.
- Of unmarried ADM members who received an absentee ballot, 80% completed and returned their ballots; comparatively, 87% of married ADM members completed and returned their ballots.

## Local Election Officials

FVAP surveyed local election officials (LEOs) to better understand the election environment and resulting impact of FVAP program efforts. Due to outstanding challenges associated with survey design and the voluntary effort of FVAP data collection activities, some figures remain unavailable for the UOCAVA population. Key figures on absentee ballot processing include:

- Of the total absentee ballots received from UOCAVA voters, 4% were rejected; and,
- Of the absentee ballots received from Uniformed Services voters, 3% were rejected versus 4% of absentee ballots rejected from overseas civilians.

The primary reason reported for ballot rejection was receipt of the ballot after the statutory election deadline. Of those rejected due to receipt after the deadline:

- 68% of ballots rejected were initially transmitted by mail;
- 20% of ballots rejected were initially transmitted by email; and,
- 3% of ballots rejected were initially sent by fax.

## Recommendations

Based on the supporting activities surrounding the conduct of the 2012 General Election, as well as the execution of its post-election survey, FVAP developed the following key recommendations for program improvement and research:

- **Reduce Obstacles to Active Duty Military Voting Success.** The suite of DoD voting assistance tools available work together to support the ADM voter's ability to participate in the electoral process. As with all U.S. citizens, the decision whether to cast a vote in an election is a personal choice. And while participation may be an indicator, it does not provide a complete picture of FVAP's ability to effectively assist voters or reduce obstacles to voter success. FVAP will undertake several initiatives to improve active duty military voter success.
- **Expand UOCAVA Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives for All Populations.** Survey data indicate FVAP programs were most successful when voter populations were aware of the tools and resources available; however, overall awareness and use was low, especially among spouses of active duty military members. Further, marital status is an important predictor of voting behavior, underscoring the potential value for FVAP to improve outreach to spouses and leverage their influence in engagement and voting assistance activities. FVAP will make several improvements to increase awareness and encourage use of tools across all UOCAVA populations.
- **Enhance Measures of Effectiveness and Participation.** For the first time in its program history, FVAP identified a positive and statistically significant relationship between the use of DoD voting assistance resources and the propensity for members of the military to actually vote and return their absentee ballots. FVAP will conduct further research to isolate factors or resources that are contributing the most to this relationship and how FVAP can build from it. FVAP will focus on several improvements to enable better measurement of program effectiveness and indicators for its annual assessment.

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## Message from the FVAP Acting Director

It is my distinct pleasure to present the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress. In this report, FVAP presents the findings from its post-election surveys and provides an assessment of the supporting activities surrounding the 2012 General Election.

Voting is an individual's most fundamental right. FVAP works to ensure Service members, their families and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to do so — from anywhere in the world. This past year, FVAP established a new standard of innovation and level of activity. Major accomplishments during 2012 include:

- **Developed and implemented a wide array of tools and resources targeted at improving the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voting experience;**
- **Expanded outreach and developed new digital content to reach and be shared among UOCAVA voters; and,**
- **Awarded grants to State and local election officials to research technical solutions for UOCAVA voters.**

Our program continuously strives to improve the UOCAVA voting process and the voting assistance provided to eligible citizens. To further develop our ability to measure program effectiveness, we are working with a Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) to enhance performance goals and indicators for annual assessments of voting assistance resources and activities.

We can always do more. Survey data indicate that voters are satisfied with FVAP voting assistance resources — when they are aware of and use them. We will expand efforts to inform Service members, their families and overseas citizens of the voting resources available to them. FVAP is already preparing for 2014. We are exploring methods to enhance communication and engagement initiatives, and are working closely with the Services, State and election officials and advocacy groups to ensure voting assistance in support of the 2014 elections is even better.

Although voting is an individual's choice and personal responsibility, for those members of the Uniformed Services, their families and overseas citizens who want to vote, FVAP continues to provide voting assistance. We look forward to continuing our work, improving the voting experience for our voters and reporting our efforts to you next year.



*Mr. Matt Boehmer  
Acting Director, FVAP*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew D. Boehmer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



# I. Background

## Section Overview:

This report fulfills the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) requirement for a report following a Presidential election under section 1973ff(b)(6) of title, 42, U.S.C. and its annual reporting requirement under section 1973ff-4a(b).

## The Law and its Requirements

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) (section 1973ff et seq of title 42, U.S.C.) and sections 1566 and 1566a of title 10, U.S.C., provide authority for establishment of voting assistance programs for members of the Uniformed Services, their spouses and dependents, and U.S. citizens residing abroad.

Presidential Executive Order 12642, signed in 1988, names the Secretary of Defense as the Designee for administering UOCAVA. Further, Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1000.04, Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), assigns the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness as the Presidential designee; the responsibilities are carried out by the Director, FVAP. Under these authorities, FVAP provides voter registration and voting information to those eligible to vote in applicable U.S. elections.

In October 2009, UOCAVA was amended by the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act Subtitle H of P.L. 111-84, National Defense Authorization Act Fiscal Year 2010 (NDAA FY10). Among its provisions, the MOVE Act:

- Requires States to transmit ballots at least 45 days before Federal elections;
- Requires States to offer electronic transmission of voting information and blank ballots;
- Expands the use of the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) for all Federal elections;

- Prohibits outdated notarization requirements;
- Requires the Services to establish voting assistance through Service Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices, and authorizes the Secretary of Defense to authorize the Service Secretaries to designate IVA offices as voter registration facilities - under section 7(a)(3)(B)(ii) of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993, P.L. 103-31; and,
- Requires DoD to field a number of online tools for FVAP-prescribed forms.

Section 1973ff(b)(6) of title 42, U.S.C. requires an annual report by the Department of Defense to Congress concerning:

- The effectiveness of FVAP activities carried out under section 1973ff-2b of the above title;
- An assessment of voter registration and participation by absent Uniformed Services voters;
- An assessment of voter registration and participation by overseas citizens not members of the Uniformed Services;
- A description of cooperation between States and the Federal Government in carrying out the requirements of UOCAVA; and,
- A description of the utilization of voter assistance under section 1566a of title 10 U.S.C.



## II. Post-Election Voting Surveys

### Section Overview:

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) completed its statistical analysis of voter registration and participation and found that the active duty military (ADM) rate of registration was slightly higher than that of the citizen voting age population (CVAP). In contrast, the ADM participation rate was slightly lower than that of the CVAP.<sup>2</sup> Overall, active duty military registration and participation remained steady from 2008 to 2012.

To help evaluate overall approach and effectiveness for the DoD network of voting assistance resources, including the FVAP.gov website, Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices and Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs), FVAP conducted additional analysis to examine the relationship between these resources and a voter's experience. FVAP found and verified the statistical significance of a positive relationship between DoD activities and the likelihood of an active duty member actually voting and returning his or her absentee ballot.

In preparation for this report, FVAP surveyed five stakeholder populations following the 2012 General Election. The Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), using industry standards, developed and administered the five surveys of the 1) Active Duty Military, 2) Active Duty Military Spouses, 3) Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs), 4) Department of State Voting Assistance Officers (DoS VAOs) and 5) Local Election Officials (LEOs). The complete tabulations of responses with the

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2 - In an attempt to compare registration and participation rates, FVAP controlled for age and sex using industry standard statistical methods in order to normalize the active duty military population to be demographically similar to the CVAP. When comparing civilian and military voting rates, it is important to recognize that this adjustment does not capture all of the differences between the populations. Ongoing research shows that the military and civilian populations are significantly dissimilar regarding two additional characteristics, education and mobility. These four characteristics, when combined, may have a more significant influence on voting behavior and would allow for a more direct comparison to the CVAP. FVAP is actively researching the most influential factors.



statistical methodology reports for each of the five surveys and the non-response bias study can be found at [www.fvap.gov/reference/reports.html](http://www.fvap.gov/reference/reports.html).

The goals of the surveys are:

1. To determine participation in the electoral process by those covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA);
2. To assess the impact of FVAP's efforts to simplify and ease the process of voting absentee;
3. To evaluate progress made to facilitate absentee voting; and,
4. To identify remaining obstacles to voting by citizens covered by UOCAVA.

This report discusses the resulting analysis for each stakeholder population. To the greatest extent possible, FVAP draws comparisons between the 2012 general election cycle and the 2008 general election cycle as both were Presidential election years which typically experience higher participation as compared to midterm election years. In addition, November 6, 2012, was the first Presidential election since the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act amended UOCAVA. In the absence of relevant 2008 data, 2010 General Election data are used to provide general context to the discussion.

## **The Active Duty Military Population**

Many voting observers, including FVAP, make direct comparisons between active duty military voter registration and participation rates and those of the CVAP. The active duty military is proportionally much more male and a much younger population than the CVAP. Historically, male and younger voters participate at lower rates than female and older voters, which drive down the voter participation rates of the military. In an attempt to compare registration and participation rates in previous reports, FVAP controlled for age and sex using industry standard statistical methods in order to normalize the active duty



military population to be demographically similar to the CVAP. When comparing civilian and military voting rates, it is important to recognize that this adjustment does not capture all of the differences between the populations. Ongoing research with DMDC shows that the military and civilian populations are significantly dissimilar regarding two additional characteristics, education and mobility.<sup>3</sup> These four characteristics, when combined, may have a more significant influence on voting behavior and would allow for a more direct comparison to the CVAP. FVAP is actively researching the most influential factors.

## Active Duty Military Voter Registration Rates

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the breakdown of the voter registration and participation rates for the following populations:

**Active Duty Military (ADM):** The active duty military survey population includes active duty members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard, and members of the Reserve component population in the Active Guard/Reserve (AGR/FTS/AR) or who were activated on November 6, 2012.<sup>4</sup>

**Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP):** Refers to the citizen voting age population, the U.S. Census Bureau's standard baseline measurement used when comparing voting statistics, which consists of native and naturalized U.S. citizens who are 18 years of age or older.<sup>5</sup>

**ADM adjusted to CXP:** ADM population adjusted by age and sex to reflect greater demographic alignment with the CVAP.

Figure 1 shows that the ADM registration rate remained steady from

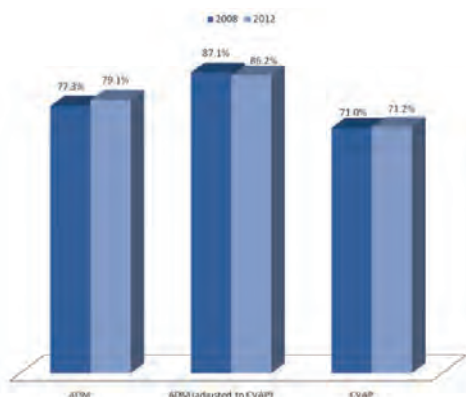
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3 - U.S. Census Bureau. *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2008*. Available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/tables.html>

4 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Questions 15 & 40

5 - U.S. Census Bureau Voting Supplement available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>

**Figure 1: 2008 and 2012 Voter Registration Rates**



2008 to 2012 (comparable Presidential election years).<sup>6</sup> The data show that 79% of ADM were registered to vote in 2012.<sup>7</sup>

## Active Duty Military Voter Participation Rates

Figure 2 compares the population groups based on overall participation rates. Voter participation is traditionally reported simply on voting, regardless of method of voting (e.g., in-person on Election Day, early voting or absentee). Participation rates are reported this way historically since comparable data sources do not adequately isolate voting methods.<sup>8</sup>

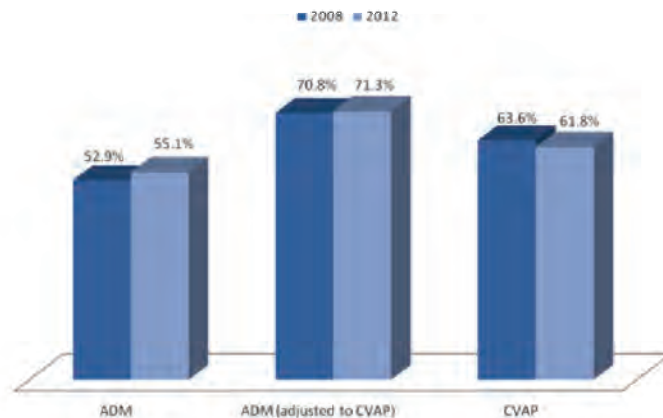
Participation by members of the active duty military remained steady from 2008 to 2012. While the initial participation rates for ADM appear lower than the CVAP, after adjusting for age and sex, the ADM participation rate is much higher. FVAP recognizes the need for further research of additional demographic factors that could provide greater

6 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 15

7 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Questions 15 & 40

8 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 40

**Figure 2: 2008 and 2012 Voter Participation Rates**



equivalency between the ADM and CVAP before drawing conclusions from the adjusted rates; FVAP is actively researching the most influential factors.

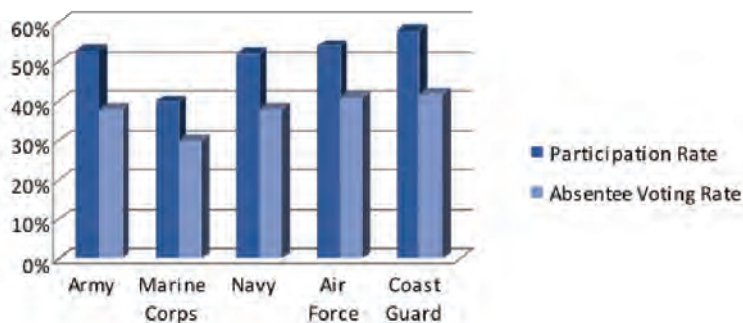
## The Active Duty Military Absentee Voter

Participation rates reported historically by FVAP are based on actual participation regardless of voting method (e.g., in-person on Election Day, early voting or absentee). Because FVAP program activities are intended for absent military members, FVAP narrowed its analysis of ADM surveys to active component members<sup>9</sup> who voted absentee. Figure 3 provides participation and absentee voting rates by Service.

9 - Active component refers to active duty members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard, not including members of the Reserve component population.

10 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Questions 1 & 40; Participation rate includes all methods of voting (e.g., in-person, early or absentee). Absentee voting rate reflects those members who specifically stated they voted absentee during the 2012 General Election.

**Figure 3: 2012 Voting Rates by Service (Active Component Only)<sup>10</sup>**



## **Active Duty Ballot Request, Receipt and Return Rates**

FVAP works to ensure Service members, their families and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to do so successfully. As with all U.S. citizens, the decision whether to cast a vote in an election is a personal choice. Although participation may be an indicator, it does not provide a complete picture of voting assistance effectiveness. FVAP continues to examine whether a UOCAVA voter who applies for an absentee ballot has the same opportunity for success in having his or her ballot accepted and counted as a regular absentee voter.

Because the 2008 and 2012 surveys of the ADM used different methodologies within the survey designs, it is difficult to draw major conclusions when comparing the rate of the ADM requesting, receiving



and returning ballots.<sup>11</sup> However, the survey data reveal a drop in the rate of the ADM receiving their ballots in 2012, which was unexpected.<sup>12</sup>

A natural assumption is that States offering an electronic delivery option to voters, as required by the MOVE Act, would shorten the transit time for delivery and increase the rate of those receiving absentee ballots.

The measured drop in receipt may lead to claims that the postal balloting process was a cause. To test whether the postal balloting process experienced problems, FVAP reconciled its survey findings from the ADM with the Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) data.<sup>13</sup>

FVAP will continue improving awareness and promotion of submitting FPCAs each time a voter's address changes.

MPSA provides mail delivery to members of the ADM, their spouses and dependents and other UOCAVA voters located overseas on military installations or on ships. FVAP compared the number of active component members and their spouses who resided overseas or on board a ship and reported using postal mail to vote absentee versus the number of ballots transmitted by MPSA.

Table 1 demonstrates that mail delivery is not a contributing factor to the decreased absentee ballot receipt rate, as the overall numbers reported from MPSA for postal ballots processed correspond with the reported survey data for ADM and spouses. The

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11 - The ADM questionnaire was restructured in 2012 to allow for data collection that would provide a vastly more comprehensive depiction of the voting experience. The absentee ballot items on the 2008 survey contained additional skip logic that was not present on the 2012 survey, making comparisons between the estimates less clear. The results from the 2012 survey can be subset to the same criteria that was required to see the items in 2008, but this provides a limited look at the absentee ballot process. The 2008 survey item that asks respondents if they requested an absentee ballot in the 2008 election was limited to those who indicated they definitely did not vote in that election. The remaining absentee ballot questions are limited to those that voted absentee or those who definitely did not vote, but requested an absentee ballot.

12 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Questions 17, 24, & 28

13 - Section III of this report provides an expanded description of MPSA and the collection and delivery of overseas military ballots.

14 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Questions 10 & 28

numbers reported fall within a reasonable 10% threshold for two independent data sources. In addition, the survey estimate likely underreports since activated reserve members, dependents and any civilians casting ballots through an MPSA facility are not included as they were not surveyed.

**Table 1: Postal Absentee Rates (Survey) Versus MPSA-Reported Data**

	Postal Ballots Delivered to Voters	Voted Ballots Returned from Voters <sup>14</sup>
MPSA Reported	51,725	89,329
Active Component and Spouse Reported Data*	46,214	83,263

\*Non-spouse dependents and other civilians located on installations/ships are excluded since these groups were not surveyed.

A plausible cause for a reported decline of ADM voters receiving a ballot is a significant change to the Federal Post Card Application's (FPCA)<sup>15</sup> period of eligibility. Prior to the MOVE Act, FPCA users automatically qualified and received an absentee ballot for a period of up to two general election cycles.<sup>16</sup> The MOVE Act revised the minimum period of eligibility for the FPCA to one calendar year.<sup>17</sup> Although a number of States retained a longer period of eligibility, it is possible the reported decrease in the rate of the ADM receiving ballots can be attributed to a disconnect between voter expectations to automatically receive absentee ballots and the actual period of eligibility. States are not required to establish voter notification procedures for UOCAVA voters should their period of eligibility expire. In order to discern if respondents are referring to requests made during the 2012 calendar year or are referencing past activities, further refinement to the FVAP survey instrument is required.

15 - The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) serves a dual role as both a voter registration form and an absentee ballot request form.

16 - Section 704 of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 Public Law 107-252

17 - Section 585 of the of P.L. 111-84, NDAA FY10

FVAP will continue to encourage UOCAVA voters to submit a new FPCA in January of each year and with any change of address to ensure they receive their absentee ballots. Further, per Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1000.04, UVAOs distribute FPCAs, *via* in-hand delivery or electronic means, to all Service members by January 15 of each calendar year and by July 15 of even-numbered years.

## Active Duty Military Spouses

The 2012 General Election was the second time that FVAP surveyed spouses of active duty military members. Military spouses are a UOCAVA-covered population; however, since 94% of military spouses reside in United States,<sup>18</sup> their ability to receive and return absentee ballots in a timely manner is substantially different than that of the ADM.

To further examine the differences between the ADM and military spouses, FVAP compared their respective rates of requesting, receiving and returning an absentee ballot in Table 2.

As Table 2 demonstrates, spouses requested ballots at much lower rates but received and returned at higher rates. The higher received and return rates are not surprising since spouses reside in the United States at greater rates and likely vote by “regular” absentee methods through their local election officials.

External research consistently shows that marital status is an important predictor of voting participation. People who are married vote at consistently higher rates than those who are unmarried.<sup>22</sup> Data from FVAP’s 2012 Post-Election Voting Surveys strengthen this point.

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18 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 7

19 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Questions 17, 24, & 28

20 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of Active Duty Military Spouses, Question 10, 14, & 16

21 - Returned rate is calculated out of those who requested and received absentee ballots or those who automatically received absentee ballots.

22 - Kingston, Paul W., and Steven Finkel. 1987. “Is There a Marriage Gap in Politics?” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 49: 57-64.; Wolfinger, Nicholas H., and Raymond E. Wolfinger. 2008. “Family Structure and Voter Turnout.” *Social Forces*, 86: 1513-1528.

**Table 2: Comparison of Requesting, Receiving and Returning Ballot Rates for ADM and Spouses for 2012**

Absentee Ballots	Active Duty Military <sup>19</sup>	Spouse <sup>20</sup>
Requested	41%	29%
Received	75%	86%
Returned <sup>21</sup>	84%	89%

The overall voting participation rate for ADM members was 55% but the voting participation rate for married ADM members was higher at 61%.<sup>23</sup> Absentee ballot return statistics mirror this trend. Of unmarried members who received an absentee ballot, 80% completed and returned their ballots; comparatively, 87% of married members completed and returned their ballots.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, research shows that married couples tend to have as much as 95% convergence in their voting behavior. That is, if one spouse chooses to vote, the other spouse is likely to also vote; if one spouse does not vote, the other spouse is most likely to also not vote.<sup>25</sup> This underscores the potential value for FVAP to improve outreach to spouses and leverage their influence in engagement and voting assistance activities. Overall results of the 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of Active Duty Military Spouses suggest the military spouse population remains relatively untapped by FVAP.

- Only 10% of spouses visited the FVAP website; when asked for the main reason they did not visit the website, 49% reported they did

23 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Questions 7 & 40

24 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 24 & 28; differences are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

25 - Straits, B. (1990). The social context of voter turnout. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 54, 64-73.

not know they could get such assistance<sup>26</sup> and,

- Spouses reported a low (16%) awareness of their ability to use a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB).<sup>27</sup>

FVAP will target military spouses to improve awareness of FVAP tools and resources.

For those spouses who did use voting assistance resources, satisfaction was high.

- Of spouses who reported they did visit the FVAP website in preparation for the 2012 primaries and General Election:

- o 82% reported they were satisfied with the website;<sup>28</sup>

- o 79% agreed they were able to find what they needed on the FVAP website quickly and easily;<sup>29</sup> and,

- o 78% agreed they were able to find the materials and forms needed to vote on the FVAP website.<sup>30</sup>

The data indicate FVAP programs were most successful when voter populations were aware of the tools and resources available. However, as noted above, a large portion of the military spouse population remains untapped. Each spouse that FVAP reaches provides an additional opportunity to reach the military member, as well. Based on these findings, FVAP intends to target military spouses more directly in future marketing efforts.

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26 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of Active Duty Military Spouses, Questions 40 & 44

27 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of Active Duty Military Spouses, Question 26

28 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of Active Duty Military Spouses; Question 41

29 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of Active Duty Military Spouses; Question 42

30 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of Active Duty Military Spouses; Question 42



## Local Election Officials<sup>31</sup>

FVAP surveyed local election officials (LEOs) to better understand the election environment and resulting impact of FVAP program efforts and also shed more light on the UOCAVA voter's experience. Due to outstanding challenges associated with quantifying and identifying the overseas citizen population, voter registration and participation figures are unavailable for this UOCAVA population. However, some elements of overseas citizen voting behavior can be determined through the LEO survey.

In 2012, FVAP substantially changed its data collection method making comparisons between 2012 and 2008 difficult.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the wide variances in the data reported limit the use of LEO survey data in terms of any statistical relevancies and limit FVAP's ability to infer too many conclusions; all associated findings should be seen as observations only and require additional research and validation.

Key data from the 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs on the use of the FPCA include:

- Of the total number of registered voters in 2012, approximately 1% were covered by UOCAVA;<sup>33</sup>
- An estimated 534,927 FPCAs were received from UOCAVA voters;<sup>34</sup>
- An estimated 278,496 FPCAs were received from Uniformed

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31 - Estimates for the subparts of a question from the LEO Survey will often sum to a value that is not identical to the total estimate for that question. For example, ballots counted and ballots rejected do not always sum perfectly to ballots received. Two main reasons contribute to these differences between totals. First, State and local election officials may have misinterpreted a question or may have incorrectly entered values when responding to the survey. Second, the interrelated nature of the questionnaire, where each question has a logical relationship with several other questions, limits the ability for all logical relationships to be maintained.

32 - See Appendix III: Local Election Official Quantitative Survey Note

33 - 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Questions 2a/1

34 - Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voters are members of the Uniformed Services, their spouses and dependents who are absent from their normal voting residence, and civilians living overseas; 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Question 3a

Services voters;<sup>35</sup>

- An estimated 248,790 FPCAs were received from overseas civilian voters;<sup>36</sup>
- Approximately 4% of all FPCAs were rejected;<sup>37</sup> and,
- Of FPCAs received from Uniformed Services voters, approximately 5% were rejected versus approximately 3% of FPCAs were rejected from overseas civilians.<sup>38</sup>

The FPCA remains the primary means by which the ADM apply for an absentee ballot.<sup>39</sup> The causes of the rejections are unclear. It is possible voters are confused with their overall eligibility for voting absentee. For example, some States may permit “no excuse” absentee voting in which all voters may choose to vote absentee; however, other States may only permit voters to vote absentee when they are away from their home address. For those members of the military who have returned home and can vote locally, submitting an application for an absentee ballot may result in a rejection based on a review of their eligibility. FPCA rejection rates require further research.

Key data from the 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs on absentee ballot processing include:

- Of the total absentee ballots received from UOCAVA voters, 4% were rejected;<sup>40</sup> and,
- Of the absentee ballots received from Uniformed Services voters, 3% were rejected versus 4% of absentee ballots rejected from overseas civilians.<sup>41</sup>

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35 - Uniformed Service voters are members of a Uniformed Service, members of the merchant marine, and spouses or dependents of a member who are qualified to vote.

36 - 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Question 3d

37 - 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Questions 4a/3a

38 - 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Questions 4b, 4c, & 4d

39 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 19

40 - 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Question 11a

41 - 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Questions 11d/Q9d

The primary reason reported for ballot rejection was receipt of the ballot after the statutory election deadline. When isolating a potential correlation between the methods of transmission of the blank ballot and rejection due to receipt after the deadline:

- 68% of ballots rejected were initially transmitted by mail;
- 20% of ballots rejected were initially transmitted by email; and,
- 3% of ballots rejected were transmitted by fax.<sup>42</sup>

The corresponding drop in rejection rates based on the initial method of transmission serves only as a positive indicator for the MOVE Act's requirement of offering UOCAVA voters an electronic means of receiving blank ballots in an attempt to reduce overall transit times. At this time, FVAP is unable to identify any corresponding relationship between the method of transmission and overall rejection rate.

A growing number of States do offer the option of returning a voted ballot electronically. Sixty-eight (68%) percent of UOCAVA voters continued to return their ballots through the postal system, and 26% chose to return their ballots by email with an estimated 10% returning their ballots by fax.<sup>43</sup>

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) remains a viable option of last resort for voters to use when they do not receive their official ballot from their local election official. Key data on the use of the FWAB include:

- Of those ADM who reported not receiving an absentee ballot at all, 25% reported using the FWAB to cast votes for Federal office and State or local offices as permitted under State law;<sup>44</sup>
- Of the estimated 60,001 FWABs received from UOCAVA voters, 74% were counted with a 24% rejection rate;<sup>45</sup>

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42 - 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Questions 12a1, 12a2, & 12a3

43 - 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Questions 10a1, 10a2, & 10a3

44 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 43

45 - 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Questions 15a/14a

- Approximately 8% were rejected because they were received after the absentee ballot receipt deadline; and,
- 6% were rejected because the regular absentee ballot was received and counted (however the FWAB served its purpose as a backup ballot).<sup>46</sup>

LEOs rejected FWABs submitted from Uniformed Services voters at a higher rate versus those submitted by overseas citizens.<sup>47</sup> FVAP needs to research the specific causes of FWAB rejections to understand if the various UOCAVA populations differ in usage and timeliness of submitting FWABs.

High rates for the FWAB are expected given its role as a backup provision. However, this is likely another area where voter confusion is a contributing factor. For example, some States require a potential FWAB user to have submitted an application 30 days prior to the election mirroring the State-prescribed deadline for voter registration. If voters do not fully understand these particular requirements, it may lead to high instances of FWAB rejections. While awareness of the FWAB has increased, FVAP needs to continue increasing voter comprehension of the form's proper usage and adherence to State requirements.

## Statistical Participation Summary Findings

FVAP completed its statistical analysis of voter registration and participation and found that the ADM rate of registration was slightly higher than that of the CVAP. In contrast, the ADM participation rate was slightly lower than that of the CVAP. Overall, ADM registration and participation remained steady from 2008 to 2012.

In terms of evaluating the overall statistical impact of the DoD suite of voting assistance resources (e.g., website, UVAOs and Installation Voter Assistance Offices) on voting participation rates, FVAP

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46 - 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Questions 16 & 17

47 - 2012 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Questions 15b-d/14b-d

conducted an additional analysis of the 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military to identify the extent to which these resources contributed positively to a voter's experience. The most significant finding indicates that of the active duty members who interacted with one of these resources and received an absentee ballot, 86% voted and returned their absentee ballots; whereas for those active duty members who received an absentee ballot, but never interacted with one of the resources, only 80% voted and returned their ballots.

FVAP verified the statistical significance<sup>48</sup> of this finding that demonstrates, for the first time, a positive and statistically significant relationship between DoD activities and the likelihood of an active duty member actually voting and returning his or her absentee ballot.

This is a significant finding for FVAP, the rest of DoD and UOCAVA voters. FVAP will continue researching this finding to isolate the exact relationship and determine how it can inform allocation of resources toward further improvements to FVAP programs.

FVAP will continue its review of survey findings and will release subsequent research supplements as they become available.

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48 - This is now documented as a statistically significant difference at the .01 level of significance (the proportion of those who received DoD assistance and who reported completing their absentee ballot was 6 percentage points higher than those who did not receive DoD assistance and this difference is statistically significant ( $p=.008$ )).

## **III. Collection and Delivery of Ballots for Overseas Uniformed Services Voters**

### **Section Overview:**

The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and DoD Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) facilitate the delivery of election materials between overseas military voters and local election officials. Pursuant to section 1973ff-2a of title 42, U.S.C., those agencies provide expedited mail delivery service for Uniformed Services voters' absentee ballots, which are processed before other classes of mail. The overall average transit of voted ballots from the absentee voter to election offices was 5.6 days — more than a day faster than the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act's (UOCAVA) seven-day requirement. Of the ballots sent by election offices and received at overseas Military Post Offices (MPOs), nearly 15% of ballots were deemed "undeliverable as addressed." This percentage represents a 35% decline from the 2010 election when the rate was nearly 50%.

### **Procedures for Handling Overseas Military Ballots**

Details regarding inbound ballots are described below:

- Inbound blank absentee ballots from local election officials (LEOs) are initially sorted at a USPS International Service Center (ISC) prior to dispatching them to overseas military postal activities.
- Military postal clerks process and deliver ballots through post office

boxes or unit delivery.

- For ballots that cannot be delivered as addressed:
  - o A directory clerk attempts to locate addressees *via* change-of-address cards on file, local personnel management systems or global address listings.
  - o If a new address is found, the absentee ballot is then dispatched and delivered to the current address on file, either overseas or domestic.
  - o If no new address information is found, the absentee ballot is returned to the election official marked “undeliverable as addressed.”

## Ballots Collected and Delivered to Overseas Uniformed Services

Between September 1, 2012, and November 30, 2012,<sup>49</sup> the Military Postal Service (MPS) received 51,725 absentee ballots from local election offices for distribution to overseas military members and a total of 89,329 voted ballots were transmitted back to the U.S. and local election officials using Express Mail Service (Table 3). The difference between the number of ballots received and transmitted back is likely due to the fact that many voters chose to receive their blank ballots electronically, but printed them out and returned them by mail. The overall average transit of voted ballots from the absentee voter to election offices was 5.6 days — more than a day faster than UOCAVA’s seven-day requirement.

MPSA’s post-election report indicates that of the ballots sent by election offices and received at overseas MPOs, nearly 15% of ballots were

<sup>49</sup> - MPSA continues to deliver voted ballots after Election Day; 20 States accept and count ballots from UOCAVA voters after Election Day.

**35%**

decline in undeliverable-as-addressed ballots sent by election officials



**Table 3: 2012 MPSA Military Overseas Absentee Ballot Statistics**

Service	Total Ballots (Sent from LEOs to Overseas Military)	Redirected (Rerouted to correct address)	% Redirected	Returned to Sender (RTS) (Undeliverable)	RTS % of Total Received	Postmarked and Dispatched Ballots From Voters to LEOs
Army	23,404	2,215	9.5%	1,171	5%	36,991
Navy	6,746	586	8.7%	461	7%	16,043
Marines	4,202	391	9.3%	288	7%	5,139
Air Force	17,236	1,366	7.9%	1,013	6%	23,129
Coast Guard	20	8	40%	2	10%	57
DOS/JMPAs	117	26	22.2%	11	9%	7,970
Totals	51,725	4,592	8.9%	2,946	6%	89,329

deemed “undeliverable as addressed.” This percentage represents a 35% decline from the 2010 election when the rate was nearly 50%. A potential contributor to this decline was the MOVE Act’s narrowing of the “automatic ballot request” provision in section 1973ff-3 of title 42, U.S.C., which previously required States to use mailing information from voters’ Federal Post Card Applications (FPCAs) through two general election cycles. A number of States have reduced that to one election cycle or one calendar year, which may have contributed to the decrease in the number of ballots redirected or returned.

Nearly 9% of ballots received by the MPS were redirected to a correct address and 6% were returned to the local election office. The top five States for undeliverable-as-addressed ballots in 2012 were California, Florida, Virginia, New York and Washington. The high number of undeliverable-as-addressed ballots may be directly attributed to extended periods of time of eligibility for the FPCA in which voters automatically receive ballots for elections as all five States have periods

of eligibility for the FPCA ranging from two to eight years.

The additional time for redirecting a ballot increases the likelihood of the voter not receiving a full ballot in a timely manner — resulting in the need for casting a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB). In addition, if a voter returns to his or her residence and attempts to cast a ballot at a local polling place, depending upon State law, the fact that an absentee ballot request is on file may lead to the need for this voter to cast a provisional ballot or experience some delay while voting in person.

Overall, there were fewer undeliverable-as-addressed ballots than in 2010 when States sent a total of 33,130. High undeliverable rates for balloting materials remain an issue of concern for all uniformed and overseas citizen voters. FVAP needs to further research this issue and reconcile it with the need to standardize the period of eligibility of the FPCA to maximize the voting rights of the UOCAVA voter. Both of these issues point to the need for continuing education and awareness on the use of the FPCA, but also the need for voter notification procedures when an FPCA applicant approaches the deadline for their eligibility.

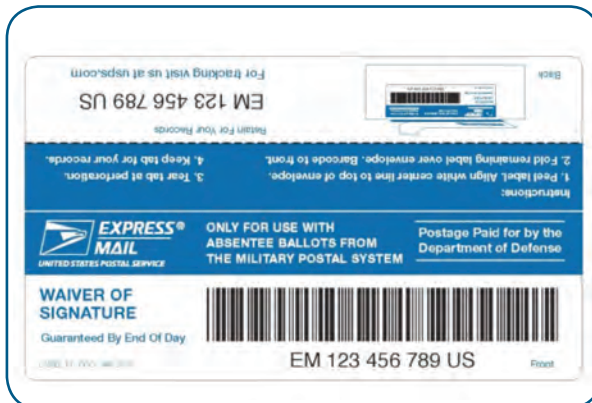
## **Expediting and Tracking Overseas Uniformed Services Ballots**

Section 1973ff-2a of title 42, U.S.C. requires expedited mail delivery service for marked absentee ballots of overseas Uniformed Services personnel. The voted ballots of overseas Service members and their voting-age eligible dependents are processed using the Express Mail Service (EMS) Label 11-DoD, as seen in Figure 4. Upon receipt from the military voter, Military Postal Clerks applied the label to each ballot, ensuring expedited delivery to the local election office. The label provided voters and MPSA the ability to track ballots from acceptance through delivery using scans at the initial intake point, en route, upon arrival at the U.S. International Gateways of New York, San Francisco and Miami, and a final delivery scan conducted by USPS.



Voters were made aware of this process *via* FVAP's voter notification emails sent through the military global network. MPSA also highlighted the Label 11-DoD in its Strategic Postal Voting Action Plan, which provided policy, guidance and clarification to the Services and MPOs to ensure military postal activities were in compliance with voting laws. The Services implementing the guidance included procedures for addressing unique missions and intermittent transportation networks to support absentee voting.

**Figure 4: Label 11-DoD**



*The Label 11-DoD is applied to marked absentee ballots of overseas military, ensuring expedited delivery to local election offices in the U.S.*

## **IV. Federal Voting Assistance Program Activities**

### **Section Overview:**

FVAP's mission is to assist Uniformed Services personnel and overseas citizens to exercise their right to vote; assist the States in complying with relevant Federal laws, and advise them on ways to best comply; and advocate on behalf of the Uniformed Services and overseas voters, identifying impediments to their ability to exercise their right to vote and proposing methods to overcome those impediments.

FVAP strives to ensure each citizen covered under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) is aware of his or her right to vote — and has the tools and resources to successfully do so. FVAP offers a full range of targeted products and services for each unique UOCAVA stakeholder population: Service members and their families, overseas citizens, State and local election officials and military and Department of State (DoS) Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs). This section evaluates these resources and the effectiveness of the program pursuant to section 1973ff-4a of title 42, U.S.C.

### **FVAP Compliance with the MOVE Act**

UOCAVA, as amended by the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act, establishes protections for absent members of the Uniformed Services, their families and U.S. citizens overseas who wish to vote in Federal elections by absentee ballot. Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1000.04 defines the responsibilities of FVAP and provides direction to DoD components in carrying out their responsibilities under UOCAVA. It replaces and consolidates previous issuances and provides the agencies with a single, authoritative source for executing their voting assistance programs.

The MOVE Act amendments to UOCAVA specifically call for improvements of FVAP and place several requirements on State election officials to ensure more timely delivery of voting materials to members of the Uniformed Services and overseas citizens. Though the 2010 General Election was the first election subject to the MOVE Act requirements, the 2012 General Election was the first Presidential election since its passage and the first election cycle in which the MOVE Act requirements applied to all Federal elections.

To implement the FVAP-specific MOVE Act amendments, FVAP:

- Enhanced FVAP.gov by adding online automated tools to guide voters through the process of registering to vote, requesting an absentee ballot and, when necessary, obtaining a backup write-in ballot. The website includes detailed information on absentee voting requirements and links to election information from all 50 States, four territories and the District of Columbia;
- Provided guidance and support to the Military Services for designating Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices;
- Provided guidance and training to State and local election officials to ensure they are aware of the requirements of UOCAVA; and,
- Executed an enhanced voter education and outreach campaign through email messages to the military global network, social media outreach and marketing.

## **UOCAVA Absentee Voting Forms**

Two forms are at the center of the absentee voting process for military and overseas citizens. The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) serves a dual role as both a voter registration form and an absentee ballot request form. The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) acts as a standard back-up ballot for voters who do not receive their requested regular State ballot in time to be completed, returned and counted. Both forms, as mandated by UOCAVA, are prescribed by FVAP to facilitate absentee voting.

During the 2012 election cycle, more than 883,000 FPCAs and 303,000 FWABs were downloaded from FVAP.gov. Additionally, per DoDI 1000.04, Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs) distribute FPCAs, *via* in-hand delivery or electronic means, to all Service members by January 15 of each calendar year and by July 15 of even-numbered years.

Leading into 2012, FVAP updated both forms to reflect the MOVE Act amendments to UOCAVA by eliminating notary requirements and providing the opportunity for voters to rank their preferred blank ballot transmission methods (e.g., mail, email/online or fax). FVAP also conducted a usability study to help make the new FPCA and FWAB more readable and intuitive. In response to some concerns expressed over the classification of overseas citizens and their intent to return, FVAP responded by making the original and revised forms available at FVAP.gov. The FPCA and FWAB are undergoing another revision in preparation for the 2014 election.

Voters can obtain hardcopies of the FPCA and FWAB through UVAOs, Installation Voting Assistance Officers (IVAOs), IVA Offices or by requesting one from FVAP. Form-fillable PDF versions of the forms are available at FVAP.gov and the forms are incorporated in the online automated tools.

## Online Resources

FVAP continues to position FVAP.gov as the central online portal pursuant to UOCAVA by maintaining comprehensive absentee voting information accessible from anywhere in the world. FVAP.gov is a consolidated and comprehensive resource where military and overseas voters can find general and State-specific information on absentee voting rules and deadlines. FVAP is the primary resource for UOCAVA voters and provides timely news, voting reference materials, pertinent reports and briefings and an independent method of executing voting rights.

**85%**

satisfied with online automated assistants\*

\* 'satisfied' includes both 'satisfied' and 'very satisfied' survey responses



## AUTOMATED ASSISTANTS

FVAP provides automated assistants that guide voters through the process of filling out an FPCA or FWAB. The automated tools reflect the individual absentee voting rules for all 50 States, four territories and the District of Columbia, by seamlessly prompting voters to fill out the information required from their State of legal residence. FVAP deployed these online tools permanently on the FVAP.gov website in August 2010. FVAP refined these automated assistants based on the redesign of the FPCA and FWAB forms.

*"This process was easy and fast. Outstanding set up. Thank you." - From an Army Staff Sergeant.*

*"You did a great job with the online tool. Easy, fast, efficient for those of us living abroad. Thank you!" - From an overseas citizen.*

To ensure UOCAVA voters could participate in all primary elections, FVAP also adjusted the FWAB automated tool to accommodate all primary election rules, including Presidential primaries, within each of the States and successfully incorporated redistricting data into the tool. Although required under UOCAVA, FVAP's automated tool stands apart for its full support of the full primary season in contrast to other third-party tools.

Based on 2012 survey data, the online automated tools remain well-received by military voters.<sup>50</sup> Of the Service members who used them in 2012, 30% were 'satisfied' and 55% were 'very satisfied.'<sup>51</sup> The automated tools are an important resource for VAOs, as well. When asked to rank order various forms of voting assistance, both UVAOs and DoS VAOs reported directing voters to FVAP's automated tools as the number one form of voting support they provided.<sup>52</sup> Further, 84% of UVAOs and 89% of DoS VAOs recommended voters to use the online FPCA tool.<sup>53</sup>

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50 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 46

51 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 46

52 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs, Question 22; 2012 Post-Election Survey of DoS VAOs, Question 14

53 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs, Question 35; 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey DoS VAOs, Question 27



## FVAP.GOV WEB AND AUTOMATED TOOL TRAFFIC

FVAP's 2012 post-election survey findings also indicate that military members, their spouses, local election officials (LEOs), UVAOs and DoS VAOs who visited FVAP.gov found the website useful and were satisfied with their experience.<sup>54</sup>

Figure 5: FVAP.gov Satisfaction by User

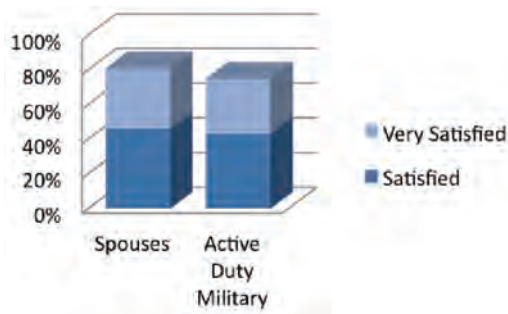
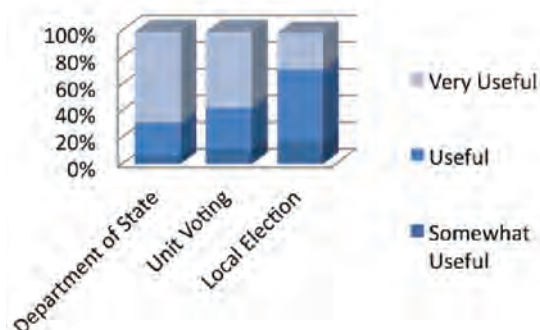


Figure 6: FVAP.gov Usefulness by User



54 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 59; 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of Active Duty Military Spouses, Question 41; 2012 Post-Election Qualitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Question 15; 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs, Question 33; 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of DoS VAOs, Question 25

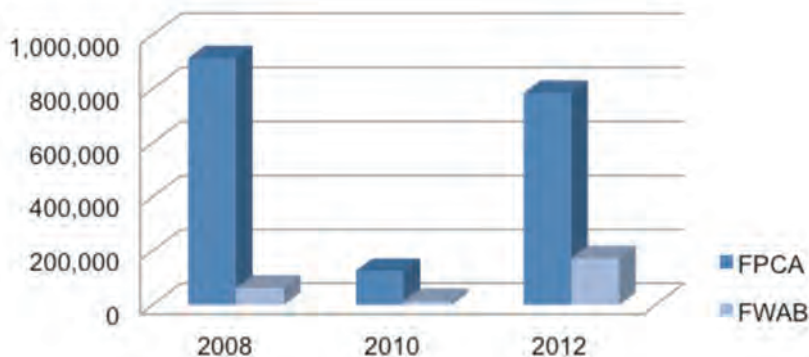
The data collected from use of the online automated tools provide a glimpse of absentee voter activity. Figure 7 illustrates the overall transaction frequencies from users visiting and downloading either the FPCA or FWAB from FVAP.gov.

The frequency of FPCA downloads was 10% lower than the last Presidential election. It is important to note that 2008 was a non-incumbent Presidential election. As such, the 2012 frequency rate fell within the range of expectations as the 2012 election cycle did not include

a two-party contested Presidential Preference Primary, which would drive greater attention to the FPCA earlier in the calendar year. It is also important to note the number of active duty military members serving overseas or away from their residence was lower in 2012 versus 2008.

In contrast to the FPCA, the rate of FWAB downloads in 2012 was much higher, reflecting an increase

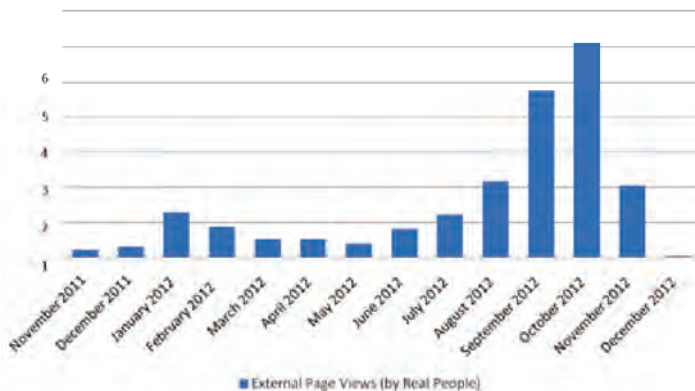
**Figure 7: FPCA & FWAB Transactions**



of 300% from the 2008 election. This increase can be attributed to FVAP's increased communications through the military global network and outreach activities reminding UOCAVA voters to use the FWAB as a back-up ballot to ensure their vote for Federal office was received in time by the local election official.

Other useful data collected focused on the traffic of the audience visiting the FVAP.gov website. Figure 8 reflects the distribution of more than 20 million page visits to the FVAP.gov website during the 2012 calendar year. Of particular note are the levels of activity associated with the Presidential Preference Primary season in spring of 2012 followed by the Fall 2012 Presidential Election. In addition, FVAP

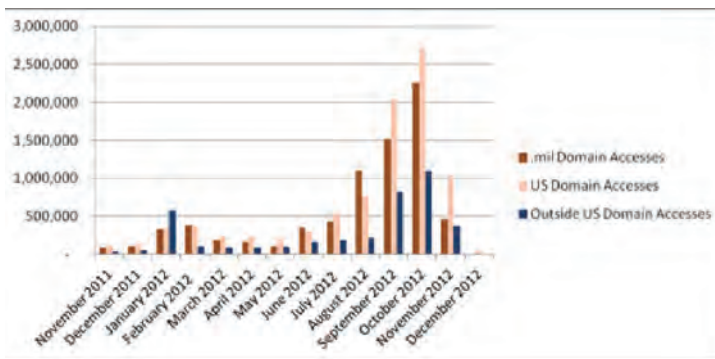
Figure 8: FVAP.gov Web Traffic-By Month



monitored significant increases in web activity that coincided with email notifications to Service members *via* the military global network.

Figure 9 illustrates the predominant traffic to the website originates from users operating within the U.S. as well as those on the .mil domain, which is limited to the Uniformed Services and the Department of Defense; overseas citizens do not frequent FVAP.gov as often as military members.

Figure 9: FVAP.gov Traffic-Grouped by Origin



## FVAP MOBILE SITE

In August 2012, FVAP launched a mobile site for easy access to absentee voting information through smartphones and tablets. In the absence of a computer, this website feature allows for voters with mobile devices to reach the latest news alerts, absentee voting information, State election dates, key contact information and answers to Frequently

Asked Questions. Users can also sign up to receive FVAP's voting alerts *via* email.

## VOTER NOTIFICATION PROGRAMS

Section 1973ff-2b of title 42, U.S.C. requires that FVAP release notifications *via* the military global network 90, 60 and 30 days prior to a regularly scheduled Federal election.

In 2012, FVAP sent a total of 18.4 million emails to military members through the military global network, to include communications sent in January, February and June, then 90, 60, 30, 15, 10 and three days prior to the General Election. Notifications included embedded links to the

FVAP.gov website, making it easy for Service members to take action. Instructions on how to obtain and submit FPCAs in order to register to vote and request absentee ballots for upcoming elections were provided and supplemented through social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, the VAO network established by the Services and the Department of State disseminated FVAP voting information in person and *via* electronic means.

Outreach to military and overseas voters is a continuous focus for FVAP. In order to help ensure voters were aware of their right to vote

Figure 10: FVAP.gov Mobile Browser



and the tools and resources available during the 2012 election cycle, FVAP established a new standard of innovation and level of activity. Key outreach activities included:

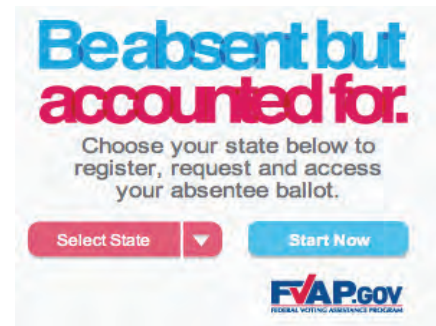
- **Carrier Classic:** FVAP “tipped off” voting assistance efforts for the 2012 election cycle at the Carrier Classic, an NCAA basketball game onboard the *USS Carl Vinson*.
- **“Gallantly Streaming” Video Contest:** FVAP conducted a worldwide public video search for new FVAP Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and how-to videos to help military and overseas citizens vote.
- **Twitter Town Hall:** FVAP, for the first time, conducted a Twitter Town Hall in which the Acting Director responded in real-time to questions regarding the absentee voting process.
- **Voting Emphasis Weeks:** Every two years FVAP, working in coordination with the Services, conducts voting emphasis weeks. In 2012, both the Armed Forces Voters Week/Overseas Citizens Voters Week (June 28 – July 7) and the Absentee Voting Week (September 27 – October 4) resulted in voter awareness events around the world.
- **Senior DoD Leadership Voting Messages:** Senior DoD leadership was engaged in the 2012 election cycle. Voting messages were delivered by the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman.

- **“I Voted” Social Media Sticker:** To promote sharing and posting

Figure 11: “Sticker” for Social Media Sharing



Figure 12: FVAP “Widget”





of FVAP information *via* social media, FVAP created an “I Voted” sticker. FVAP encouraged its social media audience to post and share the “sticker” once they voted absentee.

- **FVAP “Widget”:** FVAP created a “widget” that bloggers could post on their site to quickly send visitors to FVAP.gov.

FVAP also developed and executed a comprehensive communications

**Figure 13: Print Advertisements**



and media engagement plan, including social media, to promote awareness of the resources available at FVAP.gov. FVAP placed print advertisements in *Military Times*, *Stars and Stripes* and *Military Spouse*. To complement these advertisements, FVAP deployed online advertisements using behavioral, contextual and geographic targeting to reach military and overseas voters. FVAP’s online advertising campaign delivered more than 128 million impressions, generating more than 401,000 clicks (an overall click-through rate of 0.31%, in line with industry standards).

Leveraging FVAP’s PSAs and videos on Facebook garnered more

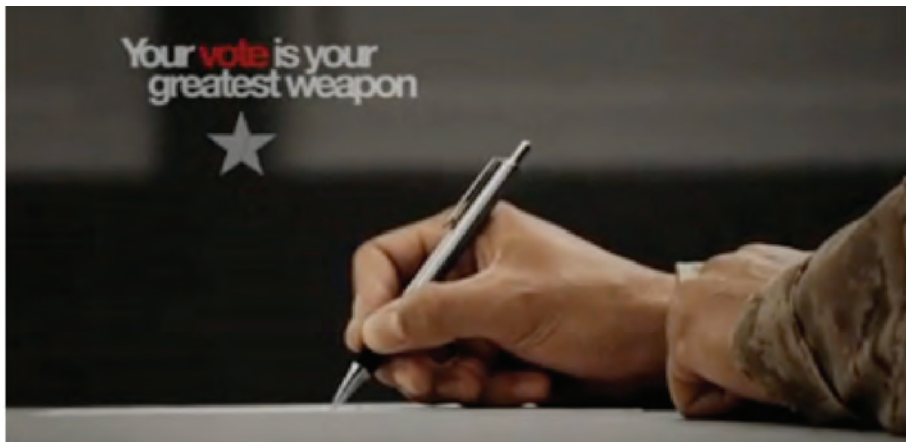
than 14,000 new FVAP Facebook page likes and resulted in an overall 4.26% click-through rate.

The Armed Forces Network (AFN) heavily promoted FVAP PSAs and other voting-related videos during the election cycle:

- Four times per day on six channels;
- Twice a day on its movie channel; and,
- Every 30 minutes on six channels.

As social networking platforms have become ubiquitous, FVAP is

**Figure 14: FVAP “Greatest Weapon” Public Service Announcement**



active on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Social media enables two-way conversations with voters and other stakeholders and offers an effective means to disseminate information quickly to the UOCAVA community. FVAP social media efforts target 18- to 24-year-old members of the military who, like their general population counterparts, have less experience voting and may be less familiar with the process.

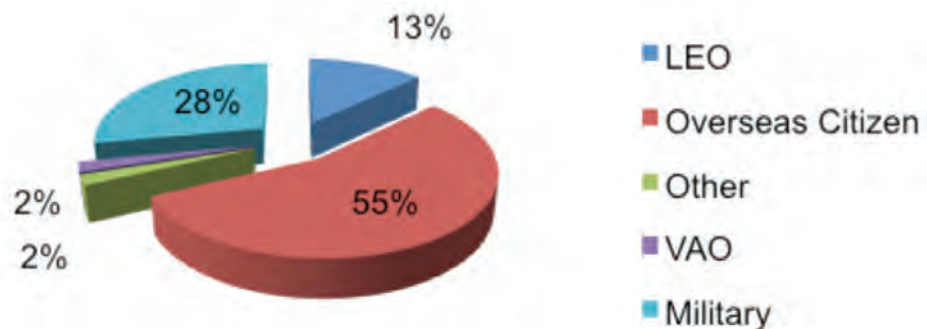


## CALL CENTER ACTIVITIES

For the 2012 General Election, FVAP reestablished a professional call center to handle voting-related questions from military and overseas voters utilizing long-established toll-free numbers. The call center was available Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., Eastern. It operated from March 2012 through December 2012 and handled more than 60,000 requests for assistance in the form of calls, web chats, emails and faxes. From August through November, volume increased significantly, accounting for 64% of the transactions for the year. Through November, Service members and their families accounted for 28% of all transactions while overseas citizens accounted for 55% of transactions (Figure 15).<sup>55</sup> Significant volume was also noted immediately following FVAP's global network email notifications, demonstrating their effectiveness in reaching potential voters. Call center satisfaction surveys conducted throughout the election cycle show that overseas citizens and Service members were satisfied with the service provided.

Full-service voting assistance continues for all Federal special elections in 2013 and into the 2014 election cycle.

**Figure 15: 2012 Call Center Transactions**



## V. Federal and State Cooperation

### Section Overview:

FVAP works with States, Military Services, the Department of State and other Federal agencies to effectively administer the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) on behalf of the Secretary of Defense. Relationships with these entities allow for improvements to the absentee voting process for Uniformed Services personnel and overseas citizens.

Aside from the requirements in UOCAVA, the experience of military and overseas voters and their ability to successfully cast a ballot is largely determined by State law. FVAP works with the States to improve the UOCAVA absentee voting process and provides State and local election officials with the information and tools needed to assist eligible voters.

### State Legislative Initiatives

FVAP continually reviews and tracks both proposed and enacted changes to State military and overseas voting laws and regulations. FVAP also provides suggestions to the States on how their laws and regulations can be improved to ensure access to the electoral process by military and overseas voters. In late 2011, FVAP sent a letter to each State's Chief Election Officer and legislative leaders outlining suggestions for consideration during the 2012 legislative session. In addition, FVAP provides written and oral testimony at State legislative hearings and conferences to educate the lawmakers on trends in military and overseas laws, compliance with Federal laws and the absentee process for military and overseas voters. In 2012, FVAP offered in-person testimony before legislative committees in California, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

Since the passage of the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment



(MOVE) Act amendments to UOCAVA, more than 40 States have enacted new laws related to military and overseas voters. Nine States and the District of Columbia have moved their primary elections to accommodate the MOVE Act's 45-day advance mailing requirement, which is most important to the timely delivery of absentee ballots. Largely, these State laws are aimed at making the absentee voting process easier and less complex for their voters while maintaining the integrity of the process. Common reforms include codifying the 45-day advance mailing MOVE Act requirement timeline into State law to include State elections, mandating acceptance of the back-up Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) for State and local elections and authorization of electronic tools for transmitting ballots and communicating with voters.

FVAP continues to support State adoption of the Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act (UMOVA). Drafted by the Uniform Law Commission in 2010, UMOVA aims to standardize the absentee voting process in Federal, State and local elections by mandating uniform treatment of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and FWAB in all elections. The Council of State Governments, American Bar Association and the Pew Center on the States have endorsed UMOVA as universal adoption would simplify absentee voting for military and overseas voters by providing a single process for voting. As of March 2013, 10 States and the District of Columbia have enacted UMOVA. Additional States will likely consider UMOVA in their 2013 sessions.

## **Voting Assistance Guide**

The Voting Assistance Guide (VAG) is a compilation of State-specific rules, processes, election dates and deadlines to assist military and overseas voters successfully register to vote and cast a ballot. For each election cycle, FVAP produces the VAG for use by Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) and election officials as a desk-reference to State-specific rules and guidelines.

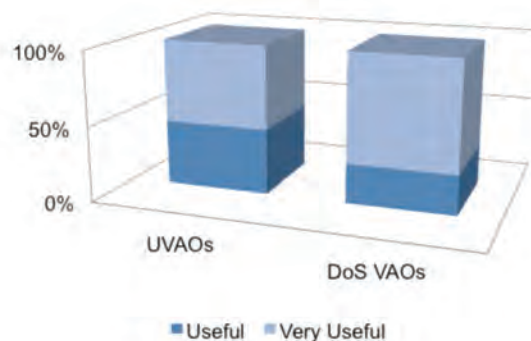
In an effort to reduce cost, FVAP produced the VAG in a limited initial release as well as an online version available at FVAP.gov. As done in previous elections, the online version was updated throughout the

election year as changes occurred. Close to the election, for the first time, an updated, printed version of the VAG was made available. This “on-demand” version of the VAG was updated monthly and VAOs could obtain printed copies by submitting a request to the Government Printing Office (GPO). This new process resulted in a 78% reduction in cost compared to last year. Approximately 140 VAOs utilized this new service.

FVAP staff coordinated with State election officials to ensure the accuracy of the State-by-State information provided in FVAP publications and online resources throughout the election cycle. In 2012, this was particularly difficult as legal challenges to State redistricting plans and other issues caused changes to election dates and many State laws and regulations.

For the 2012 election, Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs) and Department of State Voting Assistance Officers (DoS VAOs) largely thought the VAG was ‘useful’ or ‘very useful.’<sup>56</sup> While the VAG is primarily a tool for VAOs and election officials, 11% of Service members and 5% of military spouses reported referring to the publication for information about registering to vote or requesting an absentee ballot.<sup>57</sup>

**Figure 16: Usefulness of VAG for Voting Assistance Officers**



## FVAP Products and Services for Local Election Officials

Productive and cooperative relationships between FVAP and State and local election officials (LEOs) are essential to FVAP’s ability to accurately

56 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs, Question 25; 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of DoS VAOs, Question 17

57 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 63; 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of Active Duty Military Spouses, Question 45

inform and effectively serve absent military and overseas citizen voters. The products and services targeted to LEOs include the FVAP.gov website,

**Figure 17: Election Official Guided Training**



**84%**

LEOs found FVAP products and services useful

**83%**

LEOs found UOCAVA 101 training useful

\* 'Useful' includes 'useful' and 'very useful' survey responses.

VAG, quick reference guides, the Electronic Transmission Service and interactive online training. To gauge the reach and efficacy of the services and support offered to LEOs, FVAP conducted a qualitative survey of LEOs following the 2012 General Election. Of the LEOs surveyed, 57% described FVAP products and services as 'useful' and 27% described them as 'very useful.'<sup>58</sup>

In June 2011, FVAP launched its interactive online Election Official Guided Training module for both new and seasoned election officials. Dubbed UOCAVA 101, the courseware introduces UOCAVA, its requirements and forms and provides a sense of the challenges that military and overseas voters face along with suggestions on how the election official can further assist the UOCAVA population. Of the LEOs that utilized the online training, 54% found it 'useful' and 29% found it 'very useful.'<sup>59</sup>

The qualitative survey data also indicate that FVAP can still do a better job engaging LEOs to inform them of FVAP products and services. Though all survey respondents reported having used at least one FVAP product or service during the 2012 election cycle, 49%

reported they were not aware FVAP offered online training.<sup>60</sup> Further, when asked what additional outreach would be helpful, 72% of LEO

#### **Increased Recognition of FVAP**

**Tools:** California State officials made FVAP training materials mandatory for their local election officials to ensure an understanding of the UOCAVA process.

58 - 2012 Post-Election Qualitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Question 4

59 - 2012 Post-Election Qualitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Question 25

60 - 2012 Post-Election Qualitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Question 26

respondents answered ‘more information about FVAP assistance services.’<sup>61</sup> FVAP plans to address this through more aggressive promotion and outreach to LEOs informing them of the FVAP products and services available to them.

## **Electronic Absentee Systems for Elections (EASE) Research Grant Program**

FVAP awarded more than \$25 million in 35 grants to States and localities between October 2011 and June 2012. The Electronic Absentee Systems for Elections (EASE) research grants explored possible technological improvements at a time when States and localities had few if any other financial resources available. A map of the EASE research grant recipients is shown in Figure 18.

### **GRANT AUTHORITY**

As the laboratories of innovation in election policy and technology, States and localities are well suited to test different tools and systems to better understand and overcome the obstacles faced by military and overseas voters. Under authority of section 6304 of title 31, U.S.C., FVAP established the EASE research grant program under legislative direction to conduct one or more pilot projects to test the feasibility of new election technology for the benefit of UOCAVA voters. FVAP is able to test a wider range of election technologies more quickly and examine a greater number of solutions through research grants to States and localities than it could through DoD-administered research initiatives.

### **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Grant awardees were selected through a competitive process in which applications were reviewed by a Technical Evaluation Board (TEB). The TEB ranked the grant applications adhering to selection



criteria previously developed by FVAP in consultation with the National Association of State Election Directors (NASED). The TEB rated the proposals against the following criteria in order of priority:

- **Significance:** The proposal addresses critical barriers of voting success faced by UOCAVA voters.
- **Sustainability:** The proposal addresses the overall ability of the project to continue beyond the term of the grant.
- **Impact:** The proposal addresses the extent to which the grant application best serves the largest number of UOCAVA voters.
- **Strategic Approach:** The proposal addresses a sound research approach with a structured hypothesis (or set of hypotheses) and a well-defined and appropriate plan to test the hypothesis or hypotheses.
- **Innovation:** The proposal reflects the potential for discovery or implementation of new technologies in new processes.
- **Scalability:** The proposal assesses the ability of the effort to continue to function when changed in size or scope.
- **Collaborative:** The proposal demonstrates a shared effort from more than one jurisdiction.

## GRANT AWARDS

Examples of funded tools include online voter registration, online blank ballot delivery and 2-D bar codes for ballot duplication to facilitate accurate and quick ballot counting. Awardees were not permitted to use grant funds to develop any system for the electronic return of voted ballots in a live election. Figure 18 details the various system capabilities.



**Figure 18: EASE Grant Awards**

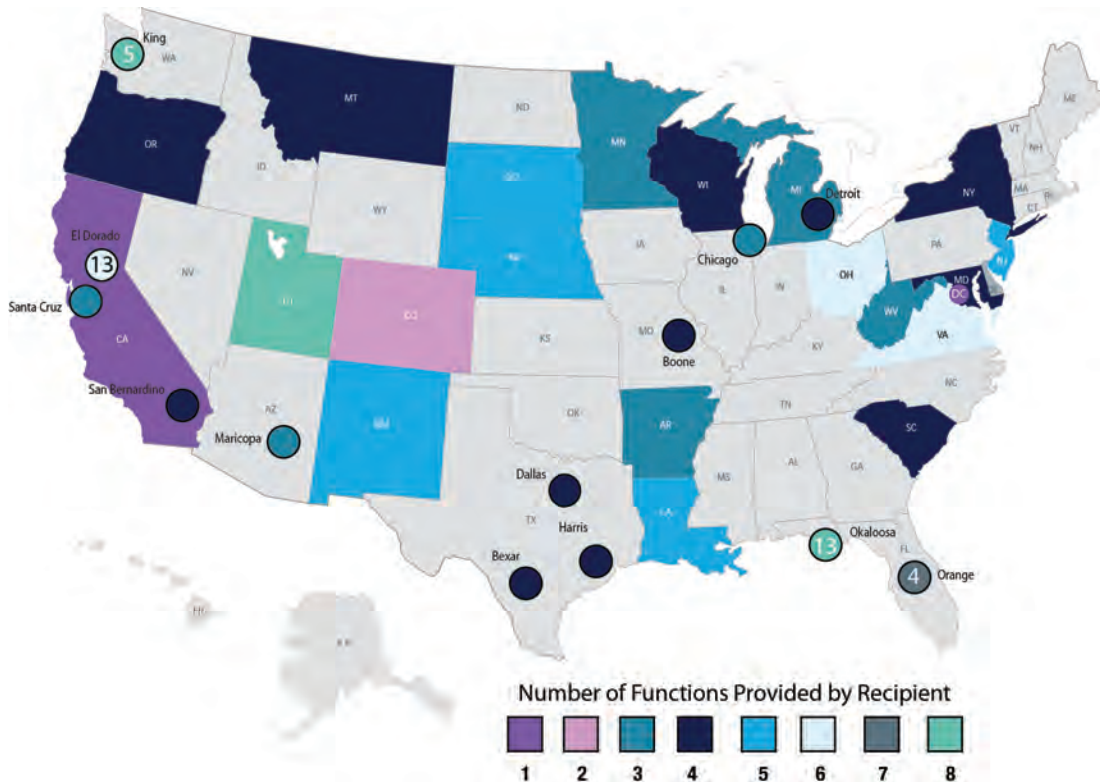


Figure 18 illustrates recipients of the EASE grants:

- A shaded State indicates a statewide grant.
- A shaded circle indicates a local grant.
- South Dakota and Nebraska received a grant as a State consortium.
- County consortiums received grant funds in El Dorado, CA; King, WA; Okaloosa, FL; and Orange, FL.
- The numbers depict the number of participating counties in the consortium.
- The grant-funded systems include tools such as: voter registration, ballot request, blank ballot delivery, instructional brochures, instructional videos, ballot tracking, outreach programs, help systems, mobile kiosks, mobile apps, ballot on demand printers, multilingual ballots, mock elections using mobile apps and dedicated UOCAVA equipment.

## PRELIMINARY RESULTS

A review of the preliminary 2012 post-election data reports indicates some promising prospects for future analysis of effectiveness:

- The Chicago Board of Elections IL 2012 General Election Recap reported that 35% of the military voters who used their online ballot delivery system were 'satisfied' and more than 60% were 'extremely satisfied;' 97% of the military and overseas voters who used the system wanted it to be available again in future elections.
- Military and overseas voters also seem willing to try electronic tools intended to ease the already complicated absentee voting process. In accordance with voters' stated preferences, Bexar County, Texas sent 58% of all UOCAVA blank absentee ballots to voters *via* its grant-funded tool.
- Louisiana and Minnesota State officials reported that the rejection rate for absentee ballots from military and overseas voters was actually lower than the rejection rate for absentee ballots cast by members of the general, domestic population.
- Wisconsin reported that total roundtrip transit time for ballots sent out through its grant-funded electronic tool was almost exactly half the transit time of ballots sent to voters through traditional postal mail services.

*"As a Service member that is away from home over half of the year, this is the perfect medium to retrieve and fill out my election ballots." - From a Service member using Okaloosa's online blank ballot delivery program.*

*"This made voting so easy. As a student studying abroad, I probably wouldn't have voted if the process hadn't been so user-friendly." - From an overseas citizen using King County's online blank ballot delivery program.*

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Grant awardees are required to submit data reports to FVAP following each Federal election in which a grant-funded tool or system is used. Awardees submitted initial reports covering several 2012 primaries and the 2012 General Election in early 2013. FVAP will continue to receive data to gauge the effectiveness of grant-funded electronic tools for the next five years, covering the 2014 and 2016 General Elections. Collecting data for several years will enable FVAP to make well-founded

recommendations about the role of electronic tools in expanding a voter's ability and opportunity to receive, cast and return an absentee ballot and have it counted.

FVAP will conduct a thorough analysis of the 2012 General Election data reports during calendar year 2013. Results will be summarized in FVAP's 2013 Annual Report to Congress. The analysis will focus on indicators of voter success, such as percentage of ballots returned and submitted for counting, and the number and percentage of ballots rejected because they were returned after the State's deadline. In each case, the analysis will determine if there is a statistically significant difference in the experiences of voters who used grant-funded electronic tools versus traditional paper-based systems of absentee voting. In future years, FVAP will update its analyses as more data become available following the 2014 and 2016 elections.

*New Jersey officials credited the expanded use of the FVAP-funded tool with helping thousands of displaced citizens to vote in the wake of Hurricane Sandy.*

## **MOVE Act Waivers and Cooperation with the Department of Justice**

Under UOCAVA, the Department of Justice (DoJ) has the authority to enforce the provisions of the statute, and is the only Federal agency that can take legal action against a State for noncompliance. During the 2012 election cycle, FVAP and the Voting Section of DoJ continued to work cooperatively and coordinate when issues arose related to FVAP's role in administering UOCAVA. As one example of coordination efforts, many consent decrees and court orders obtained by DoJ for violations of the "45-day-prior" requirement included a condition that the States work with FVAP to inform voters of the outcome of litigation. FVAP used its ability to quickly message Service members from a particular State via the military global network to notify them of changes to ballot receipt deadlines and other procedures obtained to assist them in voting.

Since the 2010 Federal General Election, only one application for a waiver of the "45-day-prior" requirement of UOCAVA was submitted to the Presidential Designee. In 2011, the State of New York sought

waivers for the 2012 Primary and General Elections. After consulting with DoJ, the Presidential Designee denied the requests because the State did not meet the requirements for an undue hardship waiver as defined in UOCAVA, and its proposed plan for the elections did not provide sufficient time for absent military and overseas citizens to vote and have their ballots counted. No States submitted waiver requests in 2012. In contrast, 12 waiver applications were submitted in the lead-up to the 2010 General Election; one was withdrawn, six were denied and five were approved.

## **Secretaries of State Trip to Southwest Asia**

Five State Chief Election Officers traveled to Southwest Asia in the run up to the November General Election to observe election preparedness and witness firsthand the unique challenges faced by military personnel and overseas citizens; FVAP hosted a similar trip in 2008. FVAP and Navy staff escorted five Secretaries of State to Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain in early September to meet with troops, VAOs, senior military commanders and U.S. Embassy staff and to visit Military Postal Service Agency facilities. Upon return, the participating Secretaries, from Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan and Nevada, published an independent report on their findings and made a series of recommendations.<sup>62</sup> The full report is available online.

## VI. Military and Department of State Voting Assistance

### Section Overview:

FVAP works closely with the Military Services and the Department of State (DoS) to carry out the requirements of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1000.04 outlines the requirements and procedures the Services and DoS must follow in establishing and maintaining voting assistance programs.

### Military Voting Assistance Programs

Each Military Service has assigned a Service Voting Action Officer (SVAO) to act as the Service's voting program manager. SVAOs provide Installation Voting Assistance Officers (IVAOs), Installation

Figure 19: Service Voting Assistance Program Key Members



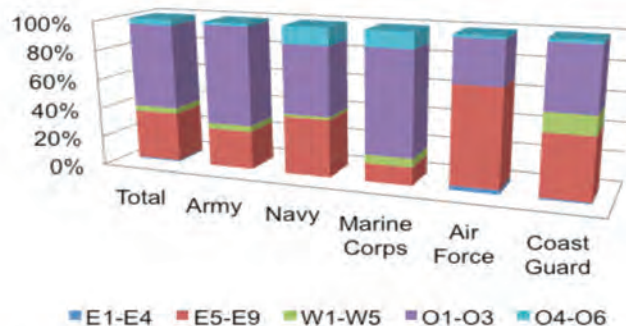


Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices, and Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs) with support and work directly with FVAP to develop programs and policies for the Services' programs. The Services are responsible for execution and compliance and are required to submit annual reports outlining the effectiveness of their programs. Figure 19 depicts a breakdown of the key members in each Service voting assistance program.

## Unit Voting Assistance Officers

UVAOs are designated individuals who provide accurate, non-partisan voting information and assistance to military voters, their spouses and eligible dependents on installations or in units. DoDI 1000.04 prescribes that a UVAO at the O-2/E-7 level or above be designated within each unit of 25 or more permanently assigned members. However, Departmental guidance states that if someone of a lower grade desires the job they may be designated as the UVAO if they have enough authority to get the job done.<sup>63</sup>

**Figure 20: Current Paygrades of UVAOs**



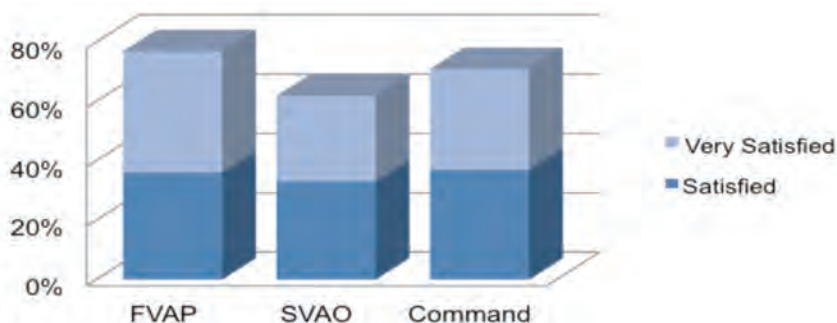
63 - Guidance in Implementing Voting Assistance Programs, Memorandum for Secretaries of the Military Departments, from Dr. Chu (available at [www.fvap.gov/resources/media/chu\\_guidance\\_memo.pdf](http://www.fvap.gov/resources/media/chu_guidance_memo.pdf))



Survey data show that 34% of UVAOs are enlisted members and 66% are officers.<sup>64</sup> Figure 20 illustrates a breakdown of UVAOs by rank and Service.

VAO duties are collateral, or secondary, to the assigned member's full-

**Figure 21: UVAO Satisfaction with Support**



time duties. It is important to provide resources for VAOs so they can quickly and efficiently provide voting assistance. To support VAOs in providing the best possible assistance, FVAP offers in-person, webinar and online training workshops, a VAO-dedicated section at FVAP.gov and voting assistance materials such as posters, banners, forms and the Voting Assistance Guide.

As shown in Figure 21, UVAOs were largely satisfied with the level of support received from FVAP, their SVAO and command.<sup>65</sup>

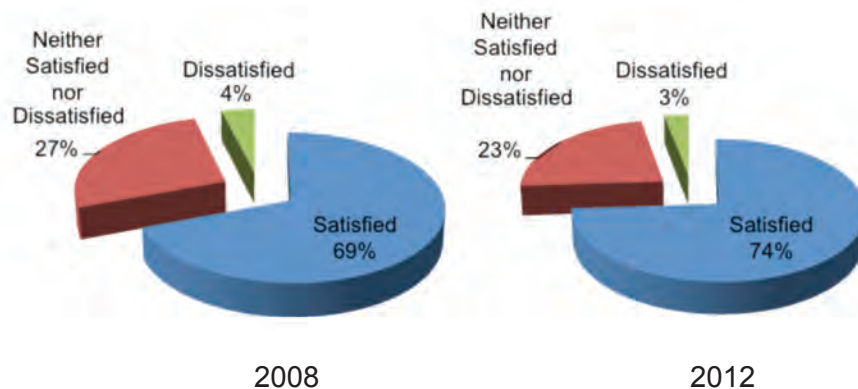
Survey data for 2012 show that 41% of active duty military members received information or assistance from a UVAO and, as depicted in

64 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs, Question 4

65 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs, Question 21

Figure 22,<sup>66</sup> 74% were satisfied with the support they received.<sup>67</sup> For Service members who did not receive assistance from a UVAO, 32%

**Figure 22: Satisfaction with UVAO Voting Assistance**



stated they simply did not need any voting information or assistance.<sup>68</sup>

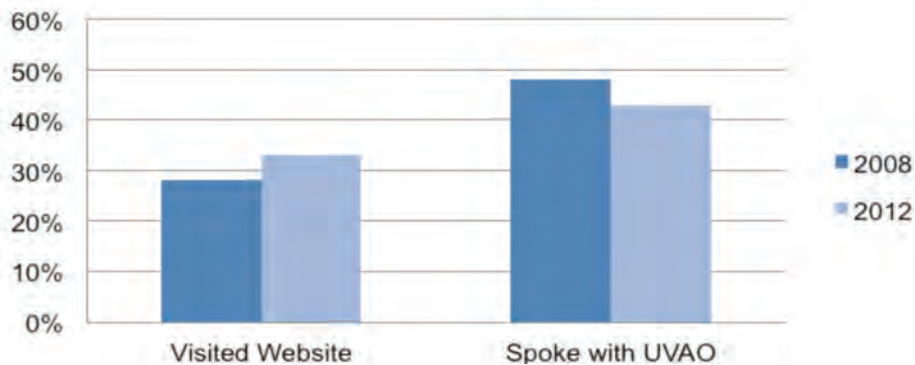
As shown in Figure 23, fewer Service members received voting assistance from UVAOs in 2012 than those who received assistance in 2008; however, it is interesting to note a corresponding increase in the percentage of Service members who visited FVAP.gov in preparation for the 2012 primaries and General Election. This likely speaks to the

66 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Questions 50 & 51. Percent responding are registered active duty military members who answered the question and who received voting information or assistance from a UVAO.

67 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Questions 50 & 51. Percent responding are registered active duty military members who answered the question and who received voting information or assistance from a UVAO.

68 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 53

**Figure 23: Utilization of UVAO and FVAP.gov**



fact that voters do not rely on a single form of voting assistance.

## **Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices**

Under regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Defense, section 1566a of title 10, U.S.C. directs the Military Service Secretaries to designate offices on military installations as IVA Offices. The Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act amendments require these offices to provide information and direct assistance on voter registration and absentee ballot procedures to Uniformed Services members and their family members when a Service member:

- Undergoes a permanent change of duty station (*i.e.*, in-processes at new duty station);
- Deploys overseas for at least six months or returns from such a deployment; or,
- Requests such assistance.

Under that same statute, the Secretary of Defense authorized the

Service Secretaries to designate IVA Offices as voter registration agencies under the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). DoDI 1000.04 enhances Department policy by outlining specific IVA Offices requirements in greater detail than previous guidance.

IVA Offices may leverage UVAOs to meet staffing requirements or directly assist with meeting processing milestones. However, it is the responsibility of the individual in charge of the IVA Office to require that UVAOs are in full compliance with the voter assistance responsibilities, if delegated.

The Department of Defense Inspector General (DoD IG) conducts an annual assessment on compliance with UOCAVA. The DoD IG report released in August 2012 focused on the IVA Office requirement. The

#### Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices

U.S. Army:	59 offices
U.S. Navy:	68 offices
U.S. Marine Corps:	18 offices
U.S. Air Force:	74 offices
U.S. Coast Guard:	15 offices

DoD IG noted it had difficulty contacting the IVA Offices, which generated significant interest from the media and Congress. However, it used an outdated IVA Office contact list found at FVAP.gov. These offices exist on military installations and, as in any military environment, offices change and Service members are reassigned. FVAP addressed the outdated information and, to ensure accurate records for each office, conducted IVA Office outreach *via* weekly calls and emails leading up to the General Election. FVAP conducted biweekly operation information calls from September 2012 to November 2012, serving as a platform for IVA Office staff to share best practices and outreach ideas, answer questions and address concerns. Post-election, FVAP continues to ensure accurate information is provided at FVAP.gov by calling and emailing IVA Offices on a monthly basis.

As of October 2012, 219<sup>69</sup> offices were reported as established by the Services (234 including the U.S. Coast Guard). The most recent DoD IG report, released in April 2013, concurred with the Services' Inspectors General determination that their respective Services are in compliance with Voting Assistance Program statutes and regulations including the IVA Offices provision.

FVAP's 2012 survey data indicate that 21% of active duty members received voting information or assistance from an IVA Office.<sup>70</sup> Of the active duty members who used the IVA Office, 36% were 'satisfied' with the support they received while 35% were 'very satisfied.'<sup>71</sup> The largest percentages of active duty members used the IVA Office to help determine their eligibility to vote, understand the absentee voting process and find information about deadlines.<sup>72</sup>

In April 2013, the DoD Inspector General confirmed IVA Offices are compliant.

When reporting the reasons they did not receive voting assistance from their IVA Office, 36% of active duty members indicated they did not need voting assistance, 18% reported not knowing they could receive assistance from the office and 11% stated they simply were not interested in voting.<sup>73</sup>

## Overall UVAO and IVA Office Effectiveness

With the implementation of IVA Offices for the first time in a Presidential election, the issue of resource efficiency for the UVAO versus the IVA Office can be examined more closely. In the 2012 survey of active duty military personnel, 55% of Service members surveyed stated they did not receive information or assistance from a UVAO or an IVA Office

69 - From August 2012 to October 2012, the number of IVA Offices changed due to the discovery of duplicative counting of offices located on joint bases.

70 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 54

71 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 55

72 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 56

73 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 57

during 2012.<sup>74</sup> Of these individuals, 20% did seek assistance directly from the FVAP.gov website.<sup>75</sup> This demonstrates that members of the military use all of the resources available to them whether it is through the FVAP.gov website, an IVA Office or their UVAO.

In addition, of the 45% of military who did receive information or assistance from a UVAO or an IVA Office in 2012:<sup>76</sup>

- 8% received information or assistance from an IVA Office only;
- 39% also visited the FVAP.gov website in preparation for the 2012 primaries and General Election;<sup>77</sup>
- 40% received information or assistance from both a UVAO and IVA Office; and,
- 52% received information or assistance from a UVAO only.

**71%**

Service members satisfied with  
IVA Office support\*

\*'satisfied' includes both 'satisfied' and 'very satisfied'  
survey responses

These findings point to the continued importance of the UVAOs in their respective Service as a direct and available resource to each active duty military voter and highlight the complementary service areas of these resources.

In terms of evaluating overall approach of the DoD network of voting assistance resources, including the FVAP.gov website, IVA Offices and UVAOs, FVAP conducted an additional analysis of the 2012 Post-Election Survey of the Active Duty Military to identify the extent to which these resources positively contributed to a voter's

experience.

Of the active duty members who interacted with one of these resources and received a ballot, 86% voted and returned their ballots; whereas for those voters who received a ballot, but never interacted with one

74 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Questions 50 & 54

75 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 58

76 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Questions 50 & 54

77 - 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the Active Duty Military, Question 58



of the resources, only 80% of those voted and returned their ballots. A subsequent analysis conducted by the Defense Manpower Data Center found a statistically significant relationship with these findings. This means that FVAP, for the first time, is able to document a positive relationship between the use of DoD voting assistance resources and a voter's likelihood of actually voting and returning a ballot. FVAP will continue to examine the nature of this relationship, but this remains the clearest indicator of not only FVAP program effectiveness, but also overall effectiveness for DoD efforts.

The DoD IG recommended in its April 2013 report that FVAP enhance performance goals and indicators for annual assessment of DoD voting assistance activities to enable measurement of program effectiveness *via* coordination with and guidance to the Military Services. FVAP concurs with the recommendation and agrees the collection of metrics to measure effectiveness, although already in existence, can be improved. FVAP is working with a Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) to help define new metrics and refine those currently collected.

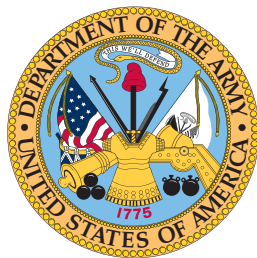
## **Voting Assistance Training**

To assist the Services with DoDI 1000.04 requirements, FVAP provides in-person and webinar training, self-paced courses, handbooks and document templates for all personnel providing voting assistance. The training provides the Services with UVAO and "IVA Office in a box" turnkey courses. FVAP hosts all training materials on FVAP.gov. In 2012, FVAP staff conducted assistance visits and provided in-person IVA Office training at 43 installations. Worldwide, 83 workshops were conducted for VAOs.

FVAP continues to host monthly conference calls and semi-annual face-to-face meetings with SVAOs to share best practices, identify challenges and provide guidance.

## Service Assessment of Voting Assistance Programs

UOCAVA requires each Military Service to assess its voting assistance program and provide reports on Service activities. Highlights from these reports, to include data on utilization of voter registration activities, are provided below. FVAP is working with an FFRDC to enhance metrics and will provide further guidance to the Services regarding voting assistance program performance goals and indicators of effectiveness.



**Army:** The Army faced challenges implementing IVA Offices due to the lack of funding; funding has been approved for Fiscal Year 2014. The Army recommends continuing FVAP-based online training to support IVA Offices. Weekly information emails to UVAOs and social media remained the most effective ways to distribute voting information to all members of the Army. Additionally, The

Adjutant General of the Army was available to respond to high visibility media issues to promote FVAP's messaging. The Army IVAOs and UVAOs distributed 221,400 Federal Post Card Applications (FPCAs), 41,000 Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots (FWABs) and answered more than 600,000 general voting inquiries. The program had more than 7,830 assigned and trained UVAOs. Armed Forces Voters Week and Absentee Voters Week were supported at installations by passing out voting information at high-traffic areas. Installations in Korea distributed voting information during the American Idol World Tour.



**Navy:** The Navy designated IVA Offices as required; however, challenges were noted due to the changing requirements throughout the election cycle, such as requiring voicemails to be set up and returning calls within a specific period of time. Command support of the Navy's voting program was demonstrated through the three NAVADMINs, flag-level and senior enlisted leader newsletters and emails. The combination of installation and unit

distribution of voting materials provided the most efficient and cost-effective method of disseminating materials. Voting materials were also available for VAOs from the Navy Logistics Library, free of charge. The Navy did not experience challenges with the delivery of forms to their Service members and will continue to share electronic versions of the forms with voters to reduce cost and errors in completing the forms.



**Marine Corps:** The Marine Corps staffed 18 IVA Offices manned with uniformed personnel assigned additional duties as an IVA Officer. It found the largest challenge to be maintaining current contact information when a staff member has a permanent change of station (PCS). The creation of electronic training was greatly appreciated by Marines stationed outside of the contiguous U.S. For calendar year 2012, nearly 70,000 FPCAs and FWABs were distributed by Marine Corps VAOs. The majority of form requests were for FPCAs due to routine change of address. The Marine Corps hosted an email campaign to all USMC personnel (military and civilian) January 2-5, 2012, informing them to update their information with local election officials. Moving forward, the Marine Corps will implement creative ways to be more proactive while engaging dependents, use FVAP.gov for information and send monthly emails to Service members with voter information to increase awareness. The Marine Corps continues to stock hardcopy FPCAs and FWABs because of the deployable nature of its Service. Additionally, Recruit Depots and Officer Candidate Schools will continue to require paper versions of forms due to the groups' lack of access to computers.



**Air Force:** IVA Offices were designated at 74 locations. Many Air Force offices were able to set up in areas such as the Airman & Family Readiness Center that attracts both military and civilians (especially family members). Challenges were found in ensuring Service members knew where to find the IVA Office, especially for geographically separated units. Further, because not all IVA

Offices are located with the IVAO's office, manning the IVA Offices was difficult. FVAP workshops were well-received and beneficial. IVAOs recommend providing more hands-on training and more sessions specific to the IVAO role. The Air Force executed well-organized methods to provide access to military voters and their families, to include: one-on-one service by the IVA Office and UVAO personnel, Public Affairs involvement and outreach activities at exchanges, cafeterias and other base-sponsored events.



**Coast Guard:** The Coast Guard chose 15 commands to host IVA Offices. These offices were manned by uniformed personnel assigned additional duties as an IVA Officer. VAOs took advantage of FVAP's in-person and online training courses. The online programs were proven valuable due to the unique geographical dispersion of Coast Guard units. All FPCA and

FWAB applications submitted were processed in accordance with UOCAVA and no issues were identified.

In the future, Service reports on voting assistance activities will reflect standardized content as prescribed by the FVAP Director.

**Table 4: Voting Assistance Provided by the Services (\*Metrics provided by the Services)**

	Service Members Assisted	Family Members Assisted	Civilians / Contractors Assisted	Total
Jan - Dec 2012	1,160,723	58,875	76,353	1,295,951

## Department of State Voting Assistance Program

Similar to UVAOs, DoS VAOs are mandated by UOCAVA to assist overseas citizens seeking absentee voting information. DoS administers its program through 240 U.S. embassies and consulates around the world.

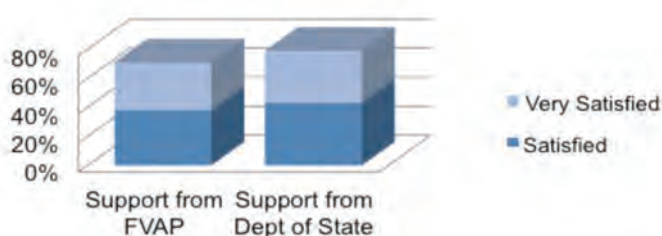


DoS provided extensive guidance on the absentee voting process, voter outreach and voter assistance to U.S. consular officers at U.S. embassies and consulates. It partnered with FVAP to host 22 workshops at embassies and consulates, hosted two conference calls for consular officers to discuss questions and answers on voting outreach and assistance and conducted a Twitter town hall to answer questions about absentee voting from abroad. DoS issued guidance on collaborating with private U.S. citizens groups and non-partisan political organizations, and provided recommendations for hosting successful voter outreach events.

U.S. embassy and consulate websites shared absentee voting information on their homepages and many U.S. Ambassadors created outreach videos on the importance of absentee voting which were displayed on their homepages and social media outlets. Many of these videos can also be seen on the FVAP Facebook page.

As depicted in Figure 24, during 2012, DoS VAOs were largely satisfied with the support they received from FVAP and DoS.<sup>78</sup>

Figure 24: DoS VAO Satisfaction with Support





## VII. Conclusions

### Section Overview:

Voter registration and participation rates for active duty military members remained steady from 2008 to 2012. Due to outstanding challenges associated with quantifying and identifying the overseas citizen population, voter registration and participation figures are unavailable for this Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) group. Although FVAP made important strides in the full scope of resources it now makes available to its stakeholders, much work remains to improve awareness of the multitude of resources available to UOCAVA voters.

Three themes emerged from overall program activities and survey findings that FVAP will take for action in the coming year: reduce obstacles to active duty military voting success, expand UOCAVA voter awareness and outreach initiatives for all populations and enhance measures of effectiveness and participation.

### Reduce Obstacles to Active Duty Military Voting Success

From developing and implementing a wide array of tools and resources to leveraging its network of Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) across the world, FVAP's presence as a voting assistance resource has never been as robust. The myriad of tools now available from FVAP reflects positively on the requirements of the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act amendments to UOCAVA. Whether a military member uses the FVAP website, speaks with a Unit Voting Assistance Officer (UVAO) or visits an Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Office, the resources work together to support the military voter's ability to participate in the electoral process. As with all U.S. citizens, the decision whether to cast a vote in an election is a personal choice. And while participation may be an indicator, it does not provide a complete picture of FVAP's ability to effectively assist voters or reduce obstacles to voter success. Based on the 2012 election, FVAP will undertake the



following activities to improve active duty military voter success:

- Work with local election officials to develop best practices to solicit address confirmations and notify UOCAVA voters of their eligibility status;
- Research technological improvements to improve mail processing through the United States Postal Service (USPS) and the Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA);
- Examine the effect of the establishment of a single point of contact in States for distribution and receipt of UOCAVA election materials; and,
- Further analyze the effect of electronic blank ballot delivery.

Collectively, these initiatives should directly support an active duty military member's ability to successfully receive, cast and have his or her ballot counted.

## **Expand UOCAVA Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives for All Populations**

In 2012, FVAP initiated new activities and enhanced previous efforts to assist UOCAVA voters, VAOs and State and local election officials. While many were successful and well received by those who used them, overall awareness and use was low, especially among spouses of active duty military members. In addition, marital status is an important predictor of voting behavior, underscoring the potential value for FVAP to improve outreach to spouses and leverage their influence in FVAP's education and awareness efforts. FVAP will focus on the following improvements:

- Increase awareness and encourage usage of its tools with innovative promotion and improved outreach across all stakeholder groups;
- Refine marketing and voter awareness campaigns to further stress



the use of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) with each change of address;

- Research the specific causes of Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) rejections to understand if the various UOCAVA populations differ in usage and timeliness of submission and adjust its marketing approach accordingly; and,
- Develop informational and training materials to improve voter comprehension of FPCA and FWAB usage and the varying State requirements.

These targeted improvements to FVAP's communications and outreach activities will fully support the 2014 General Election program efforts and should enhance not only resource utilization, but also reduce the rate of rejections for the FWAB.

## **Enhance Measures of Effectiveness and Participation**

For the first time in its program history, FVAP identified a positive statistically significant relationship between the use of DoD voting assistance resources and the propensity for members of the military to actually vote and return their absentee ballots. FVAP will conduct further research to isolate factors that are contributing the most to this relationship and how FVAP can build from it. This finding is an important first step in FVAP's ability to refine data collection efforts and support its ongoing ability to report program effectiveness. FVAP will also work to improve the following aspects to enable better measurement of program effectiveness:

- Identify the full range of demographic factors that should be accounted for when comparing registration and participation rates to ensure a better level of comparison between the active duty military and the citizen voting age population (CVAP);
- Standardize all survey design efforts to improve trending and comparative analyses between similar election cycles;

- Consolidate FVAP's Local Election Official Quantitative Voting Survey with the United States Election Assistance Commission to improve data quality; and,
- Develop a standardized set of performance metrics for FVAP to document internal effectiveness and support future Congressional reporting requirements.

In addition, FVAP will further enhance performance goals and indicators for its annual assessment of DoD voting assistance resources and activities to enable better measurement of program effectiveness *via* coordination with and guidance to the Military Services as key stakeholders.



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**for**



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