



2013 Annual Report to Congress

On the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)

Effectiveness of Activities and Utilization of Procedures

Send your vote home.

This report fulfills the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) requirement under section 1973ff-4a(b) under title 42 of the United States Code (USC). The estimated cost of report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$12,000 in Fiscal Years 2013 - 2014. This includes \$200 in expenses and \$12,000 in DoD labor. Generated on 2014Feb11 RefID: 2-A4D8725



FVAP.gov
FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM





Executive Summary

Assessment of FVAP Activities

In 2013, the Department of Defense, through the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), undertook a number of initiatives to reduce obstacles to active duty military voting success, expand Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voter awareness and outreach initiatives, and enhance measures of effectiveness and participation. In 2013, FVAP and the Department created a robust information portal, implemented greater voter assistance capabilities, and commenced work to increase the efficiency of military mail delivery with the establishment of the Military Postal Automated Redirection System.

In preparation for the 2014 primary and general elections, FVAP worked to empower UOCAVA voters to successfully cast an absentee ballot by: updating the Voting Assistance Guide; redesigning the FVAP.gov website for a customized user experience; and increasing awareness through an aggressive marketing campaign. The prescribed forms were also updated following usability and content feedback received from stakeholders.

Similarly, FVAP worked with those who assist UOCAVA voters to ensure they have the tools and resources necessary to do their jobs. FVAP provided in-person and online training for military and Department of State Voting Assistance Officers world-wide. Election officials also received training, as well as research grant funding to explore the use of a single State point of contact for UOCAVA voters and blank ballot delivery systems.

Coordination did not end with voters and those that help them. State election official quantitative surveys were unified and standardized with the United States Election Assistance Commission. Additionally, a Federally Funded Research and Development Center was brought on to provide a third party assessment toward FVAP's future strategic focus and further enhance FVAP's metric collection by researching the most appropriate methods for evaluating voter behavior and trends, and gathering insight on how to measure voting assistance effectiveness from customers and stakeholders.

Assessment of Voter Registration and Participation

To provide an assessment of voter registration and participation by absent Service members and overseas voters who are not members of the Uniformed Services, FVAP gathered information



from the States on participation in special elections for Federal office in 2013.

Two special elections for vacancies in the U.S. Senate were held in 2013: New Jersey and Massachusetts. Massachusetts UOCAVA voters returned ballots at a much higher rate than those in other States. This may be attributable to the Massachusetts requirement for yearly ballot request submission and therefore a recently updated address list.

Six special elections for vacancies in the House of Representatives were held in 2013 with overall low voter turnout rates; this was also true for UOCAVA voters.

Federal and State Cooperation

Because UOCAVA voters face a unique set of challenges due to location and mobility, FVAP works directly with the States to reduce obstacles to the absentee voting process. To this end, FVAP facilitated Electronic Absentee System for Elections (EASE) research grants to provide funds to State and local governments to explore methods to overcome barriers UOCAVA voters face. This report covers the first year of what will generally be five-year terms.

Preliminary findings based on State research data include:

- A trend towards voter preference to receive blank absentee ballots through online systems
- Absentee ballots sent to UOCAVA voters via ballot delivery tools were voted and returned nearly 13 days sooner than those ballots sent via postal mail (and in some cases arrived earlier than domestic non-UOCAVA absentee voters)
- A lower percentage of ballots returned from UOCAVA-eligible voters were rejected compared to general population absentee voters
- The percentage of returned UOCAVA ballots that are ultimately counted—that is, not rejected—jumped dramatically from 73.5% in the 2008 General Election to 97.8% in the 2012 General Election

Military Voting Assistance Programs

The Military Services continued to provide voting assistance in 2013 to support the special elections that occurred. This assistance came via Voting Assistance Officers at the installation and unit levels, Installation Voter Assistance Offices and online resources such as FVAP.gov. Metrics on the voting assistance activities provided by the Services will be updated and posted at FVAP.gov in early 2014.



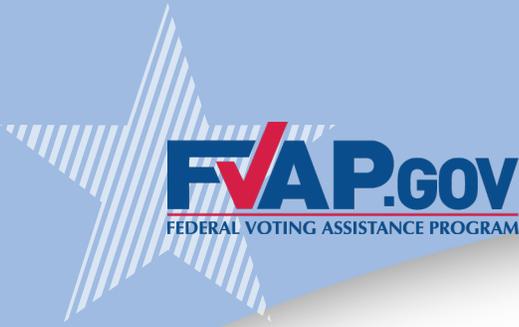


Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....2
Message from the FVAP Director.....5
Assessment of FVAP Activities.....6
Reducing Obstacles to Active Duty Military Voting Success.....6
Expanding UOCAVA Voter Awareness, Outreach Initiatives for All Populations.....11
Enhancing Measures of Effectiveness and Participation.....12
Assessment of Voter Registration and Participation.....14
Voter Participation by UOCAVA Citizens in Special General Elections.....15
Federal Election Activity.....17
Federal and State Cooperation.....18
Electronic Absentee System for Elections (EASE) Research Grants.....18
Military Voting Assistance Programs.....25

Figures

Figure 1 – FVAP.gov Site Visits by Month.....9
Figure 2 – Ballots Returned by Group.....14
Figure 3 – Voter Turnout.....16
Figure 4 – Special Election Participation.....17
Figure 5 – Maryland Blank Ballot Delivery.....20
Figure 6 – Average Transit Time.....20
Figure 7 – Montana Transit Time by Days.....21
Figure 8 – Return Rate.....21
Figure 9 – FWAB and Return Rate.....22
Figure 10 – Minnesota Rejection Rates.....22
Figure 11 – Rejection Rates due to Late Return.....23
Figure 12 – Military Voting Assistance Metrics.....26



Message from the FVAP Director

Everyone pays attention to Federal elections during even-numbered years; especially during Presidential years. So much attention is focused on these regularly scheduled elections that often people forget that elections occur all the time, including during odd-numbered years. The Federal elections occurring during odd-numbered years are not planned nor are they universal. Yet these elections represent what makes our democracy strong: the peaceful continuation of government by those elected to serve in government.



For the Federal elections held last year, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) worked continuously to ensure voters covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act had the information and assistance they needed to successfully vote absentee. So while 2013 was a less visible year in terms of Federal elections occurring, it was nonetheless a very busy year where FVAP cared for the elections that did occur, and prepared for the coming Federal elections in 2014. In this Annual Report to Congress, FVAP addresses the major activities including revamping the FVAP.gov website to improve its overall usability, expanding the interactive training provided to Installation Voter Assistance Offices and Voting Assistance Officers and redesigning the Voting Assistance Guide to better accommodate those providing assistance to voters.

Significant among our accomplishments was the revision and publication of the Federal Post Card Application and the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot. The significance of this accomplishment to me was not in their revision and publication but in how the revision and publication were accomplished. The staff was intentionally inclusive and worked hard to listen to the various stakeholder voices and perspectives, incorporating suggestions where possible, but equally important, providing explanation where not possible. The end result has been much improved forms that will better serve our constituency, the military and overseas voter.

We hope to continue this theme of collaboration throughout the 2014 election and beyond. 2013 was a good year, yet there is still much to do. I look forward to the challenges and the accomplishments and know that together, in partnership with the dedicated election community, we can do great things for our voters.

Matthew D. Boel



Assessment of FVAP Activities

As Congress and the courts have repeatedly affirmed, voting is a citizen's fundamental right. Recognizing that military and overseas voters face unique challenges when participating in elections, Congress enacted a set of protections to make voting in Federal elections easier and more accessible. These protections are set forth in the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA).

In fulfilling the Department of Defense's responsibilities under the law, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) is committed to two voting assistance tenets: promoting awareness of the right to vote, and eliminating barriers for those who choose to exercise that right. While FVAP made great strides in 2013 to improve processes, programs and tools, there is still work to be done. In its 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP recommended three areas for action to improve its effectiveness:

1. Reduce obstacles to active duty military voting success
2. Expand UOCAVA voter awareness and outreach initiatives for all populations
3. Enhance measures of effectiveness and participation

During 2013, using lessons learned from 2012 to further explore how to reduce obstacles, FVAP established mechanisms to expand awareness and enhance measures of effectiveness. This section examines FVAP's progress on these initiatives. It should be noted since there was not a General Election for Federal office in 2013, more time was spent planning and advancing recommendations for the 2014 and 2016 election cycles.

Reducing Obstacles to Active Duty Military Voting Success

As detailed in the 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress, a number of initiatives were identified as directly supporting an active duty member's ability to successfully receive, cast and have his or her ballot counted; however the decision whether to cast a vote in an election is a personal choice.

Updating Forms

In 2013, FVAP optimized its prescribed absentee voting forms, the Federal Post Card Application



SF-76 (FPCA) and Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot SF-186 (FWAB), to improve clarity and usability. Based on a usability study and feedback received through the Federal Register review process and overseas citizens groups, the revised forms simplify instructions for all voters and clarify the classification selection for activated National Guard members on State orders and U.S. citizens who have never resided in the United States. The signature block's size on the FPCA was increased to enhance local election officials' ability to read the voter's signature. Updated hardcopies of the FPCA, FWAB and assistance materials became available in late 2013.

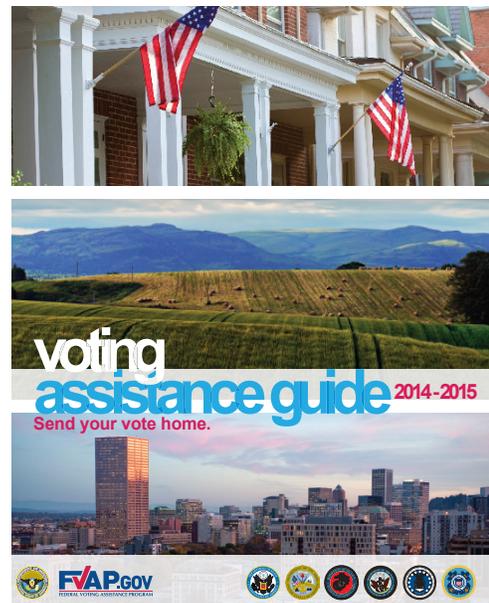
Training Voting Assistance Officers

Ensuring that Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) understand their responsibilities in carrying out the law and State-specific rules and deadlines is critical to voter success. As such, FVAP provided in-person training for Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) at military installations and embassies worldwide, and began updating online training for VAOs. The training provides the VAOs with everything they need to know in order to assist UOCAVA voters.

So far this election cycle, FVAP conducted in-person training for more than 2,600 VAOs worldwide. One way of measuring the efficacy of this training is via self-assessments. Following the training, VAOs complete an evaluation to gauge the training's effectiveness. During post-training evaluations the VAOs were asked to rate themselves on how knowledgeable they were in regard to completing their responsibilities. The sliding scale went from 1 (unknowledgeable) to 5 (very knowledgeable). The average self-assessment went from 2.4 before the training, to 4.6 after the training, showing a drastic improvement in competency and confidence. When asked how prepared the VAOs felt to complete their voting assistance duties following the training, the average response was 4.4.

Redesigning the Voting Assistance Guide

FVAP publishes the Voting Assistance Guide (Guide) for use by military and Department of State VAOs, as well as overseas citizens and State and local election officials. The Guide, published every two years, was redesigned with user-friendliness in mind for 2014-2015. New State-specific information call-out boxes highlight essential information up-front, answering questions voters frequently ask about the absentee voting process. FVAP continues to distribute its Guide in multiple formats to accommodate the various



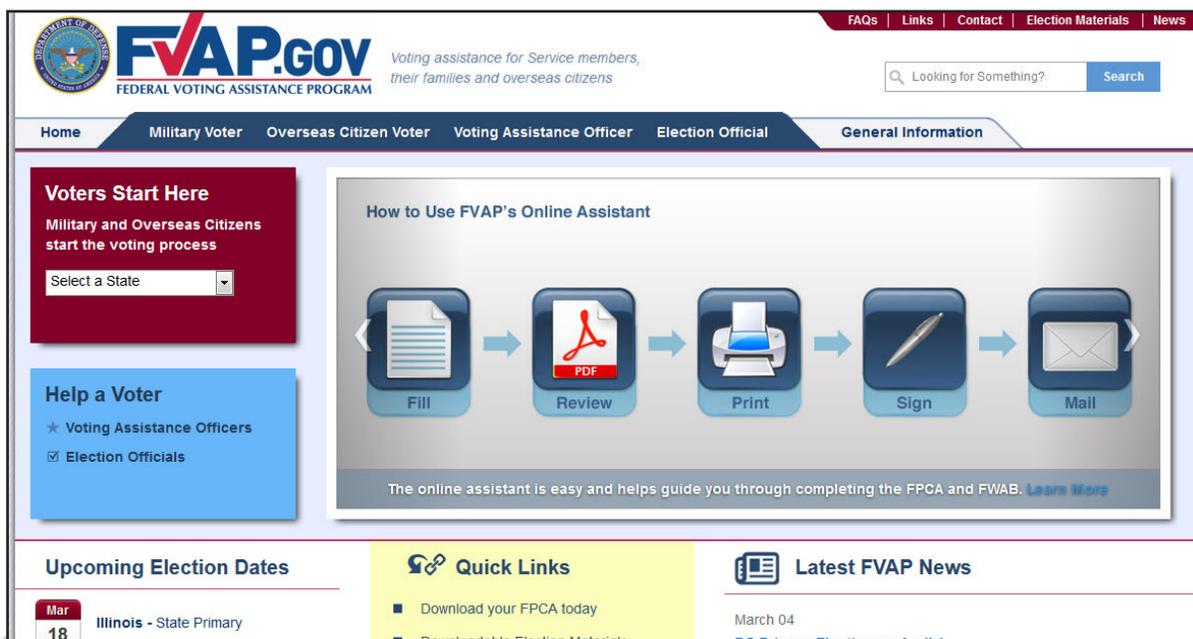


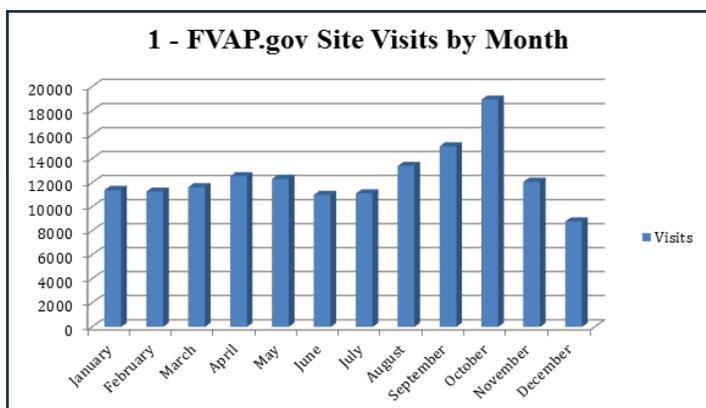
conditions of its VAOs. Whether it is in hardcopy format, through the FVAP website, or available CD format, this material is a resource available across a wide spectrum of locations ranging from domestic Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) offices, to ships at sea and Forward Operating Bases as well as embassies and consulates around the world.

Should there be significant changes to voting laws following publication of the book, such as occurred in 2012 when Texas moved the date of its primary election, users can view current information online at FVAP.gov.

Reorganizing the FVAP.gov Website

The FVAP.gov website was reorganized to make it easier for Service members and their families, overseas citizens, election officials and VAOs to use. Each group's role in the absentee voting process has been specifically addressed. The online assistants at FVAP.gov guide absentee voters through the process of completing an FPCA or FWAB and produce a print-ready copy for signature and return to the local election office. These online assistants help ensure the user fully completes the forms, and eliminate many potential errors. An example of the website's use is that during calendar year 2013-a year with no regularly scheduled Federal elections-the FPCA was downloaded 4,990 times, and the FWAB 507 times. The site also offers training modules for VAOs and election officials and State-specific information for a personalized experience. Figure 1 shows a count of people visiting the site, by month, during 2013.





Working with Local Election Officials

In 2013, FVAP worked closely with State and local election officials during the FPCA and FWAB forms redesign process and publication of the Voting Assistance Guide. These projects not only ensure the information FVAP provides via its website and printed materials accurately reflect current State

requirements, but also provides FVAP the opportunity to work with election officials to make them aware of their responsibilities under Federal law.

In an effort to serve those who support UOCAVA voters, FVAP met with election officials at conferences conducted by State and local officials to discuss current procedures and trends, as well as identify how FVAP can improve its communication with voters. FVAP updated its election official training resulting in an improved module that provides a more in-depth background on UOCAVA and the States' roles under the law.

Coordinating Military Postal Updates

Due to the nature of their jobs, military members are an extremely mobile population. Upon every deployment, change of duty station and return back home, the local election official runs the risk of mailing important election materials to an outdated address. To combat this, the Department of Defense is working to modernize military mail systems, and provide a proactive way to encourage Service members to update their mailing address with their local election officials.

MILITARY POSTAL AUTOMATED REDIRECTION SYSTEM (MILITARY PARS)

- The cycle time to request and return an absentee ballot may serve as a hindrance to voting absentee successfully. The Department, with the Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) as the lead, is coordinating with the Department of State and the United States Postal Service (USPS) to modernize military mail delivery. The system, known as Military PARS, will redirect undeliverable-as-addressed election materials to military and diplomatic addresses in the same manner as civilian mail. This will occur at the first processing point stateside — rather than at a distant, overseas processing center.



- This modernization will drastically improve the transit time required to receive a blank ballot, and provide the voter with every opportunity to submit the ballot in a timely fashion. MPSA estimates that the system will reduce redirect transit time by a range of 7 to 30 days. Military PARS began the process in 2013; it is on track for the scheduled completion date in October 2014 and will be fully established as States begin mailing ballots for the 2016 election cycle.

PROACTIVE ADDRESS UPDATES

- In 2013 FVAP began developing a tool to prompt proactive address change messages to Service members each time they process an address-changing event online. Every time a voter initiates an address change within this system, known as milConnect, the system will provide reminder information and a link to FVAP.gov to complete a new Federal Post Card Application for submission to their local election official. This update is on track for its scheduled completion in summer 2014.



Examining Electronic Blank Ballot Delivery and Single Point of Contact

In 2013, FVAP facilitated awards totaling \$10.5 million in grant funding to 11 States and localities to explore improvements to the UOCAVA voting process. The second round of Effective Absentee System for Elections (EASE) research grants focus on two specific areas: online blank ballot delivery tools and single point of contact for the transmission of voters' election materials to State election offices. The single point of contact concept comes from the Congressional recommendation in the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) that States adopt such a system. These research efforts will study the effect of centralizing the responsibility of sending and receiving election materials to and from military and overseas voters as well as further evaluate the effect of blank ballot delivery on the voter success rate.

These grants are in the first year of what are generally five-year terms. Additional information on this research grant program will become available in following reports, and throughout the remaining term at FVAP.gov.

Expanding UOCAVA Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives for All Populations

Increasing Awareness, Refining Marketing Campaigns and Developing Training Materials

As discussed in FVAP's 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress, although overall awareness of our tools and resources is low, voters are more likely to return their ballots when they do use a voting assistance resource. In using a multi-faceted approach to increasing awareness of the available tools, FVAP hopes to ensure every UOCAVA voter has information and resources they need to vote – from anywhere in the world.

FVAP used 2013 as a building year to develop branded information, such as brochures, wallet cards, the Voting Assistance Guide, FVAP.gov website, fact sheets and posters as part of FVAP's 2014 election preparation efforts. This suite of informational materials brands FVAP as a trusted resource for absentee voting assistance for the United States military and overseas citizens, as well as a professional representative of the Department of Defense. Each piece of collateral (such as wallet cards, fact sheets, posters and brochures) can be used as a stand-alone product, or can be paired with other pieces to create a comprehensive toolkit for use by VAOs, election officials and informal partners. The materials will be used to increase awareness, educate voters on the absentee voting process, detail information regarding proper use of the FPCA and FWAB and explain the importance of completing an updated FPCA with each change of address. FVAP expects these materials to benefit both seasoned and first-time voters.

Along with materials, FVAP began the process of creating video and print Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to provide direct-to-voter information on the UOCAVA absentee voting process. These PSAs will be tailored to military Service members, their families and overseas citizens. The PSAs will be disbursed to a wide range of media outlets to include social media and other online sources, and will be available in summer 2014.





FVAP also began updating online training for Voting Assistance Officers and local election officials to improve comprehension and usage of the FPCA and FWAB. FVAP is further researching topics to cover in direct-to-voter training videos to be hosted at FVAP.gov. Development of these direct-to-voter training videos is planned to start in 2014.



Initiating Research on Absentee Ballot and FWAB Rejection Rates

In late 2013, FVAP entered into a cooperative agreement with the Council of State Governments in part to facilitate discussions with State and local election officials to assess rejection rates of FWABs as well as regular absentee ballots. Once this assessment is complete, FVAP will be able to incorporate the findings into actionable guidance for voters and election officials alike. As an interim measure, FVAP created a FWAB fact sheet for voters to help address common issues that may lead to the rejection of the form.

Enhancing Measures of Effectiveness and Participation

In its 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP identified a positive statistically significant relationship between the use of voting assistance resources and the propensity for members of the military to actually vote and return their absentee ballots. FVAP anticipates releasing additional research on this finding in the summer of 2014.

Developing Standardized Metrics

In 2013, FVAP worked with a Federally Funded Research & Development Center (FFRDC) to

further enhance FVAP metric collection, research the most appropriate methods for evaluating voter behavior and trends, and gather insight on how to measure voting assistance effectiveness. The results from this FFRDC effort are expected in December 2014.

Consolidating Survey Efforts

In the 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP recommended that it consolidate the Local Election Official Quantitative Voting Survey with the United States Election Assistance Commission's (EAC) survey to improve data quality. FVAP worked closely with the EAC to establish a joint survey effort for 2014 to reduce the burden on State and local election officials for reporting post-election data. In 2013, the EAC and FVAP entered into a Memorandum of Understanding that enables both agencies to meet their core requirements and reduce the overall burden on election officials. This effort completes a process begun when FVAP, the EAC and the National Association of State Election Directors agreed in 2011 to work toward a single survey instrument.

Identifying Demographic Factors

In 2013, FVAP continued working to 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 citizen voting age population (CVAP). FVAP anticipates release of the subsequent research into these demographic factors by the summer of 2014. Once identified, these factors would lead to a more accurate comparison, and a better overall understanding of the implications of absentee voting.

Standardizing Survey Design

In order to compare data across similar election cycles, FVAP is continuing its work to standardize survey methodologies. FVAP has initiated its survey planning for these groups for the 2014 General Election.

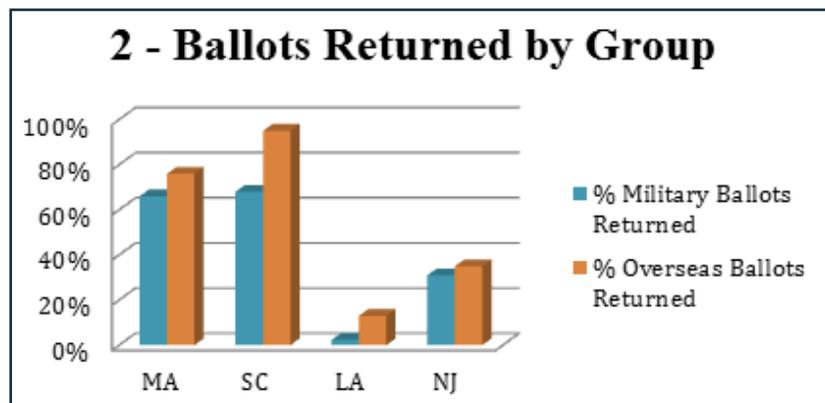
FVAP is engaged in research with members of the Uniformed Services to better understand their absentee voting experiences during the 2012 election to further identify administrative or attitudinal behaviors that may affect a UOCAVA citizen's success. Results from this research will be used to refine the 2014 FVAP survey program as part of a continuous effort to improve FVAP's ability to report on, and improve, the UOCAVA voting experience.



Assessment of Voter Registration and Participation

To provide an assessment of voter registration and participation by absent Uniformed Service members, and overseas voters who are not members of the Uniformed Services, FVAP gathered information on special election participation in 2013.

Seven special elections for Federal office were held in 2013. For elections where an FVAP research grant system was used, there is additional information on the participation by UOCAVA voters. Figure 2 shows the number of military and overseas ballots returned by those States with grant-funded systems.



Two special elections for U.S. Senate were held in 2013:

1) Massachusetts: Special General Election for U.S. Senate; June 25, 2013 to fill seat vacated by the resignation of Senator John Kerry.

- Of the 840 UOCAVA ballots transmitted, 636 were returned and 634 were accepted. Of the total 840 ballots transmitted 804 went to overseas citizens and 36 went to Service members. Massachusetts requires that voters submit a new FPCA annually. This active request may account for the high percentage of overseas and military ballots returned compared to other States.

2) New Jersey: Special General Election for U.S. Senate; October 16, 2013 to fill the vacant seat of the late Senator Frank Lautenberg.

- Of the 3,751 ballots transmitted, 1,280 were returned and 1,206 were accepted. Of the total 3,751 ballots transmitted 2,576 were sent to overseas citizens and 1,175 went to Service members.

Six special elections for House of Representatives were held in 2013:

1) South Carolina: Special Election for Congressional District 1; May 7, 2013 to fill the seat vacated by the resignation of U.S. Representative Tim Scott.

- South Carolina experienced a 104 percent return rate for the 74 UOCAVA ballots transmitted. This may be attributed to additional UOCAVA citizens completing forms apart from those transmitted by the State. For example, a voter can download the form at FVAP.gov or cast a ballot using the FWAB.

2) Louisiana: Special Primary Election for Congressional District 5; October 19, 2013 to fill the seat vacated by the resignation of U.S. Representative Rodney Alexander.

- Louisiana had 6 percent participation for UOCAVA citizens, and a 19 percent total turnout.

3) Illinois*: Special Election for Congressional District 2; April 9, 2013 to fill the seat vacated by the resignation of Representative Jesse Jackson, Jr.

4) Massachusetts*: Special General Election for Representative in Congressional District 5; December 10, 2013 to fill the seat vacated by the resignation of Democratic Congressman Ed Markey.

5) Missouri*: Special Election for Congressional District 8; June 4, 2013 to fill the seat vacated by the resignation of Representative Jo Ann Emerson.

6) Alabama*: Special Election for Congressional District 1; September 24, 2013 to fill the seat vacated by the resignation of Representative Jo Bonner.

States marked with a * did not have grant-funded systems, so additional details are not provided.

Voter Participation by UOCAVA Citizens in Special General Elections¹

Figure 3 shows how UOCAVA participation compared to the total voting population.² UOCAVA participation was generally higher than the average for all voters. South Carolina reflects a 104% UOCAVA voter turnout rate and it should be noted that this may reflect the

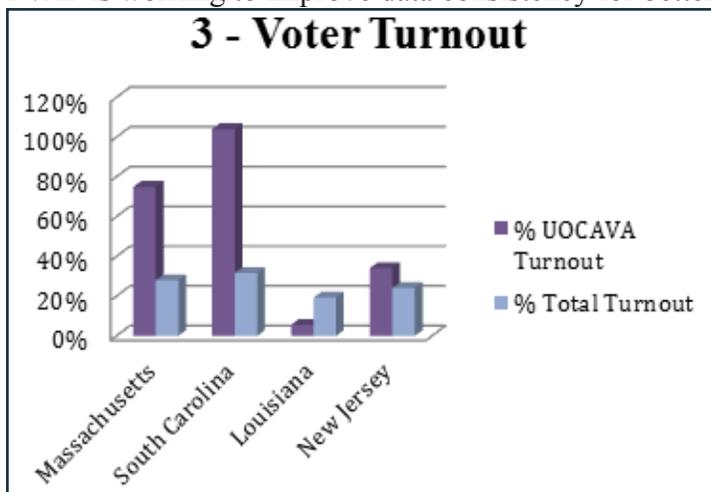
1 UOCAVA votes are included in total votes.

2 Total voting population includes domestic absentee voters and UOCAVA votes.



influence of the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot since South Carolina permits UOCAVA voters to submit FWABs to register to vote, request a ballot, and cast their ballot regardless of whether or not they submitted an FPCA.

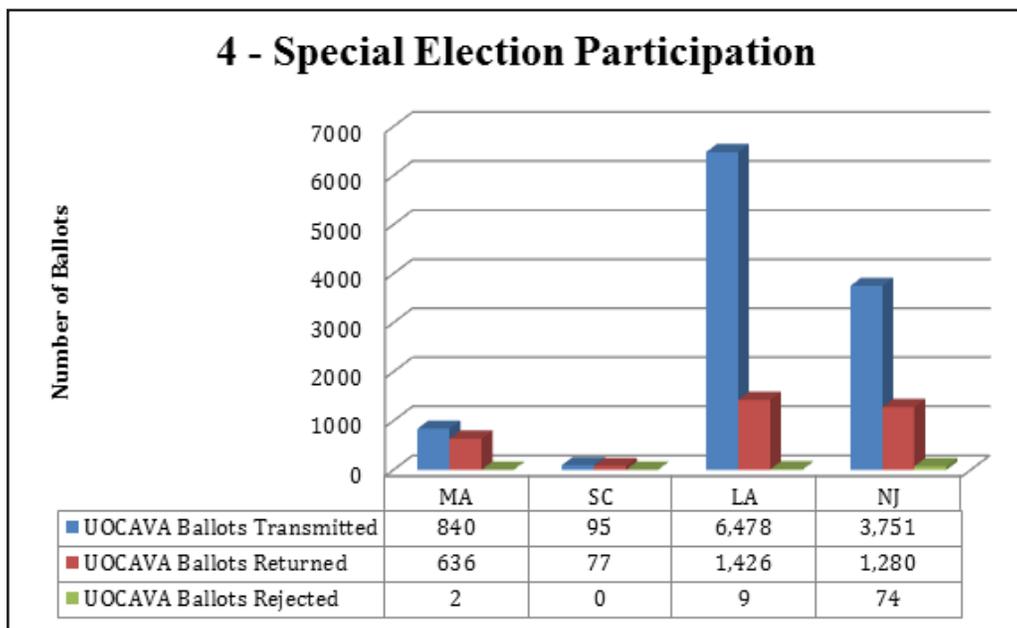
FVAP is working to improve data consistency for better comparison across States. Additionally,



FVAP is continuing to look into ways to establish a better understanding of overseas citizen participation given the difficulty that exists with identifying this population group.

Federal Election Activity

The data available to FVAP for analysis on Federal election activity are mostly limited to elections held in jurisdictions in which FVAP EASE grant-funded systems were used (these States are to provide information required through the grant program). Though FVAP requested special election data from all States and jurisdictions that held a Federal election in 2013, only States with grant-funded systems were required to provide data. FVAP thanks the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for voluntarily providing its Statewide election data. Figure 4 provides a breakout of total ballots transmitted, and those accepted and rejected, by State. Note that Louisiana's data reflect the total ballots transmitted to UOCAVA voters. This could include a voter receiving or downloading multiple ballots for the election.





Federal and State Cooperation

Although UOCAVA voters face unique challenges, FVAP works directly with the States to reduce obstacles to the absentee voting process. To this end, FVAP has facilitated research grants to provide funds to State and local governments to explore methods to overcome barriers UOCAVA voters face. As required by the EASE Research Grant program, States that received grants provided initial findings on their 2012 election data. For this report, FVAP analyzed elections held in 2013, and those elections in States which used the EASE grant tools. Though Massachusetts was not a grant participant, they chose to provide information.

Electronic Absentee System for Elections (EASE)

Research Grants

This report provides a high-level overview of initial findings from the 2012 election data, as reported by the EASE research grant recipients in 2013, to serve as an update on 2012 recommendations. This section covers the first year of what are generally five-year terms. FVAP will update its analyses as more data become available following the 2014 and 2016 elections. Information regarding grant authority and evaluation criteria can be found at FVAP.gov.

The FVAP EASE grants were created to fulfill two primary goals: to examine tools that can effectively make the UOCAVA voting process simpler and more accessible, and to assist the State and local election administrators improve services to military and overseas citizen voters. FVAP plans to work with the Council of State Governments to analyze grant data in 2014 and beyond.

Data Collection

As part of the terms and conditions of the EASE grant program, grant recipients agreed to provide FVAP with a specific set of data about UOCAVA and domestic absentee voters, plus additional data pertaining specifically to any grant-funded tools. Data are collected for each Federal election and must be submitted to FVAP within 90 days after the completion of the election.

Data collected includes:

- Number of UOCAVA ballot requests received, by method of submission, type of voter and timing of submission
- Number of UOCAVA absentee ballots transmitted and returned, by type of voter and transmission method
- Number of UOCAVA ballot rejections and the reasons for UOCAVA ballot rejections
- Number of FWAB submissions and their disposition

To help benchmark the UOCAVA data, FVAP requested similar data concerning domestic non-UOCAVA absentee voters, such as the number of ballot requests, ballots sent and returned and ballot rejections. Finally, FVAP also requested information regarding the online ballot request and ballot delivery tools funded with grant money. This information will provide insight in regard to how many voters are using these tools and whether the tools make a measurable impact during the voting process.

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 live elections.

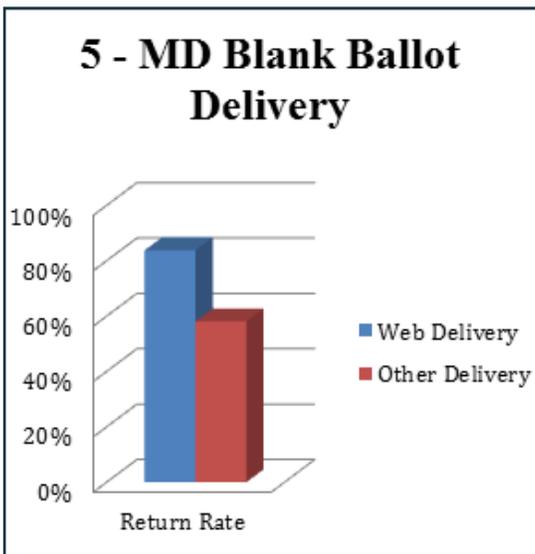
Initial Findings

The self-reported data from the grant recipients, and as outlined in this report, are detailed below. FVAP will draw conclusions and recommendations in its report to Congress following the completion of the five-year grant program in 2018.

Ballot Requests

The Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act amendments to UOCAVA require election officials to transmit previously requested blank ballots to military and overseas citizen voters at least 45 days before each Federal election. The 45-day window is intended to give UOCAVA voters enough time to receive, mark and return their absentee ballots by Election Day. One challenge is that many UOCAVA voters—like many non-UOCAVA voters—do not become interested in voting until shortly before Election Day. If these voters have not requested an absentee ballot prior to the 45-day mark (mid-September for November General Elections), they will not benefit from the full 45-day window to receive, mark and return their ballots. One observation made by State and local election officials is a preference to receive blank absentee ballots electronically. The MOVE Act required that States provide electronic means for

providing ballots to absentee voters. This requirement was validated during the 2012 General Election, when numerous grant recipients reported a majority of the absentee ballots sent to military and overseas voters were sent electronically.



Some jurisdictions, like Chicago and a consortium of counties in Washington State, made all UOCAVA ballots available online while simultaneously sending hardcopy ballots to those military and overseas voters who requested postal delivery.

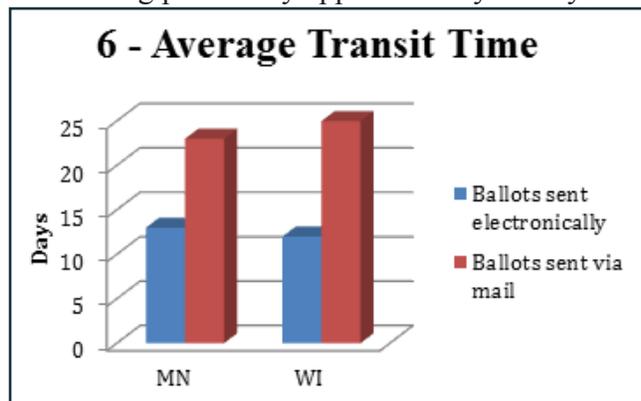
Although grant recipients were not required to report data from elections prior to 2012, some did so to illustrate a possible shift in voter behavior. Figure 5 shows Maryland voters' preference to receive blank absentee ballots through online systems. The increased reliance on online blank ballot delivery may be due in part to the fact that this was the second year online blank ballot delivery was made available. The percentage of people that requested online blank ballot

delivery doubled (37-74%) during the General Elections from 2010 to 2012.

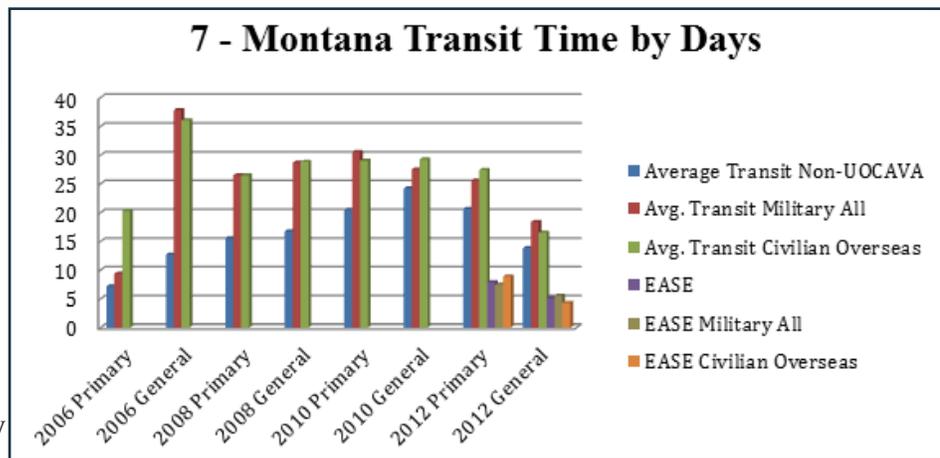
Transit Time

Minnesota and Wisconsin reported differences in the round-trip transit time between absentee ballots sent to voters via postal mail versus those ballots sent through grant-funded electronic tools. Figure 6 shows that for military and overseas citizen voters in Minnesota and Wisconsin, receiving a blank ballot electronically shortened the voting process by approximately 10 days.

The difference was even more dramatic for Wisconsin's UOCAVA voters. Absentee ballots sent to Wisconsin UOCAVA voters via its grant-funded ballot delivery tool arrived back in Wisconsin nearly 13 days sooner than those ballots sent via postal mail. Electronic delivery of blank absentee ballots should cut the typical round-trip transit time of ballots in half.



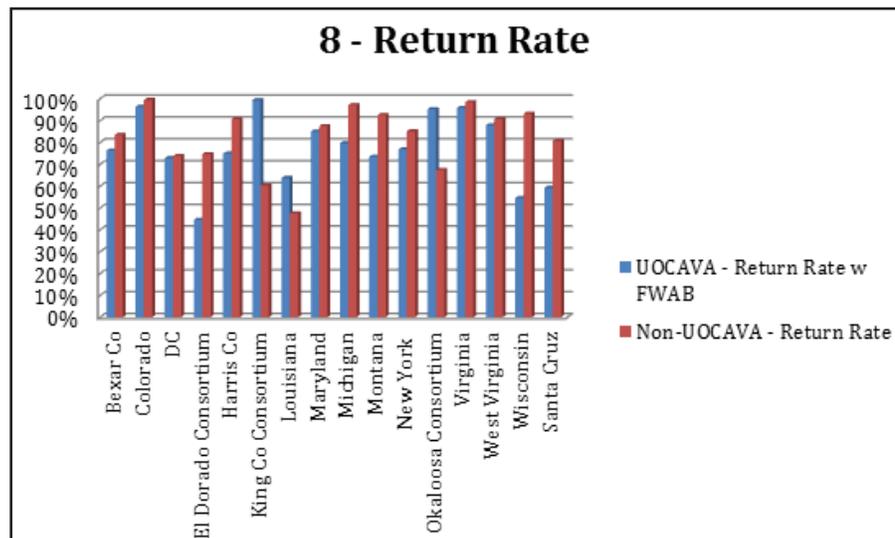
The transit time improvements from Minnesota and Wisconsin appear modest compared to the results reported by Montana, a State that has tracked the transit time for UOCAVA ballots for the last several elections. Figure 7 comes directly from Montana's data



submission. Note that while the round-trip transit time of military and overseas citizen ballots has gradually decreased since the 2006 General Election, it has never been comparable to the transit time for absentee ballots sent to domestic civilian voters. In 2012 military and overseas citizen voters who received ballots via Montana's grant-funded online ballot delivery system returned those ballots earlier than domestic non-UOCAVA absentee voters. Note that Montana permits UOCAVA voters to return ballots by fax and email, which is a process not available to non-UOCAVA voters.

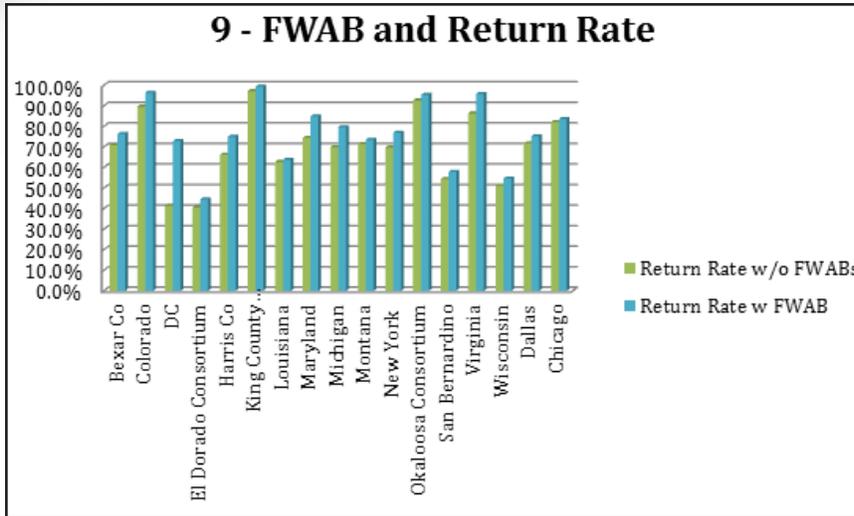
Ballot Return

The data submitted by grant recipients confirm previously reported information about the return rates for UOCAVA absentee ballots. Without counting FWABs, the return rate is roughly 74%.³ When including FWABs, the average return rate reported by grant recipients is roughly 80%. In this regard, the



3 Slightly lower than other reports, owing to confusion over terminology. Cast =counted, or submitted for counting.





State-reported data closely mirror the results of the 2012 Post-Election Survey of Active Duty Military by FVAP in which 80% of those Uniformed Services members who received an absentee ballot reported returning it.⁴

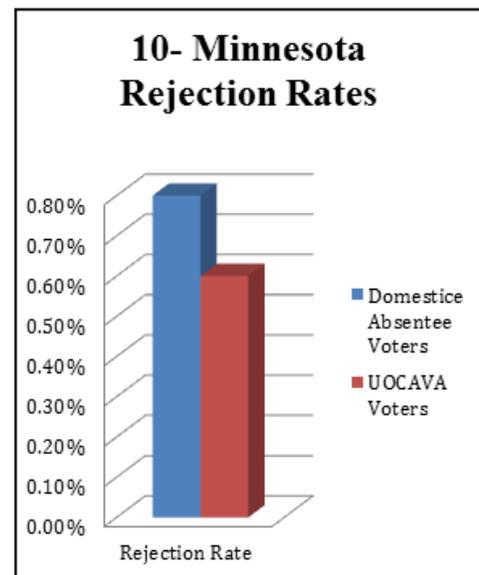
The UOCAVA ballot return rate is compared to the return rate for domestic civilian absentee

voters in Figure 8. In some jurisdictions, the UOCAVA return rate lags the domestic absentee ballot return rate by 30%; in other cases, the UOCAVA return rate actually exceeds that of the domestic civilian population.

Figure 9 shows the returns for recipient jurisdictions excluding and including the FWAB. As indicated in the table, FWAB submissions account, on average, for 7% of UOCAVA ballots submitted to each recipient jurisdiction. While there is no way to know if the FWABs counted in Figure 9 originated as transactions on FVAP.gov, in some cases the numbers reported by grant recipients and the transactions tracked by FVAP closely align. For example, the State of Colorado reported 1,307 FWABs were cast in the November 2012 General Election. On FVAP.gov, 1,310 Colorado voters completed the FWAB assistant during October and the first week of November 2012. As reported in the 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress, use of the FWAB online assistant increased more than 300% from the previous Presidential General Election in 2008.

Rejection Rates

As first reported in the FVAP 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress, some grant recipients reported that absentee ballots returned by military voters were



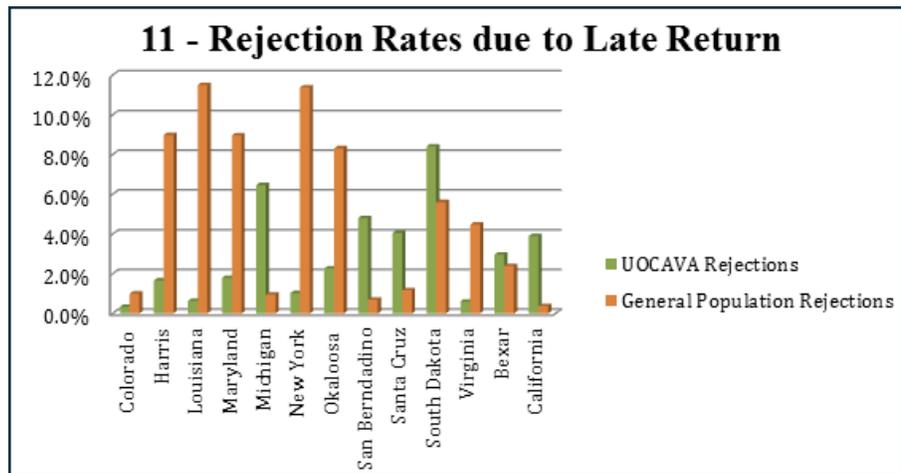
rejected (not counted) by election officials at lower rates than absentee ballots returned by overseas civilian voters. Minnesota and Louisiana both indicated that a lower percentage of ballots from UOCAVA-eligible voters were rejected compared to general population absentee voters.

Minnesota officials believe the difference is due in part to the greater level of support and voter education available to military and overseas voters.

Minnesota officials noted: “Under the funds provided for this program, UOCAVA voters enjoy more support as they apply for their ballot, including step-by-step instructions, a video (<http://youtu.be/fpCh8WhmCwg>), and a reminder at the end of the process that they need to submit their application in order to receive a ballot. They were also provided reminders via email to return ballots and online ballot tracking tools.”

Moreover, military and overseas voters from Minnesota are exempt from a requirement to have a witness sign the ballot envelope. For the State’s domestic civilian absentee voters, the failure to obtain a witness signature was the leading reason for ballots to be rejected. Of the domestic civilian absentee ballots that were rejected, 43% were rejected because they lacked a witness signature. Figure 10 shows how domestic rejection rates compared with UOCAVA voters.

FVAP pays particular attention to the number of absentee ballots rejected because they arrive at the election office after the ballot return deadline. For comparison, numbers from military and overseas voters are benchmarked against domestic civilian absentee voters. Figure



11 compares the percentages of ballot rejections due to untimely receipt from UOCAVA and general populations.⁵ In some jurisdictions for which data are available, the percentage of UOCAVA ballots rejected for arriving too late to be counted is higher than the corresponding

5 Some States are not included in the chart: Minnesota had no general population rejection data; Montana had no UOCAVA breakdown by reason; and Ohio, DC, Dallas, Wisconsin and Chicago had no general population data. Colorado’s numbers include FWABs.



Colorado reports that in 2008, a majority of the UOCAVA ballot rejections were attributed to late arriving ballots. In 2012, half of the UOCAVA ballot rejections were FWABs that were rejected because the regular State ballot was received and counted.

percentage for domestic absentee ballots.

Of note however, not all FWAB rejections should be viewed negatively. Frequently a FWAB is rejected because the official State ballot was also received and only one can be counted.

Looking at rejection rates across a series of elections can illuminate the effects of changing the voting process. Although grant recipients were not required to provide historical rejection data, the two States that did so (Colorado and Maryland)

suggest that progress has been made since the MOVE Act amended UOCAVA. In Colorado, the percentage of returned UOCAVA ballots that are ultimately counted—that is, not rejected—has jumped dramatically from 73.5% in the 2008 General Election to 97.8% in the 2012 General Election.

This report provides a high-level overview of initial findings from the 2012 election data, as reported by the EASE research grant recipients in 2013, to serve as an update on 2012 recommendations. This section covers the first year of what are generally five-year terms. FVAP will update its analyses as more data become available following the 2014 and 2016 elections. Information regarding grant authority and evaluation criteria can be found at FVAP.gov.

Military Voting Assistance Programs

Voting assistance takes place throughout the year; regardless if it is a year with a Federal General Election. The Military Services are required to report on the voting assistance they provide to Service members. To do so, metrics are collected by the Service every time a military Service member goes to an Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Office or Unit Voting Assistance Officer for help or additional information. Figure 12, on page 26, demonstrates this assistance at the Service level, and shows that more than half of all Service members received assistance via the military voting assistance programs in 2013. This figure shows the number of times a Service member was assisted, not the number of Service members helped. FVAP continues to work to improve its assistance metrics.

Figure 12 shows the Military Service voting metrics for calendar year 2013, by quarter. Title 10 USC 1566a also requires each Military Department to regularly assess its voting assistance programs. A description of each Services' respective programs can be found at FVAP.gov. These Voting Action Plans help the Services ensure messaging remains consistent throughout the Service, and that key milestones such as Voting Emphasis Weeks are appropriately addressed.

In 2013, FVAP worked with a Federally Funded Research & Development Center (FFRDC) to further enhance FVAP metric collection, research the most appropriate methods for evaluating voter behavior and trends, and gather insight on how to measure voting assistance effectiveness. This effort will identify both efficiencies and redundancies to streamline FVAP's efforts in future election cycles and identify core metrics to measure FVAP program effectiveness to guide future policy decisions to include IVA Office and unit voting assistance metrics. The results from this FFRDC effort are expected in December 2014.



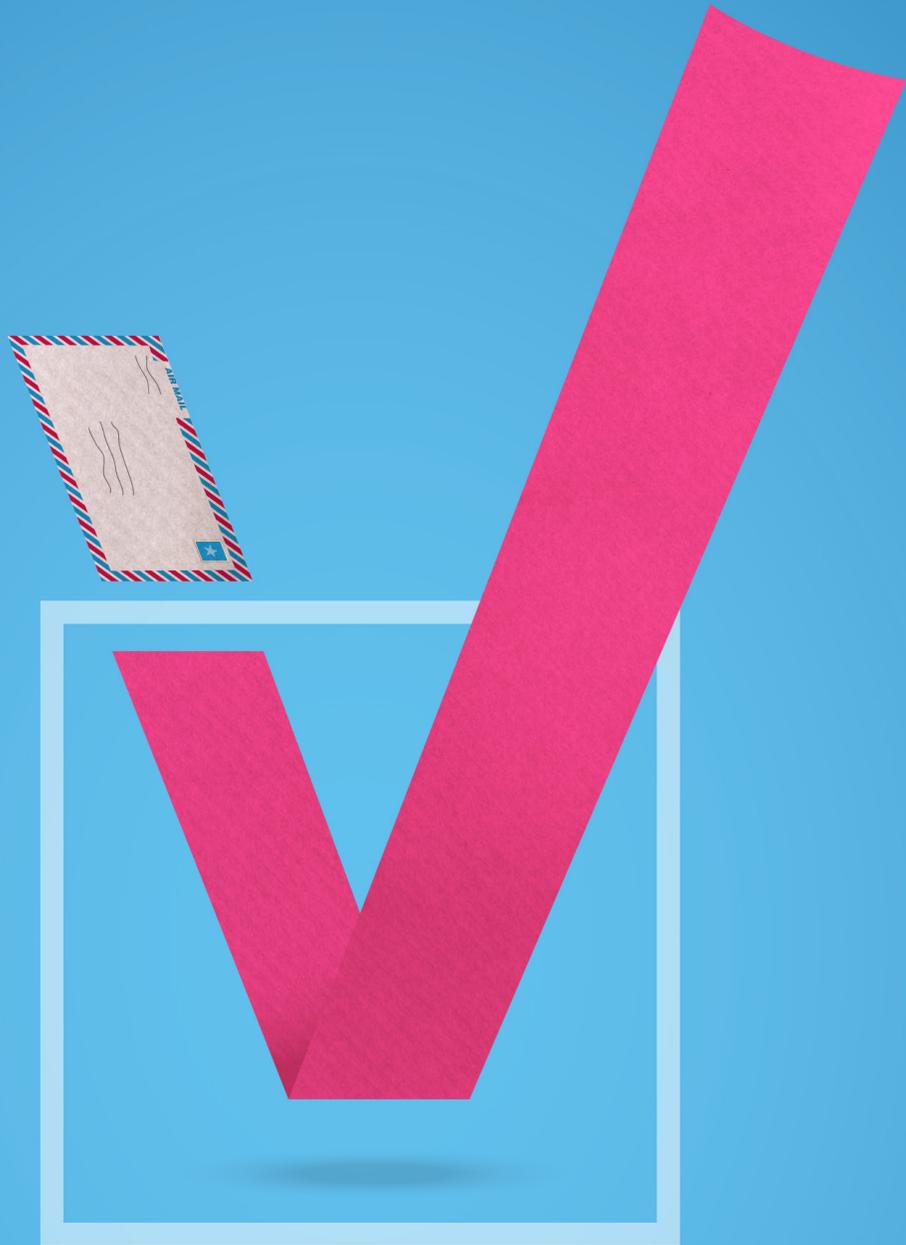
12 - Military Voting Assistance Metrics

	Total (2011)	Total (2012)	Total (2013)	Q1 Total (2013)	Q 2Total (2013)	Q 3Total (2013)	Q 4Total (2013)
# of Forms Mailed on Behalf of the Voter	915	3,601	1,933	402	564	470	497
# of Service Members Assisted	170,905	1,025,495	885,205	280,245	65,960	363,070	175,930
# of Family Members Assisted	9,279	58,875	74,906	26,003	1,202	32,194	15,507
# of Civilians/ Contractors Assisted	34,187	76,353	17,076	4,396	3,607	4,730	4,343
Total Assisted	214,371	1,160,723	977,187	310,644	70,769	399,994	195,780



be absent but

accounted
for



FVAP.gov

office: 1-800-438-VOTE

fax: 703-693-5527

vote@fvap.gov

Facebook.com/DoDFVAP * Twitter @FVAP