

Americans can vote.

Wherever they are.

2015 Annual Report to Congress

On the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)
Effectiveness of Activities and Utilization of Procedures

This report fulfills the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) requirement under section 20308(b) of Title 52 of the United States Code (USC). The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$13,000 for the 2015 Fiscal Year. This includes \$100 in expenses and \$13,000 in DoD labor. Generated on 2016Feb01 RefID: 8-4B2F1EB.





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Executive Summary

This report fulfills the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) requirement for its annual report under section 20308(b) of title 52, U.S.C.

Assessment of FVAP Activities

In fulfilling the Department of Defense's (DoD) responsibilities under the law, 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. In its 2014 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 *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* voter awareness and outreach initiatives for all populations; and
3. Enhance measures of effectiveness and participation.

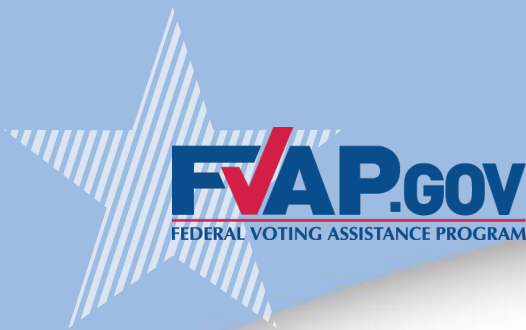
Using lessons learned since the 2014 election cycle, FVAP further explored how to reduce obstacles by improving its resources throughout DoD, establishing mechanisms to expand voter awareness, and enhancing measures of effectiveness to refine its research approach to identify exactly what challenges remain with *UOCAVA* voters.

In 2013, FVAP commissioned a research effort with RAND, a Federally Funded Research & Development Center (FFRDC), to align its strategy and operations to better reflect its core mission. On October 27, 2015, RAND released its findings. FVAP has already begun implementing initiatives that align with RAND's recommendations, such as the utilization of adult learning methodologies and incorporation of evaluations to revamp training modules for voters, election officials and Voting Assistance Officers.² Additionally, FVAP completed an organizational restructuring aligned with RAND's overall recommendation for FVAP – to focus on its core mission of assisting military voters, their families, and overseas citizens and to perform that mission well.

Reduced obstacles to active duty military voting success:

Using lessons learned since the 2014 election cycle, FVAP further explored how to reduce obstacles by improving its resources throughout DoD and identifying methods for improving

¹ The Federal Voting Assistance Program and the Road Ahead, http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR882.html.

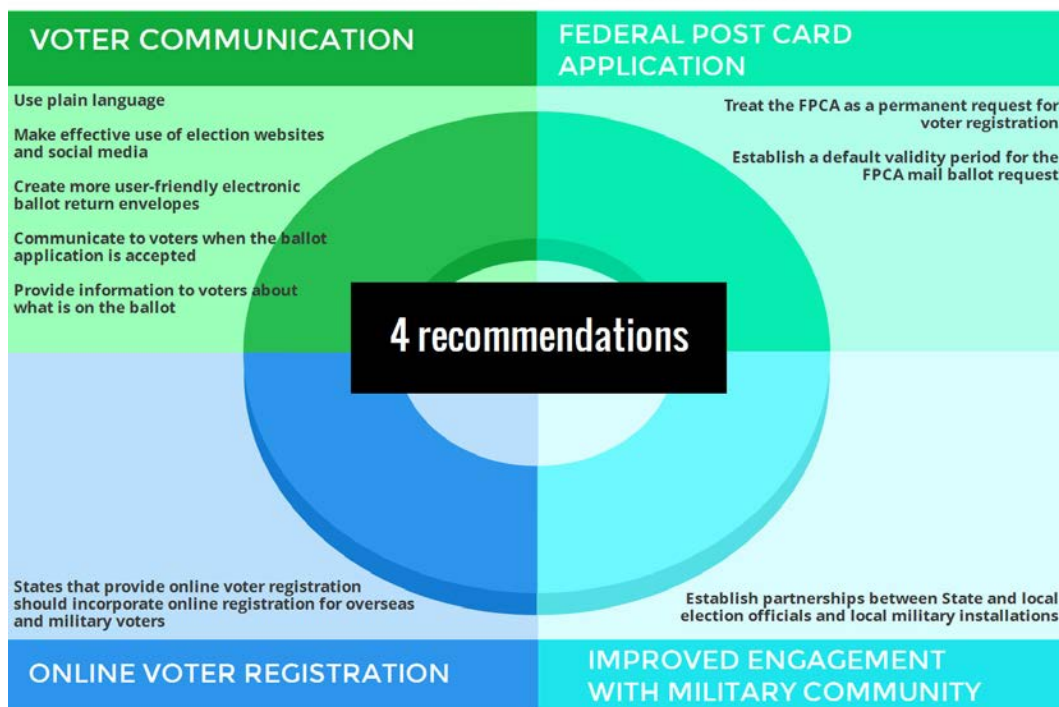


the absentee voting process. FVAP completely overhauled its *Voting Assistance Guide (Guide)* by standardizing the content and incorporating plain language principles. The *Guide* is a catalog of the State-specific processes and regulations that military and overseas voters need to follow to successfully register to vote and cast a ballot. The updated content is available at FVAP.gov for the 2016 election cycle, and hard copies were provided to the Military Services in early 2016.

To support the overhaul of the *Guide*, FVAP made several enhancements to its website and Portal. The *Guide* is the primary FVAP resource for voting assistance efforts and with significant complexity due to the fact that each State has its own legal requirements for UOCAVA voters. FVAP implemented the compilation and coordination process for the *Guide* into the Portal to enable election officials to make comments in real-time and approve the language used for both FVAP's online assistant and the *Guide*.

FVAP also updated its interactive online Voting Assistance Officer (VAO) training course, resulting in an improved module providing more in-depth background on UOCAVA and the VAOs' role in assisting voters. FVAP also made extensive improvements to its in-person training

CSG OVI Policy Working Group's Key Recommendations for Election Officials

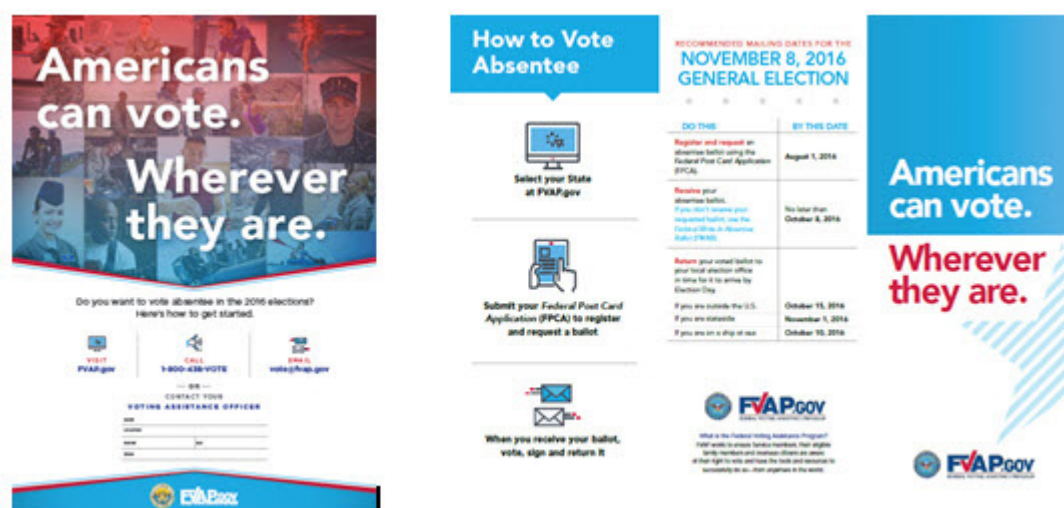


content by utilizing adult learning methodologies, in response to recommendations from RAND. FVAP continued its work with the Council of State Governments (CSG) Overseas Voting Initiative. In December 2015, the policy working group announced its key recommendations for State and local election officials. The recommendations will directly impact how FVAP works with States and provides voting assistance to UOCAVA citizens. FVAP looks forward to continuing its work with the States as these recommendations begin to be implemented around the country and bear results.

Efforts to Increase Awareness: Refined Marketing Campaigns and Outreach Efforts

In 2015, FVAP conducted a systematic review of its materials to identify potential challenges with the language, design, and organization of content. Based on the findings, FVAP is updating its materials in an effort to communicate more effectively with stakeholders.

Updated Outreach Materials



The 2014 post-election data showed overall awareness of resources still needs improvement. In 2015, FVAP developed an active, comprehensive outreach program to support the 2016 election cycle. Its 2016 campaigns encompass print, digital and social media to reach and engage first-



time voters, military commanders, spouses and overseas citizens. Highlights of the outreach efforts are provided on page 8.

Enhanced Measures of Effectiveness and Participation

FVAP has continued to make important progress in enhancing its measures of effectiveness and participation. Following the 2014 election, FVAP conducted additional analyses of post-election data and released three research notes supplemental to its 2014 Post-Election Report to Congress:

1. Comparison of Active Duty Military and Citizen Voting Age Population Voter Behavior;
2. Spousal Impact on Voter Participation; and
3. Impact of FVAP.gov Usage on Voting Success.

Prior to the 2014 election, FVAP and the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) issued a single survey that included FVAP's UOCAVA survey questions in Section B of the EAC's Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) of election officials. In 2015, FVAP initiated a new effort with the EAC to make further improvements to Section B of the survey.

Also in 2015, FVAP fielded a pilot survey of known overseas citizen voters to determine the viability of a new methodology and statistical modeling approach to capture more information on the demographics of this population as well as estimated voter registration and participation rates. Once FVAP understands the known voter, it can apply these findings into existing statistical models and project registration and participation rates for this population.

Special Elections for Federal Office

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 requested information from the States that conducted special elections for federal office in 2015. However, because the elections were not regularly scheduled (i.e., held in even-numbered years), the States were not required to provide the data. FVAP sincerely thanks the States of New York, Mississippi and Illinois for voluntarily sharing its UOCAVA ballot transmission data. An overview of the data is provided in the "Special Elections for Federal Office" section of this report.

Federal and State Cooperation

FVAP continued its work with State and local election officials to improve the *UOCAVA* absentee voting process and provide them with the information and tools needed to assist eligible voters. This section details FVAP's ongoing effort with the Council of State Governments to facilitate true collaboration and effect real change at the systemic level.

Military Voting Assistance Programs

The Military Services continued to provide voting assistance in 2015 to support the special elections for federal office. This assistance was provided via Voting Assistance Officers at the installation and unit levels, Installation Voter Assistance Offices and online resources such as FVAP.gov.



✓ 2016 OUTREACH EFFORTS



MICROSITE

Microsite targeted at younger, first-time voters – makes voting feel fun and approachable.



TWITTER TUESDAYS

Twitter Tuesdays – encouraging the public to engage FVAP directly to ask questions.



SOCIAL AND DIGITAL ADS

Increased focus on social and digital advertisements. Highly-targeted via platforms preferred by the 18- to 24-year-old demographic.



OVERSEAS OUTREACH

Outreach to overseas citizens via overseas companies.



DEFENSE.GOV

Special Voter Page on Defense.gov throughout 2016.



DIRECT MAIL

Hard copy direct mail to the home of record for every Service member.



SPOUSE PACKETS

Spouse packets – sending information targeted specifically to military spouses.



VIDEO CLIPS

Video clips highlighting the voting experiences of Service members – used on social and digital outreach.



MONTHLY EMAILS

Monthly emails to all Service members reminding them of dates and steps necessary to vote in upcoming elections.



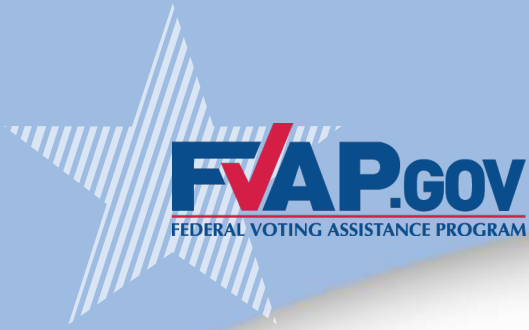
DEFENSE MEDIA ACTIVITY

Working with Defense Media Activity (DMA) to place informational videos, radio and web in channels used by Service members.

FVAP will continue its efforts and build upon the lessons learned, as shared in this report, throughout the 2016 election cycle. Together, with its stakeholders — Congressional Leaders, Department of State, State and local election officials, the Election Assistance Commission, advocacy organizations, and the Military Services — FVAP can help ensure that Service members, their families and overseas citizens can successfully exercise democracy's most important responsibility, the right to vote.

FVAP is ready for the 2016 election cycle and looks forward to sharing the results of its preparations and efforts in the 2016 Post-Election Report to Congress.





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Message from the FVAP Director

It is my distinct pleasure to present the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) 2015 Annual Report to Congress. This report provides an assessment of our activities supporting the special elections in 2015 – and our preparations for the 2016 presidential election cycle. It is important to remember that FVAP is an assistance agency — our mission is to inform voters of the right to vote and provide the tools and resources to help those who want to vote do so successfully from anywhere in the world.



Though 2015 was a less visible year in terms of elections for federal office, it was nonetheless a very busy year for FVAP. We worked continuously to ensure voters covered by the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* were armed with the information and assistance needed to successfully participate in special elections. FVAP also dedicated time and resources to planning and advancing recommendations in support of the 2016 election cycle.

Using lessons learned since the 2014 election cycle, FVAP further explored how to reduce obstacles by improving its resources throughout the Department of Defense, establishing mechanisms to expand voter awareness, and enhancing measures of effectiveness to refine its research approach to identify exactly what challenges remain with *UOCAVA* voters.

Thanks to collaboration with our many stakeholders — Congressional Leaders, Department of State, State and local election officials, the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), advocacy organizations, and the Military Services — FVAP made important strides in fulfilling those initiatives. Significant accomplishments include:

- Overhauled the *Voting Assistance Guide*;
- Enhanced FVAP.gov website and Portal;
- Revamped training for Voting Assistance Officers;
- Developed best-practice policy recommendations for military and overseas voting;
- Conducted additional analyses on 2014 post-election data; and
- Initiated a pilot survey of overseas citizens.

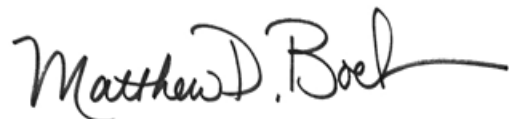
This report provides greater detail on these initiatives and introduces new efforts to support our stakeholders during the 2016 election cycle. One that I am most looking forward to is our upcoming Voting Stories Video Project. My goal is to reach all eligible citizens to ensure that anyone who wants to vote knows how to do so and can easily find the available resources.

I know this is an ambitious goal, as our 2014 post-election data continued to reveal a need to increase awareness of resources. This remains one of my top priorities. It is particularly important since we know that when military members use a DoD voting assistance resource, they are more likely to return their ballots. Whether military members use FVAP.gov, speak with a Unit Voting Assistance Officer or visit an Installation Voter Assistance Office, the Department's resources work together to support their ability to participate in the electoral process.

I am also excited about upcoming research; we are conducting a pilot program with the United States Postal Service and the Military Postal Service Agency to provide full ballot tracking in the mail stream to increase the visibility of blank ballots and voted ballots for military voters stationed overseas. This will be limited to the 2016 General Election and only to a select number of jurisdictions to help examine long-term viability for this increased level of customer service. I look forward to sharing the results in our 2016 Post-Election Report to Congress.

We will continue our collaborative efforts and build upon the lessons learned, as shared in this report, throughout the 2016 election cycle. I look forward to the opportunities and accomplishments ahead, and I know that together, in partnership with the dedicated election community, we can reach our shared vision: voting success for those who protect our freedom and defend our most fundamental right.

Matt Boehmer





Background

This report fulfills the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) requirement for its annual report under section 20308(b) of title 52, U.S.C.

The Law and its Requirements

The *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* (Chapter 203 of title 52, 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 eligible family members 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 1000.04, Federal Voting Assistance Program, directs the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to perform the responsibilities of the Presidential designee; the responsibilities are carried out by the Director of FVAP. Under these authorities, FVAP provides voter registration and voting information to those eligible to vote in applicable U.S. elections.

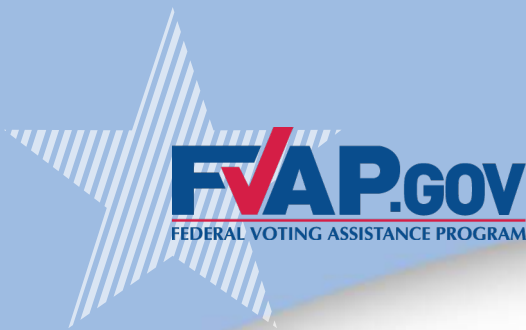
In October 2009, *UOCAVA* was amended by the *Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act* Title V, Subtitle H of P.L. 111-84, National Defense Authorization Act Fiscal Year 2010. Among its provisions, the amended *UOCAVA*:

- 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 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 Secretaries of the Military Departments to designate IVA offices as voter registration facilities under section 7(a)(3)(B)(ii) of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, P.L. 103-31; and

- Requires the Department of Defense (DoD) to field a number of online tools for FVAP-prescribed forms.

Section 20308(b) of title 52, U.S.C. requires an annual report by DoD to the President and Congress concerning:

- The effectiveness of FVAP activities carried out under section 20305 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.



Assessment of FVAP Activities

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 (DoD) responsibilities under the law, 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. In its 2014 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; and
3. Enhance measures of effectiveness and participation.

Using lessons learned since the 2014 election cycle, FVAP further explored how to reduce obstacles by improving its resources throughout DoD, establishing mechanisms to expand voter awareness, and enhancing measures of effectiveness to refine its research approach to identify exactly what challenges remain with *UOCAVA* voters. This section examines FVAP's progress on these initiatives. It is important to note that because there were no regularly scheduled elections for federal office in 2015, FVAP dedicated much of its time and resources to planning and advancing recommendations in support of the 2016 election cycle.

In 2013, FVAP commissioned a research effort with RAND, a Federally Funded Research & Development Center (FFRDC), to align its strategy and operations to better reflect its core mission. On October 27, 2015, RAND released its findings. FVAP has already begun implementing initiatives that align with RAND's recommendations, such as the utilization of adult learning methodologies and incorporation of evaluations to revamp training modules for voters, election officials and Voting Assistance Officers.² Additionally, FVAP completed an organizational restructuring aligned with RAND's overall recommendation for FVAP – to focus on its core mission of assisting military voters, their families, and overseas citizens, and to perform that mission well.

² *The Federal Voting Assistance Program and the Road Ahead*, http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR882.html.

Reduce Obstacles to Active Duty Military Voting Success

Overhauled Voting Assistance Guide

FVAP publishes the *Voting Assistance Guide (Guide)* for use by military and Department of State Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs), overseas citizen organizations and State and local election officials. The *Guide*, published every two years and continually updated online, is a catalog of the State-specific processes and regulations that military and overseas voters need to follow to successfully register to vote and cast a ballot using the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB).

This important resource often serves as a single source of information for both VAOs and individual voters alike. In an effort to make it more usable, FVAP worked closely with election officials to completely overhaul the *Guide* by standardizing the content and incorporating plain language principles. The updated content is available at FVAP.gov for the 2016 election cycle, and hard copies were provided to the Military Services in early 2016.

Enhanced FVAP.gov Website and Portal

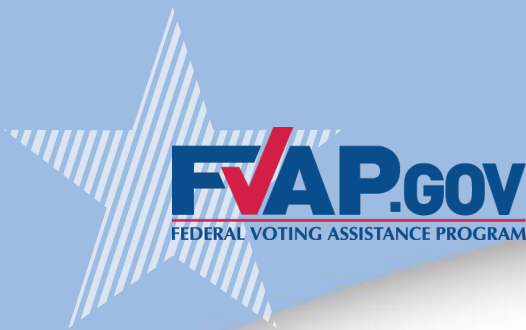
To support the overhaul of the *Guide*, FVAP made several enhancements to its website and Portal. The *Guide* is the primary FVAP resource for voting assistance efforts and with significant complexity due to the fact that each State establishes its own requirements for *UOCAVA* voters. FVAP implemented the compilation and coordination process for the *Guide* into the Portal to enable election officials to make comments in real-time and approve the language used for both FVAP's online assistant and the *Guide*.

Website usage in 2015

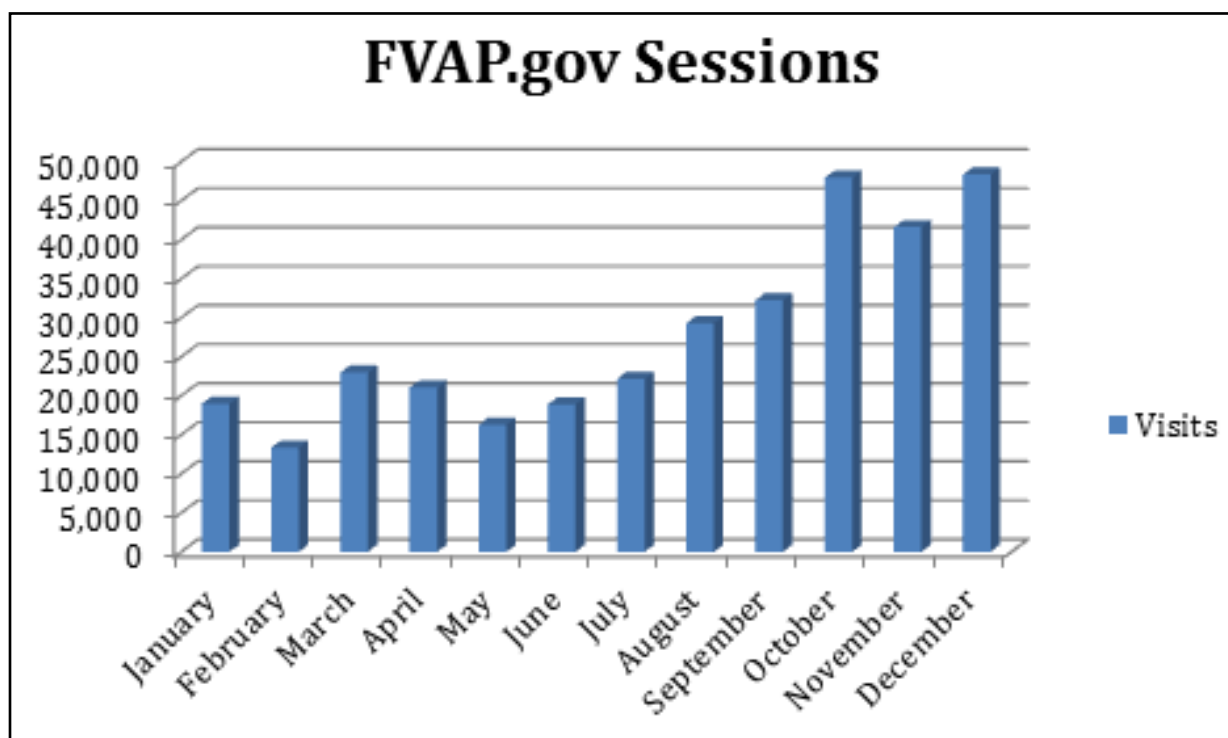
During calendar year 2015 – a year with no regularly scheduled federal elections – the FPCA was downloaded 42,881 times, and the FWAB 5,227 times. The chart on the next page shows the number of visits to FVAP.gov, by month, during 2015.³

The Military Services are required to report data on the voting assistance they provide to Service members. To help streamline the Services' data collection processes, FVAP developed

³ Figure shows total number of sessions within the date range. A session is the period of time a user is actively engaged with a website, app, etc. All usage data is associated with a session.



a single source for their metrics collection via the Portal. All of the Services may now leverage one system, decreasing the resources needed to run their respective programs. Additional information regarding the metrics is provided in the “Military Voting Assistance Programs” section of this report. FVAP continues to work with each of the Services to ensure the Portal can be leveraged as an effective management tool for all of their requirements under DoD Instruction 1000.04.



Revamped Training for VAOs

Ensuring that VAOs understand their responsibilities in carrying out the law and the State-specific rules and deadlines is critical to voter success.

FVAP is providing multimodal voting assistance training for the 2016 election cycle. This flexible approach allows VAOs to receive training when it best fits their individual schedules and preferences. Voter assistance training is offered online via the FVAP training modules and in-person by FVAP employees.

In 2015, FVAP updated the interactive online VAO training course, resulting in an improved

module that provides a more in-depth background on *UOCAVA* and the VAOs' role in assisting voters. FVAP also made extensive improvements to its in-person training content by utilizing adult learning methodologies, in response to recommendations from RAND. FVAP staff members attended a three-day training certificate program to learn how to best facilitate the workshops and deliver the improved content.

Designed Installation Voting Assistance Officer Workshop

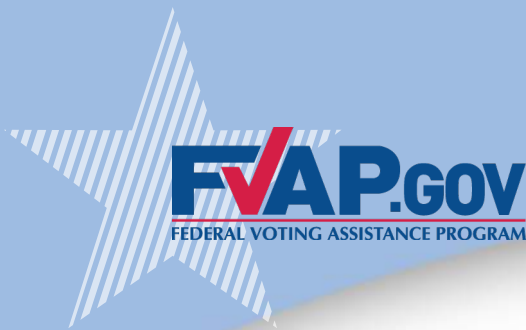
As part of its assistance efforts, FVAP designed a workshop specifically for Installation Voting Assistance Officers (IVAOs). In 2016, it will host a series of regional workshops for IVAOs that will provide critical information on the voting process and resources and tools needed for the successful performance of IVAO duties.

FVAP designed the workshops to be interactive, hands-on training sessions involving participants in discussions about program requirements for a successful Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Office and Installation Voting Program. Given the unique nature of the services offered by IVA Offices and the implementation challenges, the workshops will also be an opportunity for colleagues within and across each of the Services to collaborate and share insights. These efforts are in direct response to past concerns regarding the implementation of this mandate stemming from *UOCAVA*, as amended in 2009.

Worked with Election Officials

Effective relationships between FVAP and election officials are essential to FVAP's ability to accurately inform and serve absent military and overseas citizen voters. The products and services targeted to election officials include the FVAP.gov website, Voting Assistance Call Center, address look-up service, Electronic Transmission Service (ETS) and interactive online training.

As part of its ongoing effort to raise awareness on election official requirements under *UOCAVA* and the particular challenges military and overseas voters face in the absentee voting process, FVAP presented at conferences hosted by State and local election officials across the country. Discussions with this critical stakeholder group focused on observations resulting from the 2014 election and prompted discussions that cover current procedures and trends for assisting *UOCAVA* voters as well as working to identify how FVAP and States can improve their communication with voters. FVAP continued to provide resource correspondence to States considering legislation that could impact the *UOCAVA* voter experience.

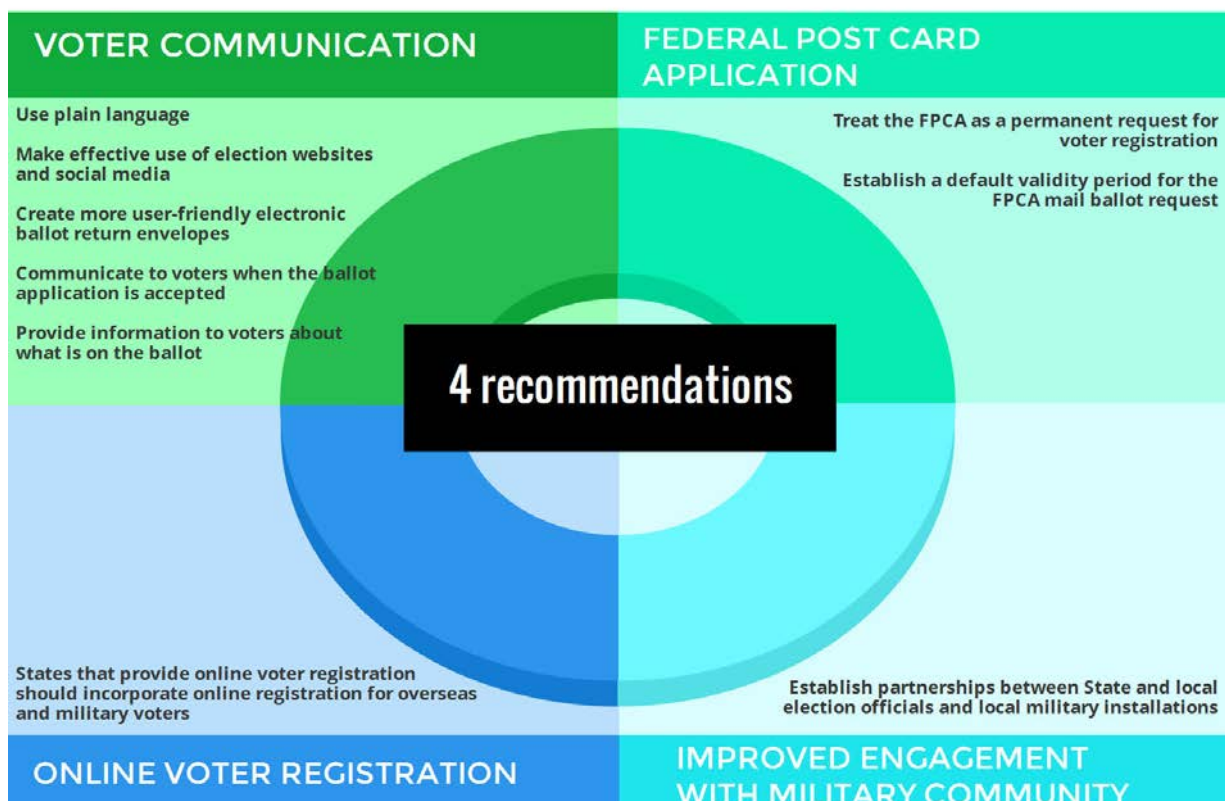


Continued Work with the Council of State Governments

In late 2013, FVAP entered into a cooperative agreement with the Council of State Governments (CSG) in an effort to build State election administrators' and policymakers' awareness and understanding of the Department's voting assistance mission, as well as learn ways to improve the absentee voting process.

CSG's Overseas Voting Initiative (OVI) created two working groups consisting of State and local election officials. The technology group is exploring the areas of performance metrics, data standardization, best practices with processing of *UOCAVA* ballots and the possibility for acceptance of electronic signatures from the DoD Common Access Card during the registration process. FVAP anticipates recommendations and best practices from this group following the completion of pilots and research done during the 2016 election.

CSG OVI Policy Working Group's Key Recommendations for Election Officials



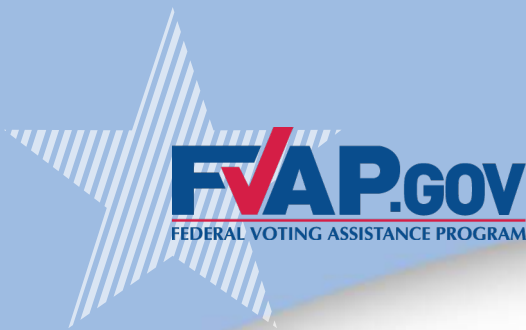
As a starting point to identify improvements, the policy group examined the Presidential Commission on Election Administration's military and overseas voter recommendations. In December 2015, it provided its own policy recommendations to State and local election officials. The recommendations will directly impact how FVAP works with States and provides voting assistance to *UOCAVA* citizens.⁴ FVAP looks forward to continuing its work with the States as these recommendations begin to be implemented around the country and bear results.

Coordinated Military Postal Updates

In late 2014, DoD and the United States Postal Service (USPS) modernized military mail systems and now provide a proactive way to encourage military members to update their mailing address with election officials. USPS and the Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) also upgraded Global Business Systems in that will improve delivery of absentee ballots mailed with the Priority Mail Express Military Service Label 11-DoD.

In 2015, FVAP began examining the use of a pilot program through CSG's Overseas Voting Initiative and in full cooperation with USPS and MPSA to provide full ballot tracking in the mail stream for the November 2016 General Election. The objectives of this pilot include increasing the visibility of blank ballots and voted ballots for military voters stationed overseas as to where the ballots are within the overall postal system and providing valuable research data into any underlying points of disruption.

Additionally, FVAP and the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) sent a letter to the Postmaster General offering their assistance to USPS to better engage State and local election officials regarding the challenges surrounding postal voting and to stress the level of importance tied to the timely handling and processing of absentee ballots. The letter provided the four main areas that election officials cite as challenges with vote-by-mail ballots: ballot delivery, ballot return, postmarking and changing infrastructure. FVAP and the EAC look forward to working with USPS to share reports and help inform any decisions that could improve the absentee voting process.



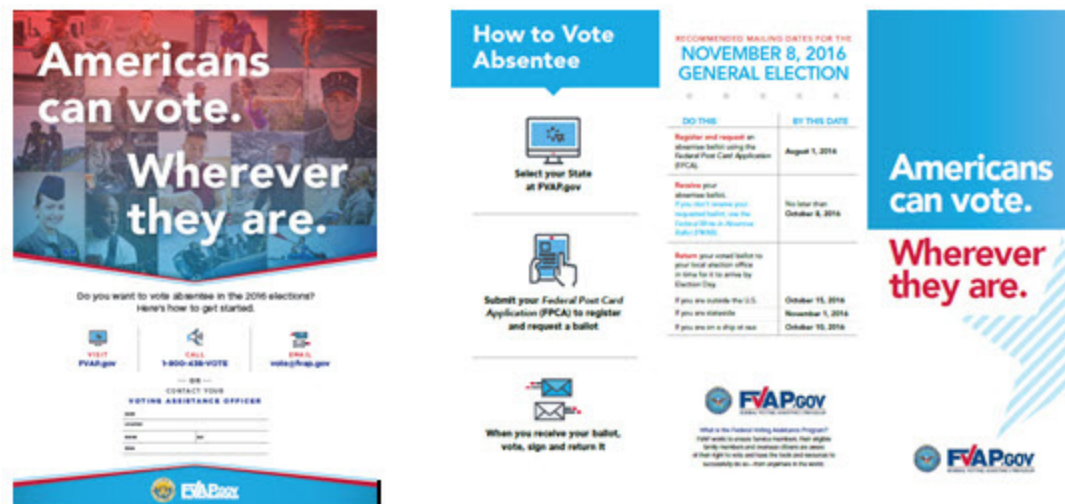
Expand *UOCAVA* Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives for All Populations

Leveraging findings from its 2014 post-election research, FVAP enhanced its suite of education and outreach materials and developed an active, comprehensive 2016 communications plan to increase awareness of available tools especially for those who are absent from their voting jurisdiction.

Efforts to Increase Awareness: Refined Marketing Campaigns and Outreach Efforts

Leading up to the 2014 election cycle, FVAP developed branded education and outreach materials, such as brochures, wallet cards, the *Guide*, FVAP.gov, fact sheets and posters. In 2015, FVAP conducted a systematic review of its materials to identify potential challenges with the language, design, and organization of content. Based on the findings, FVAP is updating its materials in an effort to communicate more effectively with stakeholders.

Updated Outreach Materials



First-Time Voters

In an effort to appeal to younger, first-time voters and make absentee voting feel approachable during the 2014 cycle, FVAP's "Voting is Easy" campaign encompassed print, digital and social media to reach the target 18- to 24-year-old demographic. FVAP is building upon these first-time voter outreach efforts in support of the 2016 election — these initiatives are particularly important given the statistically significant positive relationship between using Department resources and the likelihood of returning ballots. For example, FVAP is launching a microsite in 2016 to engage first-time voters. It implements social media integration to bring visitors to the site, where they can then "vote" on everyday topics like "beach" vs. "bbq" or "dogs" vs. "cats," and then view the results from others voting. The microsite then directs them to FVAP.gov to learn more and complete their absentee voting forms. FVAP hopes the fun, interactive platform will reach first-time voters in the manner they prefer to be engaged. For these younger voters, that tends to point to social media and the topics their friends are discussing; this microsite should cover both of those aspects.

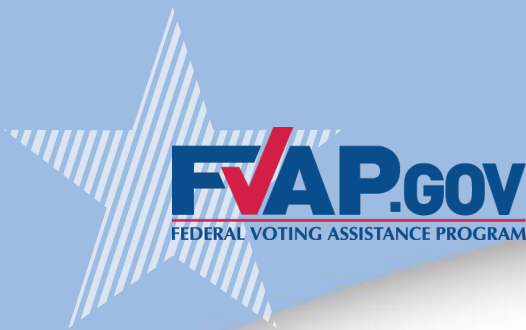
Military Spouses

FVAP also learned from its 2014 post-election data that military members who are married are more likely to vote than those who are unmarried. FVAP conducted additional analyses of the data in 2015 and learned the differences in voting rates between married and unmarried active duty military (ADM) are positive and larger for ADM who are stationed overseas than for ADM living in the United States.⁵

Spouses can have a strong direct influence on the ADM's probability of receiving voting information, as well as the probability of voting. This suggests that information about voting resources provided to spouses may reach the ADM; if spouses can provide information about DoD voting assistance resources, a marketing campaign directly targeting spouses of military members could potentially have a positive effect on the awareness of voting assistance resources in the ADM population.

FVAP is leveraging these research findings to inform its outreach efforts. To increase spouses' awareness of their absentee voting rights under *UOCAVA*, FVAP is ramping up its social media efforts targeting this key population. Digital and social media ads will encourage them to visit the military spouse page at FVAP.gov to learn more. In addition to developing an online marketing campaign targeted at spouses, FVAP coordinated with senior DoD leadership to establish relationships with the Services' respective Family Readiness Programs. FVAP is

5 *The Effects of Spouses on Voting in the Active Duty Military Population* available at https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/2015_FVAP_ResearchNote4_20160105_final.pdf

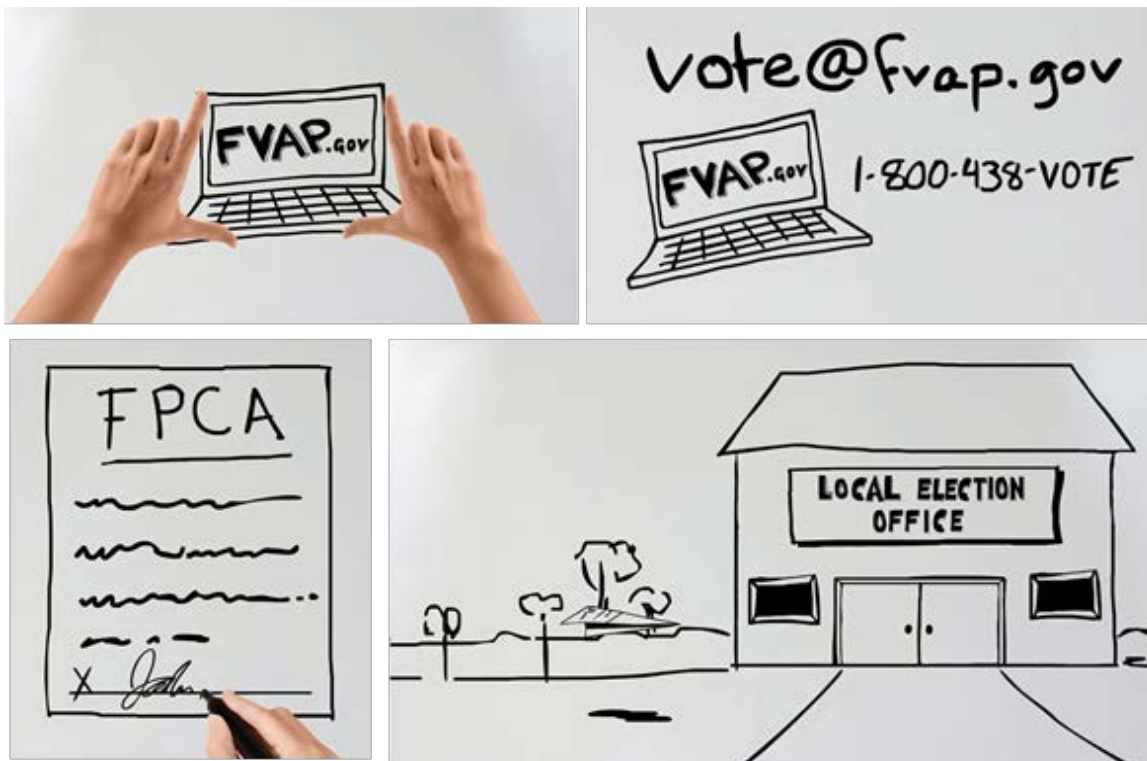


working directly with the Services' outreach coordinators to share military education and awareness outreach kits on absentee voting at the installation and unit levels.

New Outreach Videos

In 2015, FVAP developed short, attention-grabbing videos for online placement targeted to 18- to 24-year-old voters in the hopes of increasing overall awareness of FVAP. The videos provide a brief overview of the specific topics as related to absentee voting, such as how to use the FPCA or update contact information with the election office. They can be viewed separately for just the topic voters are interested in, or together to provide a full overview of the absentee voting process. Since FVAP is using these videos to reach the younger demographic, FVAP is posting them to various social media platforms to encourage engagement and visits to FVAP.gov for more training and information. Selected still shots from the video series are provided below.

New Video Series



FVAP is also creating a new series of videos geared toward military commanders to stress the importance of command emphasis and communicating to their subordinates the availability of absentee voting resources. To ensure widest distribution, FVAP will simultaneously utilize the videos as shareable content on social media platforms.

FVAP will also launch a new video series of short, entertaining clips to provide a fun and new twist on the absentee voting process. Keeping in mind how the younger demographic consumes media, the clips will be shorter than 30 seconds each but will cover a variety of topics as they apply to the first-time absentee voters.

Example Video Series for 2016





Overseas Citizens

Recognizing that overseas citizens are a more difficult population to reach, FVAP began a new concerted effort to engage this important *UOCAVA* audience. In late 2015, FVAP reached out to corporations that employ U.S. citizens living abroad. Through this effort, FVAP hopes to establish relationships with corporate representatives through the 2016 election cycle to help increase awareness of resources and improve the opportunity for those overseas to participate in the electoral process. To augment this outreach initiative, FVAP is also executing a marketing campaign that leverages placed and earned media, social engagement and online advertisements using behavioral, contextual and geographic targeting to reach overseas voters.

Enhance Measures of Effectiveness and Participation

In its 2014 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP identified a need to continue to improve the Department's ability to evaluate program effectiveness. In 2015 and in support of the 2016 election cycle, FVAP continued to incorporate recommendations from its effort with a Federally Funded Research & Development Center and made important progress in enhancing its research instruments for post-election analyses.

Conducted Additional Analyses on 2014 Post-Election Data

Following the 2014 election, FVAP conducted additional analyses of post-election data and released three research notes supplemental to its 2014 Post-Election Report to Congress:

1. Comparison of Active Duty Military and Citizen Voting Age Population Voter Behavior;
2. Spousal Impact on Voter Participation; and
3. Impact of FVAP.gov Usage on Voting Success.

Comparison of Active Duty Military and Citizen Voting Age Population Voter Behavior

FVAP identified 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 (ADM) and the citizen voting age population (CVAP). However, FVAP was unable to include the comparisons using the improved methodology in its 2014 Post-Election Report to Congress because the voting behavior data needed to conduct the analysis had not yet been released by the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2015, FVAP was able to conduct the additional

analyses and released a supplemental research note.⁶

Key findings from this research:

The registration rate for ADM in 2014 was higher than CVAP:

	Voter Registration Rate
ADM	71%
Modeled CVAP	58%
CVAP	79%

Unlike in 2012, voting participation among ADM in the 2014 midterm election was lower than that of the CVAP. When comparing the population characteristics of the CVAP that is demographically similar to ADM, the magnitude of the participation gap is significantly reduced:

- Within the modeling framework, the gap between the un-modeled CVAP and the ADM population turnout rate is 28 percentage points.
- Once the CVAP is modeled to be demographically similar to the ADM, the gap between the modeled CVAP and ADM populations drops to 2.6 percentage points.

	Voter Participation Rate
ADM	23%
Modeled CVAP	25%
CVAP	51%

FVAP's continued analyses of the ADM population also provide important insight into the behavior of ADM voters in presidential versus midterm elections and illustrates the substantive differences in the type of voter who participates in midterm elections. For example, this research marks an important first step to assess expected ADM participation rates based on the type of election and will serve as a marker to determine if future general election cycles continue to illustrate these demographic differences. Continued research in this area will also guide FVAP on how to best allocate resources and effectively reach potential ADM voters across various election cycles.

⁶ Registration and Voting Participation Differences Between the Active Duty Military and Citizen Voting Age Populations in the 2014 Election, https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/2015_FVAP_ResearchNote6_Final_1027.pdf



Spousal Impact on Voter Participation

FVAP also conducted additional analyses on the impact of marital status on voter behavior. Its research released in 2015 validates initial findings that military members who are married are more likely to vote than those who are unmarried. The differences in voting rates between married and unmarried active duty military are positive and larger for ADM who are stationed overseas than for ADM living in the United States.

Key findings from the supplemental research note:⁷

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

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

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

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

As noted in the “Assessment of FVAP Activities” section, FVAP is leveraging these research findings to inform its outreach efforts.

⁷ *The Effects of Spouses on Voting in the Active Duty Military Population*, https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/2015_FVAP_ResearchNote4_20160105_final.pdf

Impact of Website Enhancements on Voter Behavior

Building upon 2012 research, FVAP continued to identify a statistically significant relationship between the use of the DoD network of voting assistance resources and the likelihood of the ADM returning their absentee ballot. In 2015, FVAP conducted further research to isolate factors that contribute the most to this relationship and how FVAP can build from it.

Key findings from the supplemental research note:⁸

- The changes to the FVAP website increased the probability that website users requested an absentee ballot or voted compared with a projected outcome had the changes never been implemented. While other factors do affect voting behavior, the research was specifically isolated to changes based on website usage.
- Website use was associated with a larger increase in the probability of casting a ballot in the 2012 election relative to the 2008 election. This suggests an increase in the effectiveness of the website in facilitating voting between those two elections.

Continued Federal Survey Improvement Efforts

In 2014, as a result of a successful interagency initiative, FVAP and the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) issued a single survey that included FVAP's *UOCAVA* survey questions in Section B of the EAC's Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) of election officials. The EAC now collects the survey data and shares it with DoD; FVAP serves as the lead for analyzing these data.

In 2015, FVAP initiated a new effort with the EAC to make further improvements to Section B of the survey. The CSG Overseas Initiative's Policy Working Group is serving as the lead for the project. The group is comprised of State and local election officials; their involvement is critical, as they are the stakeholders the results of this effort will impact the most. FVAP looks forward to sharing the results from its collaborative effort with the EAC Standards Board's EAVS Committee.

8 *The Effects of the 2010 FVAP Website Redesign on Voting in the Active Duty Military Population*, https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Reports/FVAP_RN5_20160107.pdf



Conducted Overseas Citizens Pilot Survey

In 2015, FVAP fielded a pilot survey of known overseas citizen voters to determine the viability of a new methodology and statistical modeling approach to capture more information on the demographics of this population as well as estimated voter registration and participation rates. FVAP is surveying known overseas citizen absentee voters from the 2014 election to understand more about their demographics. Once FVAP understands the known voter, it can apply these findings into existing statistical models and project registration and participation rates for this population. This pilot approach will hopefully enable FVAP to fulfill one of its long outstanding post-election reporting requirements for the first time using a well-understood research methodology. FVAP looks forward to sharing the results of this effort in its next report to Congress.

Released Research Related to Electronic Voting Demonstration Project⁹

In the Carl Levin and Howard P. “Buck” McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, Congress eliminated the Department’s requirement to conduct an electronic voting demonstration project. FVAP is no longer exploring program implementation in this area but chose to release a comprehensive report of the research it previously conducted to inform the project. FVAP released the report in late 2015 with the intent that the *UOCAVA* community could take advantage of the knowledge gleaned from FVAP’s experiences and its extensive research efforts. With the repeal of the requirement, FVAP is able to focus on its core mission to ensure that Service members, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so from anywhere in the world.

Special Elections for Federal Office

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 requested information from the States that conducted special elections for federal office in 2015. However, because the elections were not regularly scheduled (i.e., held in even-numbered years), the States were not required to provide the data. FVAP sincerely thanks the States of New York, Mississippi and Illinois for voluntarily sharing its *UOCAVA* ballot transmission data.

Three States held elections for federal office in 2015:

- **New York:** Special General Election for 11th Congressional District; May 5, 2015, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Michael Grimm.
- Of the 326 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 152 were returned and 142 were accepted.
- **Mississippi:** Special General Election for 1st Congressional District; May 12, 2015, to fill the vacancy created by the passing of Representative Alan Nunnelee.
- Of the 31 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 14 were returned and 14 were accepted.
- **Mississippi:** Special Runoff Election for 1st Congressional District; June 2, 2015, to fill the vacancy created by the passing of Representative Alan Nunnelee.
- Of the 36 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 19 were returned and 19 were accepted.
- **Illinois:** Special Primary Election for 18th Congressional District; July 7, 2015, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Aaron Schock.
- 47 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted.¹⁰
- **Illinois:** Special General Election for 18th Congressional District; September 10, 2015, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Aaron Schock.
- Of the 53 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 23 ballots were accepted.¹¹

¹⁰ The number of ballots returned and the number of ballots accepted were not provided.

¹¹ The number of ballots returned by *UOCAVA* voters was not provided.



Federal and State Cooperation

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. Much of FVAP's efforts with States are described in the "Assessment of FVAP Activities" section of this report. This section provides information regarding FVAP's Cooperative Agreement with the Council of State Governments, its Electronic Absentee Systems for Elections Research Grant Program and its cooperative relationship with the Department of Justice.

Cooperative Agreement with the Council of State Governments (CSG)

In September 2013, FVAP entered into a cooperative agreement with the Council of State Governments (CSG) in an effort to build State election administrators' and policymakers' awareness and understanding of the Department's voting assistance mission, as well as identify ways to improve the absentee voting process. The CSG Overseas Voting Initiative was formed through the agreement and is charged with developing targeted and actionable improvements to the voting process for military and overseas citizen voters.

CSG's Overseas Voting Initiative maintains two separate advisory working groups. As discussed in the "Assessment of FVAP Activities" section, these groups are making significant progress in providing State policymakers and State and local election officials with best practice guidance to ensure *UOCAVA* citizens are able to exercise their right to vote. Though FVAP has worked closely with election officials in the past, the working groups facilitate true collaboration. Through its cooperative agreement with CSG, FVAP has the ability to effect real change at the systemic level.

Electronic Absentee Systems for Elections (EASE) Research Grant Program

In 2011 and again in 2013, FVAP offered grants to States and localities to research improving services to military and overseas voters. The EASE research grant program in 2011 funded programs including online blank ballot delivery, online voter registration, online ballot requests, automated ballot duplication and online ballot tracking.

In 2013, FVAP facilitated awards totaling \$10.5 million in research grant funding to 11 States

and localities to explore improvements to the *UOCAVA* voting process. The second round of EASE research grants focused on two specific areas: online blank ballot delivery tools and the establishment of a single point of contact for the transmission of voters' election materials to State election offices. The single-point-of-contact concept was introduced in the *Help America Vote Act* in which Congress recommended that States adopt such a system.

The EASE research grant program was created to fulfill two primary goals: to examine tools that can effectively make the *UOCAVA* voting process simpler and more accessible, and to assist State and local election administrators improve services to military and overseas citizen voters. Now that the grants have reached a level of maturity, FVAP created an internal standard operating procedure to address the final maintenance and close-out processes, which will begin for most grantees after the 2016 election. This is intended to ensure all the terms and conditions of the grants are fulfilled before closing.

These research grants are ongoing. Comprehensive information and results from this research program will become available following the 2016 election. FVAP is working with CSG's Overseas Voting Initiative to analyze grant data through the 2016 election. The resulting data and analysis from the research grant program will help identify barriers and improve the voting experience for military and overseas voters.

Please note the electronic transmission of voted ballots is strictly prohibited through the terms and conditions of the research grant program.

This report provides a high-level overview of the EASE research grant program. FVAP will conduct a comprehensive analysis of the State-reported data and provide a full report on its findings and recommendations at the conclusion of the grant program following the 2016 election. Information regarding grant authority and evaluation criteria can be found at FVAP.gov.

Cooperation with the Department of Justice and UOCAVA Waivers

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. FVAP and the Voting Section of DOJ work cooperatively and coordinate when issues arise related to FVAP's role in administering *UOCAVA*.

In 2015, there were no applications for waivers from *UOCAVA*'s 45-day advance transmission requirement.

Military Voting Assistance Programs

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

Voting assistance takes place throughout the year, regardless if it is a year with regularly scheduled general elections for federal office. The Military Services are required to report on the voting assistance they provide to Service members. To do so, they collect metrics each time a Service member goes to an Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Office or Unit Voting Assistance Officer (VAO) for help or additional information.

FVAP identified new metrics in an effort to improve and enhance the measures of effectiveness for VAOs. The new metrics guidance disseminated in September 2014 eliminated unnecessary, duplicative data points allowing for improved data collection and reporting by VAOs.¹² Metrics were standardized in order to clarify what data are to be reported and best illustrate program effectiveness.

The table below shows the Military Service voting metrics by calendar year.

	Total (2011)	Total (2012)	Total (2013)	Total (2014)	Total (2015)
# of Service Members Assisted	170,905	1,025,495	858,651	1,085,844	102,639
# of Family Members Assisted	9,279	58,875	72,962	704,763	3,671
# of Civilians/ Contractors Assisted	34,187	76,353	13,050	78,233	10,201
Total Assisted	214,371	1,160,723	944,663	1,868,880	116,511
# of Forms Mailed on Behalf of the Voter	915	3,601	1,815	10,822	12,021

Section 1566a to title 10, U.S. Code also requires each Military Department to regularly assess its voting assistance programs. A description of each Service's 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.

The Department of Defense Inspector General (DoD IG) conducts an annual assessment on compliance with *UOCAVA* and military voter assistance laws. The April 2015 DoD IG report concurred with the Services' Inspectors General determination that their respective Services are compliant with federal statutes and DoD policies. Maintenance and compliance of the requirement for IVA Offices is a continuous process, and the Services and FVAP continue to work together to identify areas for improvement.



Conclusions

Using lessons learned since the 2014 election cycle, FVAP further explored how to reduce obstacles by improving its resources throughout DoD, establishing mechanisms to expand voter awareness, and enhancing measures of effectiveness to refine its research approach to identify exactly what challenges remain with *UOCAVA* voters. As described in the “Assessment of FVAP Activities” section, FVAP spent much of 2015 planning and advancing recommendations in support of the 2016 election cycle. This section provides a preview of initiatives planned specifically for the 2016 cycle.

VAO Workshops

In January 2016, FVAP kicked off its Voting Assistance Officer (VAO) training workshops in support of the 2016 election cycle. Throughout 2016, FVAP will conduct trainings around the world, strategically placed for optimal participation from VAOs and Embassy contacts.

Military Postal Pilot Project

In 2015, FVAP began examining the use of a pilot program through CSG’s Overseas Voting Initiative and in full cooperation with USPS and the Military Postal Service Agency to provide full ballot tracking in the mail stream for the November 2016 General Election. The objectives of this pilot include increasing the visibility of blank ballots and voted ballots for military voters stationed overseas as to where the ballots are within the overall postal system and providing valuable research data into any underlying points of disruption.

Voting Stories Video Project

FVAP is creating a new series of informative videos that describe the absentee voting process and emphasize the important role played by those charged with helping Service members exercise their right to vote. As part of its Voting Stories Video Project, FVAP is interviewing Service members, Voting Assistance Officers, Senior Commanders and Senior Enlisted Officers who are willing to share their personal stories and thoughts about voting, the absentee voting process, what can be done to encourage voting among military personnel and the importance of these activities.

The final, full video will provide great insight into how leaders can help Service members successfully vote absentee. It will be shared with the Services for possible inclusion in commanders' in-briefings. Similarly, snippets of the full video will be shared on social media to help build awareness among the military population of the upcoming elections, and to highlight successful voting stories.

Voter Awareness and Education Outreach



FVAP developed comprehensive 2016 voter awareness and education plans. Highlights of the outreach efforts are provided in the graphic below.

FVAP will continue its efforts and build upon the lessons learned, as shared in this report, throughout the 2016 election cycle. Together, with its stakeholders — Congressional Leaders, Department of State, State and local election officials, the Election Assistance Commission, advocacy organizations, and the Military Services — FVAP can help ensure that Service members, their families and overseas citizens can successfully exercise democracy's most important responsibility, the right to vote.

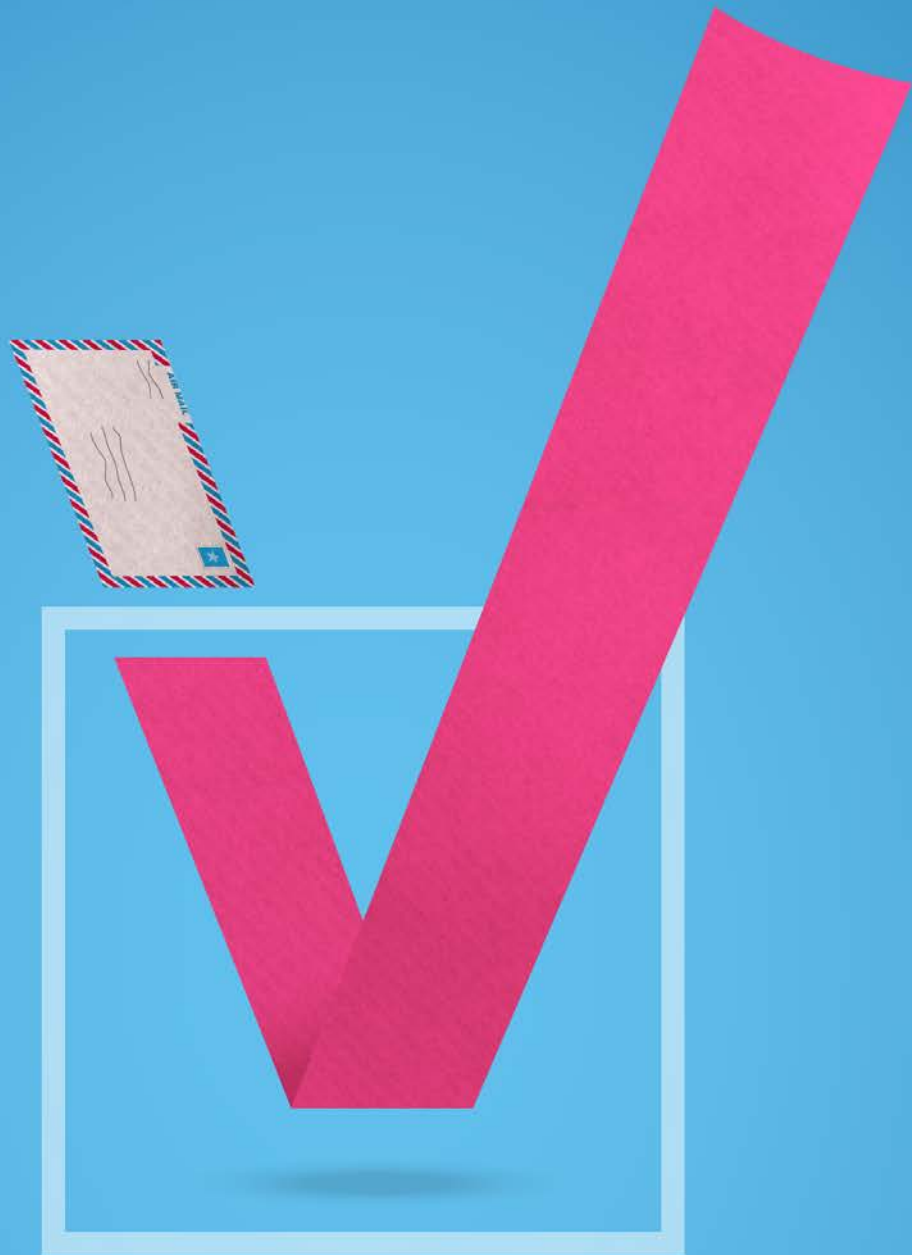
FVAP is ready for the 2016 election cycle and looks forward to sharing the results of its preparations and efforts in the 2016 Post-Election Report to Congress.



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Glossary

ADM	active duty military
CSG	Council of State Governments
CVAP	citizen voting age population
DoD	Department of Defense
DoDI	Department of Defense Instruction
DOJ	Department of Justice
EAC	Election Assistance Commission
EASE	Electronic Absentee System for Elections (research grant program)
ETS	Electronic Transmission Service
FFRDC	Federally Funded Research & Development Center
FPCA	Federal Post Card Application
FVAP	Federal Voting Assistance Program
FWAB	Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot
IVA Office	Installation Voter Assistance Office
IVAO	Installation Voting Assistance Officer
<i>MOVE Act</i>	<i>Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act</i>
MPSA	Military Postal Service Agency
OVI	Overseas Voting Initiative
<i>UOCAVA</i>	<i>Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act</i>
USPS	United States Postal Service
UVAO	Unit Voting Assistance Officer
<i>Guide</i>	<i>Voting Assistance Guide</i>
VAO	Voting Assistance Officer



FVAP.gov

office: 1-800-438-VOTE

fax: 703-693-5527

vote@fvap.gov

Facebook.com/DoDFVAP * Twitter @FVAP