



2014 Post-Election Report to Congress

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 report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$1,784,000 for the 2015 Fiscal Year. This includes \$1,739,000 in expenses and \$45,000 in DoD labor. Graphic elements prepared in-house by FVAP staff. Generated on 2015Jun22 – RefID: D-7B219F1.



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. It includes findings from FVAP's post-election surveys and provides an assessment of activities supporting the 2014 General Election. It is important to remember that FVAP is an assistance agency — its mission is to inform voters of their right to vote and provide the tools and resources to help those who want to vote do so successfully — from anywhere in the world.

FVAP's 2012 report recommended areas for action to further improve voting assistance efforts. Thanks to collaboration with FVAP's 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. This report provides greater detail on these initiatives and introduces new efforts to support stakeholders during the 2016 election cycle.

Post-Election Voting Data

FVAP completed its statistical analysis of voter registration and participation rates, which included controlling for age and sex in order to normalize the active duty military (ADM) to be demographically similar to the citizen voting age population (CVAP).

- The analysis showed that the ADM rate of registration was higher than that of the CVAP, although lower than the last midterm election in 2010.
- In contrast, the voter participation rate of the ADM was slightly lower than that of the CVAP. Participation rates decreased for both the ADM and CVAP populations since the last midterm election.
- FVAP's 2014 survey data showed that ADM who are married have higher participation and absentee voting rates. Married ADM also reported higher rates of requesting and returning absentee ballots compared to unmarried ADM in 2014.

Fast Fact!

Using a DoD resource increases the likelihood that military members will return their ballots.

- Building upon 2012 research, FVAP continued to identify a statistically significant relationship between the use of the Department of Defense (DoD) network of voting assistance resources, including FVAP, Unit Voting Assistance Officers, and Installation Voter Assistance Offices, and the likelihood of an active duty member returning his or her absentee ballot.

The data show that 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. However, the data continue to reveal a need to increase awareness of resources.

Assessment of FVAP Activities

In fulfilling DoD's responsibilities under the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)*, 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 2014 to improve processes, programs and tools, there is still much to do. 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; and
3. Enhance measures of effectiveness and participation.

Reduced Obstacles to Active Duty Military Voting Success

Using lessons learned since the 2012 election cycle, FVAP further explored how to reduce obstacles by improving its resources throughout DoD. Initiatives to help remove barriers included revision and publication of the Federal Post Card Application and the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot forms, redesign of the FVAP.gov website and outreach with local election officials. However, one of the most immediate methods for removing barriers from the absentee voting process is through the use of DoD voting assistance, which increases the likelihood of an active duty member returning his or her absentee ballot. FVAP will continue its efforts to improve awareness to enhance usage of the available resources.

**LOOKING
AHEAD:** FVAP
is standardizing
*Voting Assistance
Guide* content and
rewriting in plain
language.



Expanded UOCAVA Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives for All Populations

Leading up to the 2014 election cycle, FVAP developed branded education and outreach materials, such as brochures, wallet cards, the *Voting Assistance Guide*, FVAP.gov website, fact sheets and posters as part of FVAP's election preparation efforts.

FVAP executed an active, comprehensive outreach program with the new suite of informational materials to brand the organization as a trusted resource for absentee voting assistance for the military and as a professional representative of the Department of Defense for overseas citizens.

The 2014 post-election data showed overall awareness still needs improvement. FVAP will make several targeted improvements to increase awareness and encourage the use of tools to enhance not only resource utilization but also voter comprehension of key absentee voting forms.



As the ADM data indicated that marital status is an important predictor of voting behavior, FVAP will improve outreach to military spouses and leverage their influence in FVAP's education and awareness efforts. Conversely, this points to a continued need for FVAP to target younger, unmarried first-time voters to help ensure they are informed of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to

successfully do so from anywhere in the world.

Enhanced Measures of Effectiveness and Participation

FVAP has made important progress in enhancing its measures of effectiveness. FVAP has continued its work with a Federally Funded Research & Development Center to further improve FVAP metrics collection, research the most appropriate methods for evaluating voter behavior and trends and gather insight on how to measure voting assistance effectiveness. FVAP standardized metrics for the Services to measure effect and performance and consolidated survey efforts with the EAC to improve data quality and reduce the overall burden on election officials.

Fast Fact!

Thanks to interagency collaboration, FVAP and the EAC issued a single survey that included FVAP's *UOCAVA* questions as part of the EAC's post-election survey of election officials.

Recommendations

Although FVAP made extensive improvements in the array of resources it makes available to its stakeholders, increasing awareness of these resources remains one of FVAP's top priorities.

Based on 2014 election data and program activities, three themes continue as areas of focus that FVAP will undertake in support of the upcoming 2016 election cycle:

- 1. Reduce Obstacles to Active Duty Military Voting Success.** The suite of Department voting assistance tools work together to support military members' ability to participate in the electoral process. As with all U.S. citizens, the decision whether to cast a vote in an election is a personal choice. While voter participation may be an indicator, it does not provide a complete picture of FVAP's ability to effectively assist voters or reduce obstacles to voter success. FVAP is working with national-level election organizations to provide policy recommendations to the States, and is working toward standardization of the *Voting Assistance Guide* (a catalog of State-specific processes and regulations that military and overseas citizen voters should follow to successfully register to vote and cast an absentee ballot).
- 2. Continue Expansion of Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives for All Populations.** Survey data indicate programs were most successful when voter populations were aware of the tools and resources available; however, overall

awareness was low. FVAP will undertake several initiatives to improve active duty military voter awareness, such as the development of a direct-to-voter training module and several targeted improvements to encourage use of tools to enhance not only resource utilization but also voter comprehension of key absentee voting forms. Specifically, it will improve outreach efforts targeted at first-time voters and implement campaigns across social media and digital marketing platforms.

- 3. Enhance Measures of Effectiveness.** Since delivery of its 2012 Report to Congress, FVAP has made important strides in improving its ability to assess voting assistance efforts, such as the development of improved metrics for the Services to measure performance and its consolidated survey effort with the EAC. FVAP will continue work to enhance capabilities; its upcoming research on the viability of a new methodology and statistical modeling approach hopes to capture more information on overseas citizens' demographics in order to estimate registration and participation rates.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
Background.....	1
The Law and its Requirements.....	1
Post-Election Voting Surveys.....	3
The Active Duty Military Population.....	4
Statistical Significance: Use of DoD Resources and Voting Propensity.....	11
Local Election Officials.....	15
Collection and Delivery of Ballots for Uniformed Services Voters Serving Overseas.....	21
Procedures for Handling Overseas Military Ballots.....	21
Ballots Collected and Delivered to Overseas Uniformed Services.....	22
Expediting and Tracking Overseas Uniformed Services Ballots.....	25
Assessment of FVAP Activities.....	27
Reduce Obstacles to Active Duty Military Voting Success.....	28
Expand <i>UOCAVA</i> Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives for All Populations.....	37
Enhancing Measures of Effectiveness and Participation.....	48
Federal and State Cooperation.....	51
Electronic Absentee Systems for Elections (EASE) Research Grant Program.....	51
<i>UOCAVA</i> Waivers and Cooperation with the Department of Justice.....	54
Military and Department of State Voting Assistance Programs.....	56
Military Voting Assistance Programs.....	56
Department of State Voting Assistance Program.....	64
Conclusions.....	66
Glossary.....	71





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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, assigns the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness as 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 Service Secretaries 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 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.

Post-Election Voting Surveys

Section Overview: The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) completed its statistical analysis of voter registration and participation rates, which included controlling for age and sex in order to normalize the active duty military (ADM) to be demographically similar to the citizen voting age population (CVAP). The analysis showed that the ADM rate of registration was higher than that of the CVAP. In contrast, the ADM participation rate was slightly lower than that of the CVAP. Overall, ADM registration and participation declined from 2010 to 2014; the decrease in participation rate corresponds with that of the CVAP.

Building upon 2012 research, FVAP continued to identify a statistically significant relationship between the use of the DoD network of voting assistance resources, including FVAP, Unit Voting Assistance Officers, and Installation Voter Assistance Offices, and the likelihood of an active duty member returning his or her absentee ballot.

In preparation for this report, FVAP surveyed five stakeholder populations following the 2014 General Election. The Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), using industry standards, developed and administered four surveys.

1. The Post-Election Voting (PEV) Qualitative Survey of Local Election Officials (LEOs) asked LEOs about FVAP resources and their usefulness.
2. The PEV Survey of Department of State Voting Assistance Officers (DOS VAO) asked DOS VAOs about FVAP resources and their usefulness.
3. The PEV Survey of Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs) asked military UVAOs about FVAP resources and their usefulness.
4. The PEV Survey of the Active Duty Military (ADM) asked the ADM population about their absentee voting experiences as well as their familiarity with Department of Defense resources and their usefulness.

Fast Fact!

FVAP surveyed five key stakeholder groups to assess voter activity and experiences — and to evaluate program effectiveness.

Fast Fact!

Thanks to interagency collaboration, FVAP and the EAC issued a single survey that included FVAP's *UOCAVA* questions as part of the EAC's post-election survey of election officials.

FVAP's fifth source of data for analysis, the PEV Quantitative Survey of Local Election Officials (LEOs), was integrated into the Election Assistance Commission's (EAC) Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS).¹

This report discusses the resulting analysis for each stakeholder population. To the greatest extent possible, FVAP draws comparisons between the 2014 general election cycle and the 2010 general election cycle as both were midterm election years, which typically experience lower participation as compared to Presidential election years. However, other services that impact FVAP stakeholders, such as VAOs and LEOs, may draw comparisons between 2012 and 2014 as they are not dependent upon levels of voter participation or interest, but reflect an assessment of FVAP program support.

The Active Duty Military Population

Many election observers, including FVAP, make direct comparisons between the ADM voter registration and participation rates and those of the CVAP. The ADM is

LOOKING AHEAD: FVAP will conduct additional analyses of voter rates and release a supplemental research note later this year.

proportionally much more male and a much younger population than the CVAP. Historically, male and younger voters participate at lower rates than female and older voters, which can drive down the overall voter participation rates of the military. In an attempt to compare registration and participation rates in previous reports, FVAP controlled for age and sex using industry standard statistical methods in order to normalize the ADM population to be demographically similar to the CVAP. When comparing civilian and military voting rates, it is important to recognize that this adjustment does not capture all of the differences between the populations. Research shows that the military and civilian populations are significantly dissimilar regarding two additional characteristics, education and mobility.²

¹ The complete tabulations of responses with the statistical methodology reports for each of the five surveys and the non-response bias study can be found at www.fvap.gov/info/reports-surveys.

² U.S. Census Bureau. Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2008. Available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/tables.html>

Following the 2012 election, FVAP worked with DMDC 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 ADM and CVAP. In 2014, FVAP released a subsequent research note that compared these demographic factors from the CVAP population to the ADM.³ This was done in response to direct criticisms received regarding the manner in which FVAP adjusted its registration and participation rates. In order to maintain the integrity of its survey data, FVAP took voting data for CVAP and adjusted it to reflect the demographic profile of the ADM. This approach, as documented in the 2014 research note, further validated FVAP's original findings on voter registration and participation rates.

FVAP will use this new methodology to conduct additional analysis on 2014 post-election survey data and will release a supplemental research note to this report in September 2015. Provided this approach is validated once again for its accuracy, FVAP will rely on this approach in the future, releasing research notes containing the comparison analyses separately due to the timeframes when necessary data are made available to FVAP.

In 2010, 71% of the ADM received their ballot; in 2014, 77% of the ADM received their ballot.

Fast Fact!

2014 Active Duty Military Voter Registration Rates

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

Active Duty Military (ADM):⁴ The ADM survey population includes active duty members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard. (Does not reflect adjustments that normalize the ADM to be demographically similar to the CVAP; adjusted rates should be used when making direct comparisons to CVAP, as the ADM is demographically younger and more male, which typically drive down voter rates.)

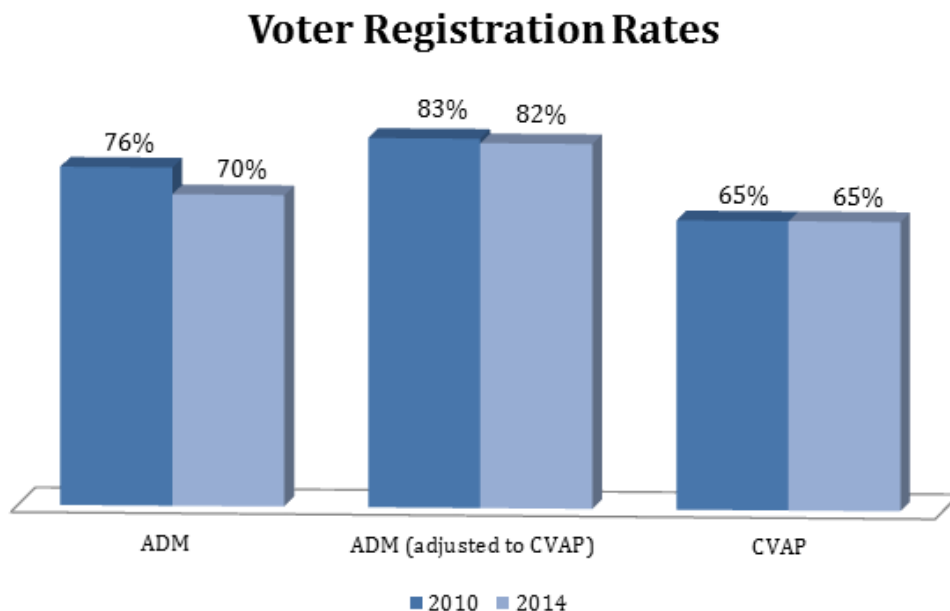
³ The research note for the 2012 post-election data can be found at <http://www.fvap.gov/info/news/new-research-on-adm-participation-rate>.

⁴ Although previous ADM surveys included members of the Reserve component population in the Active Guard/Reserve or who were activated on Election Day, only active duty members were included in the 2014 survey.

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

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

Figure 1: Comparison of 2010 and 2014 Voter Registration Rates⁶



When comparing the last two midterm election years, Figure 1 shows that the ADM registration rate decreased from 2010 to 2014.⁷ The data show that 70% of the ADM were registered to vote in 2014.⁸ This decrease in registration does not correspond

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau Voting Supplement available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/>

⁶ The 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM did not include members of the Guard/Reserve. The 2010 ADM survey did include members of the Guard/Reserve component population who were in the Active Guard/Reserve or who were activated on Election Day. Where applicable in this report, 2010 ADM data have been limited to active duty military only in order to compare the 2010 ADM survey results to the 2014 ADM survey results.

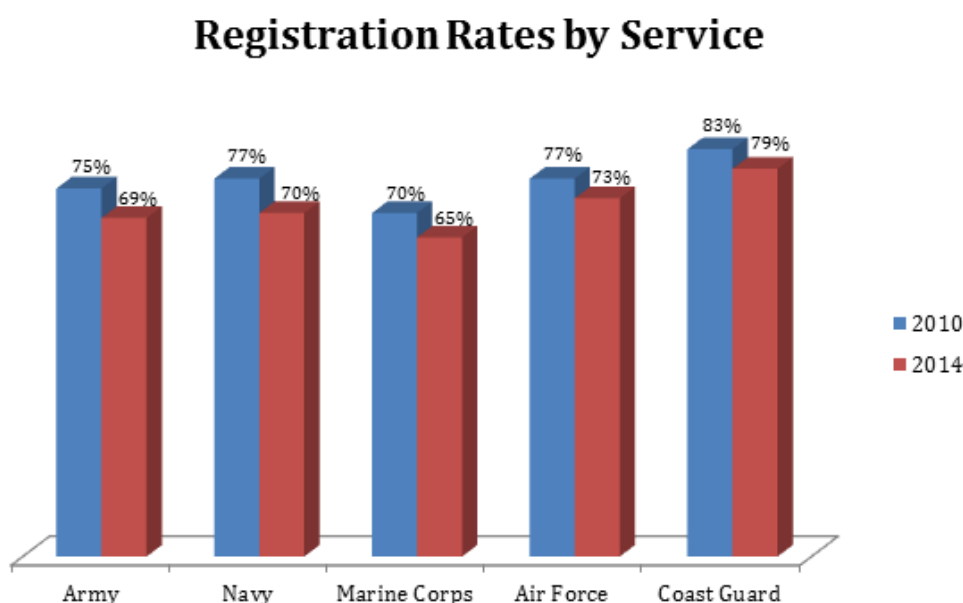
⁷ 2010 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 14

⁸ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 11

with that of the CVAP; however, the data show that the ADM continue to be registered to vote at a greater rate than that of the CVAP.⁹

Figure 2 provides a comparison of 2010 and 2014 voter registration rates by Service and shows an overall decrease across the Services.

Figure 2: Comparison of 2010 and 2014 Voter Registration Rates by Service¹⁰



Active Duty Military Voter Participation Rates

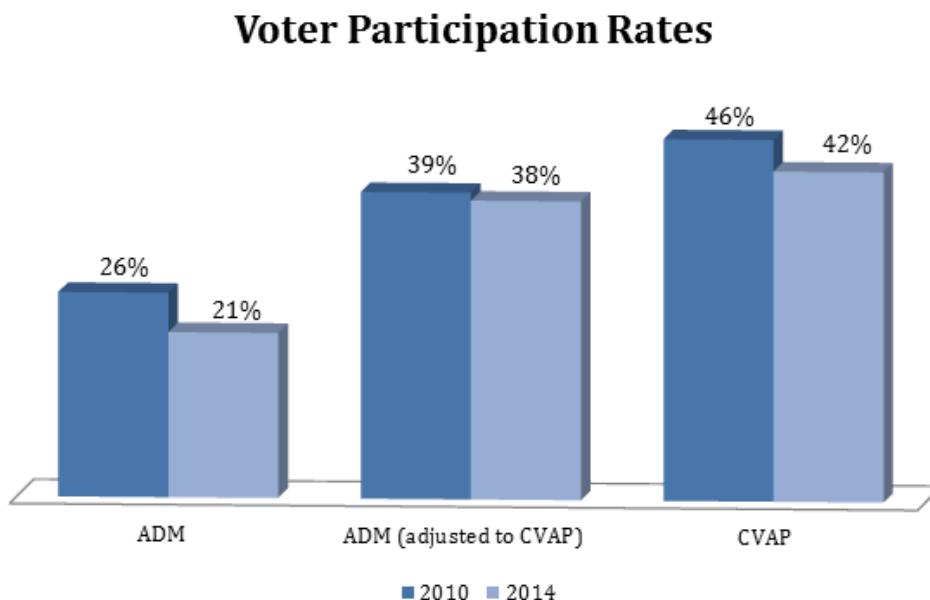
Figure 3 compares the population groups based on overall participation rates. Voter participation is traditionally reported simply on voting, regardless of method of voting (e.g., in-person on Election Day, early voting or absentee). Participation rates are reported this way historically since comparable data sources do not adequately isolate voting methods.¹¹

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau Voting Supplement available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/>

¹⁰ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 11

¹¹ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 34

Figure 3: Comparison of 2010 and 2014 Voter Participation Rates



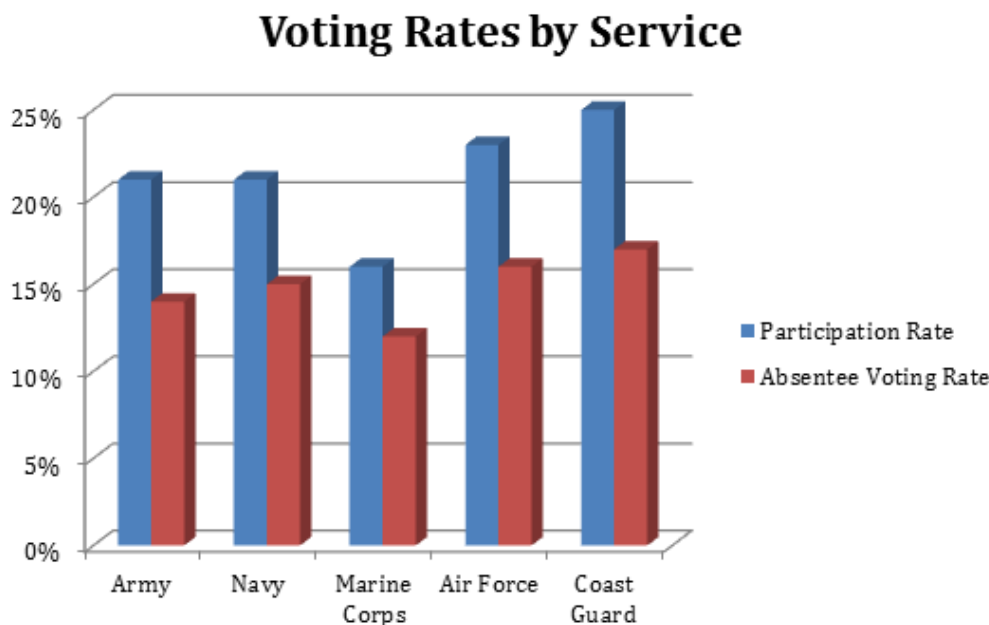
As shown in Figure 3, participation by the ADM decreased from 2010 to 2014.¹² While the initial participation rates for ADM appear drastically lower than the CVAP population, after adjusting for age and sex, the ADM participation rate is slightly lower than that of the CVAP. FVAP has identified additional demographic factors that provide greater equivalency between the ADM and CVAP and its methodology as stated. FVAP will release this supplemental research in September 2015.

The Active Duty Military Absentee Voter

Participation rates reported historically by FVAP are based on actual participation regardless of voting method (e.g., in-person on Election Day, early voting or absentee). Because FVAP program activities are intended for absent military members, FVAP narrowed its analysis of survey data to the ADM who voted absentee. Figure 4 provides participation and absentee voting rates by Service and shows that of the ADM who voted, the majority voted by absentee ballot.

¹² 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 34; 2010 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 20

Figure 4: 2014 Voting Rates by Service¹³



Active Duty Ballot Request, Receipt and Return Rates

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

Because the 2010 and 2014 surveys of the ADM used different survey designs, it is difficult to draw major conclusions when comparing the rate of the ADM

¹³ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 34; participation rate includes all methods of voting (e.g., in-person, early or absentee). Absentee voting rate reflects those members who specifically stated they voted absentee during the 2014 General Election.

requesting, receiving and returning ballots.¹⁴ However, the survey data reveal an increase in the rate of the ADM receiving their ballots in 2014.¹⁵ In 2010, 71% of the ADM received their ballot; in 2014, 77% of the ADM received their ballot. As shown in Figure 5, when not adjusting the 2014 data to produce comparable estimates to 2010, 76% of the ADM received their ballot.¹⁶

As stated in the 2012 report, ADM who are married have higher participation and absentee voting rates. Married ADM also report higher rates of requesting and returning absentee ballots compared to unmarried ADM in 2014.

Fast Fact!

Using a DoD resource increases the likelihood that military members will return their ballots.

14 The ADM questionnaire was restructured in 2012 to allow for data collection that would provide a vastly more comprehensive depiction of the voting experience. The absentee ballot items on the 2010 survey contained additional skip logic that was not present on the 2014 survey, making comparisons between the estimates less clear. When directly comparing 2010 and 2014 survey results, the results from the 2014 survey were subset to the same skip logic criteria that were used in 2010. (Regarding the referenced skip logic: The 2010 survey question that asked respondents if they requested an absentee ballot in the 2010 election was limited to those who indicated they definitely did not vote in that election. The remaining absentee ballot questions were limited to those that voted absentee or those who definitely did not vote, but requested an absentee ballot.) Skip logic is a survey term to describe a feature that changes what question or page a respondent sees next based on how they answer the current question. Also known as “conditional branching” or “branch logic,” skip logic creates a custom path through the survey that varies based on a respondent’s answers.

15 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 17 & 24

16 The 2010 survey question that asked whether the ADM received their ballot was limited to only those who reported voting absentee in the election or who did not vote but requested an absentee ballot. Results from the 2014 survey were limited to respondents who reported they voted absentee in the election, or did not vote but requested an absentee ballot to produce comparable estimates.

Figure 5: 2014 Voting Rates by Marital Status¹⁷

	Total ADM	Married ADM	Unmarried ADM
Registration Rate	70%	74%	64%
Participation Rate	21%	25%	14%
Absentee Voting Rate	14%	18%	10%
Requested an absentee ballot	17%	21%	12%
Received an absentee ballot	76%	76%	78%
Returned an absentee ballot	58%	60%	54%

The overall voting participation rate for the ADM was 21%; but for unmarried members, the voting participation rate was 14%, and the rate for married ADM members was higher at 25%.¹⁸ Absentee ballot return statistics mirror this trend. Of unmarried members who received an absentee ballot, 54% completed and returned their ballots; comparatively, 60% of married members completed and returned their ballots.¹⁹

Statistical Significance: Use of DoD Resources and Voting Propensity

Following the 2014 election, FVAP built upon its previous findings from 2012 to determine if there is a continued statistically significant and positive relationship between DoD activities and the likelihood of an active duty member actually voting and returning his or her absentee ballot.

To evaluate the overall statistical impact of the DoD suite of voting assistance resources — those provided by FVAP, Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs) and

¹⁷ Percent of the ADM who received an absentee ballot is calculated out of those who requested an absentee ballot; percent who returned an absentee ballot is calculated out of those who received an absentee ballot and those who automatically received an absentee ballot from a local election official; 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 5, 17, 24, 27 & 34

¹⁸ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 5 & 34

¹⁹ This difference is statistically significant ($p < .01$); 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 5 & 27

Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices — on voting participation rates, FVAP again conducted an additional analysis of the 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM to identify the extent to which these resources continue to contribute positively to a voter’s experience.

During the 2014 election cycle, of those ADM who needed assistance and reported seeking information or assistance from FVAP, UVAOs or IVA Offices, 81% returned their absentee ballot. Of those ADM who needed assistance but did not report seeking information or assistance from FVAP, UVAOs or IVA Offices, 46% returned their absentee ballot. This statistically significant difference²⁰ indicates that the ADM who needed assistance and sought it from a DoD resource were significantly more likely to report returning their absentee ballot compared to the ADM who needed assistance but did not seek it from a DoD resource.²¹

Of those ADM who needed assistance and reported seeking information or assistance from FVAP, UVAOs or IVA Offices:

- 73% sought assistance from FVAP;
- 52% sought assistance from UVAOs; and
- 22% sought assistance from IVA Offices.²²

As depicted in Figure 6, the difference in reported ballot return rates for those who sought assistance from a DoD resource compared to those who needed assistance but did not seek it from a DoD resource is more pronounced for 18- to 29-year-olds compared to older ADM.

Figure 6: ADM Who Reported Returning Absentee Ballots by Age²³

	Sought Assistance from DoD Resource	Did not Seek Assistance from DoD Resource
Total ADM	81%	46%
18 to 29 years old	83%	35%
30 years old or more	80%	56%

20 Statistically significant at $p < .0001$

21 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 27 & 45

22 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 45

23 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 3, 27 & 45

For example, of those ADM age 18 to 29 years old who needed assistance and sought assistance from a DoD resource, 83% reported returning their absentee ballot. Of those same ADM who did not seek assistance from a DoD resource, 35% reported returning their absentee ballot. In comparison, of those ADM age 30 years old or more who needed assistance and sought assistance from a DoD resource, 80% reported returning their absentee ballot. Of those same ADM who did not seek assistance from a DoD resource, 56% reported returning their absentee ballot.

FVAP first reported this statistically significant positive relationship in its 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress. Additional analysis led to the release of a supplemental research note explaining the influence of the various DoD voting assistance resources such as the FVAP.gov website, UVAOs and IVA Offices.²⁴ FVAP will pursue this in-depth analysis again and release a subsequent research note later this year; however, a preliminary review of specific DoD resources and return rates are provided in Figures 7 and 8.

As depicted in Figure 7, of those ADM who needed assistance and reported seeking assistance from FVAP, 81% returned their ballot. Of those ADM who needed assistance and reported seeking assistance from UVAOs or IVA Offices, 80% returned their ballot. In comparison, of those ADM who needed assistance, but did not seek it from a DoD resource, only 46% reported returning their absentee ballot.

Figure 7: ADM Who Reported Returning Absentee Ballot By Type of Assistance Requested²⁵

	Returned Absentee Ballot
Needed, but did not seek, assistance from DoD Resource	46%
Sought Assistance from DoD Resource (FVAP/UVAOs/IVA Offices)	81%
Sought assistance from FVAP	81%
Sought assistance from UVAOs or IVA Offices	80%

²⁴ The research note for the 2012 post-election data can be found at <http://www.fvap.gov/info/news/2014/10/30/research-shows-relationship-between-voting-and-dod-resource>

²⁵ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 27 & 45

Additionally, of those ADM who needed assistance and reported seeking information or assistance from a DoD resource:²⁶

- 45% reported seeking assistance from FVAP only;
- 20% reported seeking assistance from UVAOs only;
- 2% reported seeking assistance from IVA Offices only; and
- 32% reported seeking assistance from some combination of the three resources.

This demonstrates that some ADM use the variety of resources available to them — but also points to the need for FVAP and the Services to improve awareness of voting assistance resources.

First-Time Voters²⁷

Of those ADM who reported it was their first time voting or trying to vote in-person or absentee in an election and reported seeking information or assistance from FVAP, UVAOs or IVA Offices:

- 78% sought assistance from FVAP;
- 55% sought assistance from UVAOs; and
- 29% sought assistance from IVA Offices.²⁸

DoD resource usage is also beneficial for first-time voters. As shown in Figure 8, during the 2014 election cycle, of those ADM who needed assistance and reported it was their first time voting or trying to vote, and who sought assistance from a DoD resource, 81% returned their absentee ballot. Of those same ADM who needed assistance but did not seek information or assistance from a DoD resource, only 45% returned their absentee ballot.

²⁶ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 45

²⁷ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 27, 37 & 45. This difference is statistically significant at $p < .01$, indicating that ADM members who needed assistance, reported it was their first time voting or trying to vote in-person or absentee in an election and sought assistance from a DoD resource were significantly more likely to report returning their absentee ballot compared to the same ADM members who needed assistance but did not seek it from a DoD resource.

²⁸ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 37 & 45

Figure 8: ADM First-Time Voters Who Reported Returning Absentee Ballot²⁹

	Returned Absentee Ballot
Needed, but did not seek, assistance from DoD Resource	45%
Sought Assistance from DoD resource (FVAP/UVAOs/IVA Offices)	81%

The positive relationship between DoD resource usage and the likelihood of voters returning their ballots continues to be a significant finding for FVAP, the rest of DoD and *UOCAVA* voters. FVAP will continue researching this finding to isolate the exact relationship and determine how it can inform allocation of resources toward further improvements to FVAP programs.

Local Election Officials³⁰

In 2013, the EAC and FVAP entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish a joint survey effort for 2014 that enables both agencies to meet their core requirements while reducing the overall burden on election officials. This effort completed a goal that was recognized when FVAP, the EAC and the National Association of State Election Directors agreed in 2011 to work toward a single survey instrument.

LOOKING AHEAD: FVAP is working to identify jurisdictions with higher-than-average rejection rates and correlate to requirements that may impose hardships.

As a result of this successful interagency initiative, FVAP and the EAC issued a single survey which included FVAP's *UOCAVA* survey questions as part of the EAC's post-election survey of election officials (Section B). The EAC now collects the survey

²⁹ First-time voters include those ADM who reported it was their first time voting or trying to vote in-person or absentee; 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 27, 37 & 45

³⁰ All values are estimates which include margins of error. Estimates for the subparts of a question often sum to a value that does not exactly match the total estimate for that question. Similarly, groups of questions may not have expected relationships. For example, ballots counted and ballots rejected do not always sum perfectly to ballots received. Three main reasons contribute to these differences between totals. First, State election officials may have misinterpreted a question or may have incorrectly entered values when responding to the survey. Second, the complex relationships between survey items create difficulty in maintaining all logical relationships. Finally, data for some questions required imputation due to item missing data rates and it is difficult to maintain all logical relationships when imputing for missing data.

data and shares it with the Department of Defense; FVAP serves as the lead for analyzing these data:

- The EAC and FVAP both report data on *UOCAVA* voters and their ballots. Per the MOU between FVAP and the EAC, FVAP serves as the lead agency for reporting official statistics regarding *UOCAVA* data (Section B of the Election Administration and Voting Survey).
- The EAC administers the survey and transmits to FVAP unedited *UOCAVA* data as reported by election officials.
- The data presented in this report will differ slightly from EAC's reporting of *UOCAVA* data because DMDC performs statistical adjustments to the data, including editing, imputation and survey weighting.

The survey is conducted to better understand the election environment, the resulting impact of FVAP program efforts and also shed more light on the *UOCAVA* voter's experience from those administering the election.

Overseas Citizen Voters

Due to outstanding challenges associated with quantifying and identifying the overseas citizen population, voter registration and participation figures are unavailable for this *UOCAVA* population. FVAP is currently fielding a pilot survey of known overseas citizen voters from the 2014 General Election 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. In the interim, some elements of overseas citizen voting behavior can be determined through the EAC/FVAP LEO survey.

Due to the substantial changes in the EAC/FVAP data collection process and methodology, comparing data from 2014 and 2010 is difficult.³¹ In addition, some of the estimates have large margins of error which limit the use of LEO survey data in terms of any statistical relevancies and may limit FVAP's ability to infer too many conclusions; all associated findings should be seen as observations only and require additional research and validation.

³¹ See Appendix at <http://www.fvap.gov/info/reports-surveys/search-reports-surveys> (use "2014 appendix" in keyword search).

These survey data, though limited in their ability to make comparisons across elections, will enable FVAP to focus on areas of high *UOCAVA* voter concentration and understand more about State challenges. Ultimately, FVAP plans to find lessons learned and share these observations with States.

Key observations based on the 2014 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs³² on the use of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) include:

- Of the total number of registered and eligible voters in the U.S., less than 1%³³ were covered by *UOCAVA*,³⁴
- An estimated 46,382 FPCAs were received from Uniformed Services voters;³⁵
- An estimated 60,932 FPCAs were received from overseas citizen voters;³⁶
- Approximately 2% of all FPCAs were rejected;³⁷ and
- Of all FPCAs received from Uniformed Services voters, approximately 4% were rejected versus approximately 1% of FPCAs were rejected from overseas citizens.³⁸

The causes of the rejections are unclear. As reported in FVAP's 2012 Post-Election Report, it is possible voters are confused about their overall eligibility for voting absentee. For example, some States may permit "no excuse" absentee voting in which all voters may choose to vote absentee; however, other States may only permit voters to vote absentee when they are away from their home address. For those ADM who have returned home and can vote locally, submitting an application for an absentee

32 All values are estimates which include margins of error. Estimates for the subparts of a question often sum to a value that does not exactly match the total estimate for that question. Similarly, groups of questions may not have expected relationships. For example, ballots counted and ballots rejected do not always sum perfectly to ballots received. Three main reasons contribute to these differences between totals. First, State election officials may have misinterpreted a question or may have incorrectly entered values when responding to the survey. Second, the complex relationships between survey items create difficulty in maintaining all logical relationships. Finally, data for some questions required imputation due to item missing data rates and it is difficult to maintain all logical relationships when imputing for missing data.

33 All percentages are rounded.

34 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B19a & A1a

35 Uniformed Service voters are members of a Uniformed Service, members of the merchant marine, and spouses or dependents of a member who are qualified to vote. 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Question B20b

36 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Question B20c

37 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B20a &

38 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B20b, B20c, B21a & B21b

ballot may result in a rejection based on a review of their eligibility. FVAP will work to improve voter form comprehension and continue to research FPCA rejection rates across and within each of the States.

Key observations based on the 2014 Post-Election Quantitative Voting Survey of LEOs on absentee ballot processing include:

- An estimated 426,635 absentee ballots were transmitted to *UOCAVA* voters;³⁹
- Of the total absentee ballots received from *UOCAVA* voters, 5% were rejected;⁴⁰
- Of the absentee ballots received from Uniformed Services voters, 6% were rejected versus 5% of absentee ballots rejected from overseas citizens;⁴¹
- 62% of total ballots were sent to the voter by mail;
- 38% of total ballots) were sent to the voter by email; and
- 1% of total ballots) were sent to the voter by fax.⁴²

The primary reason reported for ballot rejection was receipt of the ballot after the statutory election deadline.⁴³ When isolating a potential correlation between the methods of transmission of the blank ballot to voters and rejection due to receipt after the deadline:

- 61% of ballots rejected were sent to the voter by mail;
- 43% of ballots rejected were sent to the voter by email; and
- 4% of ballots rejected were sent to the voter by fax.⁴⁴

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

39 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Question B1a

40 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B26a & B28e

41 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B26b, B26c, B28a & B28b

42 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B1a, B24ac, B24bc & B24cc

43 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B28e & B29_Total

44 Specifically, 'sent to voters' denotes the transmission method of blank ballots from LEOs to voters; 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B29ac, B29bc, B29cc & B29_Total; Survey instrument says 'other'; 'other' considered to be fax based on previous survey administrations.

later in this report, FVAP is working to identify jurisdictions that yield higher-than-average ballot-rejection rates from military and overseas voters and attempt to correlate those to processes and requirements that may indirectly impose hardships. Conversely, FVAP is looking at States that have lower-than-average ballot-rejection rates to understand what is working well. Ultimately, FVAP plans to find lessons learned and share these observations with States.

A growing number of States offer the option of returning a voted ballot electronically. Sixty-eight (68%) percent of *UOCAVA* voters returned their ballots through the postal system, and 22% chose to return their ballots by email with an estimated 8% returning their ballots by fax.⁴⁵

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

Key observations on the use of the FWAB include:

- Of those ADM who reported requesting an absentee ballot but not receiving it, 11% reported using the FWAB to cast votes for federal office and State or local offices as permitted under State law;⁴⁶
- Of the estimated 2,277 FWABs received from *UOCAVA* voters, 74% were counted with a 26% rejection rate;⁴⁷
 - * Approximately 20% of the rejected FWABs were rejected because they were received after the absentee ballot receipt deadline (5% of total FWABs received were rejected for this reason);⁴⁸
 - * Approximately 26% of the rejected FWABs were rejected because the regular absentee ballot was received and counted; however, this indicates that the FWAB served its purpose as a backup ballot (7% of total FWABs received were rejected for this reason);⁴⁹ and
 - * When removing the reported FWAB rejections because the regular absentee ballot was received and counted, approximately 19% of FWABs

45 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B26a, B27ac, B27bc & B27cc

46 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 38

47 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B31e, B32e & B35e

48 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B31e, B32e & B34a

49 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B33, B31e, B33a, B34 & B31e

received were rejected.⁵⁰

LEOs rejected FWABs submitted from Uniformed Services voters at a rate comparable to those submitted by overseas citizens.⁵¹ FVAP needs to research the specific causes of FWAB rejections to understand if the various *UOCAVA* populations differ in usage and timeliness of submitting FWABs.

High rejection rates for the FWAB are expected given its backup role. However, this is likely another area where voter confusion is a contributing factor. For example, some States require a potential FWAB user to have submitted an application 30 days prior to the election, mirroring the State-prescribed deadline for voter registration, which is the minimum requirement under federal law. If voters do not fully understand these particular requirements, it may lead to high instances of FWAB rejections. As detailed in the “Assessment of FVAP Activities” section, while awareness of the FWAB has increased, FVAP needs to continue improving voter comprehension of the form’s proper usage and adherence to State requirements for acceptance.

Overall data from LEOs on the final accounting of *UOCAVA* absentee balloting materials point to the need for more transactional levels of data, not just those resulting from surveys. Data points such as these provide an overall picture, but the individual voter’s experience is lost. FVAP remains focused on the individual voter’s experience and the factors that will prevent rejection or increase the opportunity for success. FVAP, through its work with the Council of State Governments, is exploring avenues to standardize and collect data on the individual *UOCAVA* voter experience and gain an improved sense of the root causes for ballot rejections. This effort and resulting findings are targeted to be conducted surrounding the 2016 General Election.

⁵⁰ 2014 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B31e, B32e & B34a

⁵¹ 2012 Election Administration and Voting Survey, Questions B31a, B31b, B32a & B32b

Collection and Delivery of Ballots for Uniformed Services Voters Serving Overseas

Section Overview: The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and DoD Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) facilitate the delivery of election materials between overseas military voters and local election officials. Pursuant to section 20304 of title 52, U.S.C., these agencies provide expedited mail delivery service for Uniformed Services voters' absentee ballots in general elections, which are processed before other classes of mail. The overall average transit time of voted ballots from the absentee voter to election offices was 5.1 days — more than a day faster than the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act's (UOCAVA)* seven-day requirement.

Procedures for Handling Overseas Military Ballots

Details regarding inbound ballots during the 2014 General Election are described below:

- Inbound blank absentee ballots from local election officials (LEOs) are initially sorted at a USPS International Service Center prior to dispatching them to overseas military postal activities.
- Military postal clerks process and deliver ballots through post office boxes or unit delivery.
- For ballots that cannot be delivered as addressed:
 - *A directory clerk attempts to locate addressees via change-of-address cards on file, local personnel management systems or global address listings.
 - *If a new address is found, the absentee ballot is then dispatched (forwarded) and delivered to the current address on file, either overseas or domestic.



*If no new address information is found, the absentee ballot is returned to the election official marked “undeliverable as addressed.”

Ballots Collected and Delivered to Overseas Uniformed Services

Between September 1, 2014, and December 6, 2014,⁵² the Military Postal Service postmarked and dispatched 10,491 voted absentee ballots from military voters to local election offices using Express Mail Service. The average transit time of ballots to election offices was 5.1 days. Military Post Offices (MPOs) received 4,933 (33%) that were undeliverable as addressed (UAA) from election officials with 2,968 (20%) redirected to current addresses while 1,965 (13%) were returned to sender. Though this percentage represents a 17% decline from the 2010 election when the rate was nearly 50%, it is an increase from the 15% received during the 2012 election. The UAA ballots may be attributed to three factors:

- Election offices did not validate current addresses of voters;
- Extended periods of *UOCAVA* eligibility under State law; or
- Absentee voters did not update mailing addresses with election offices.⁵³

LOOKING AHEAD:

DoD and the USPS recently modernized mail systems, enabling improved address list maintenance. A decrease in undeliverable-as-addressed ballots expected for the 2016 election.

The top five States for UAA ballots in 2014 were California, New York, Florida, Washington and Colorado. The high number of UAA ballots in these States may be directly attributed to extended periods of time of eligibility for the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) in which voters automatically receive ballots for elections as all five States have periods of eligibility for the FPCA ranging from two to eight years. This may also point to a need for greater levels of address-list-maintenance efforts (similar or equal to those required under the *National Voter Registration Act*) for *UOCAVA* voters in these States.

The issue of undeliverable ballots is a point of concern as the additional time for redirecting a ballot increases the likelihood of the voter not

⁵² MPSA continues to deliver voted ballots after Election Day; several States accept and count ballots from *UOCAVA* voters after Election Day. FVAP and MPSA also support States such as Louisiana that conduct a runoff election for federal office in December.

⁵³ MPSA After Action and Lessons Learned of the 2014 General Election

receiving a full ballot in a timely manner — resulting in the need for casting a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot, or worse, jeopardizing a voter's ability to successfully cast a ballot at all.

To combat this issue, DoD and USPS modernized military mail systems and now provide a proactive way to encourage military members to update their mailing address with election officials. These initiatives are described in greater detail below; the Department anticipates a resulting decrease in UAA ballots during the 2016 election.

USPS Postal Automated Redirection System (PARS)

- In November 2014, MPSA and USPS deployed modifications to the USPS postal automated redirection system for military address recognition.
- Now, when standard-sized ballot envelopes are processed through USPS, the integration of MPSA and USPS address-change information will process a ballot for forwarding before transmitting it overseas. In the past, MPSA may have had a separate listing of address changes that would result in delays as ballots were sent overseas before being redirected.
- State and local election officials often use the National Change of Address (NCOA) database to conduct maintenance on lists of registered voters. In the past, the NCOA database excluded overseas/APO and FPO address changes. The new system consolidated all address change information for APO addresses into the overall NCOA list maintenance service — meaning that local election officials can now leverage one source of data for the most current address information registered with either USPS or MPSA.

The overall average transit time of voted ballots from absentee voters to election offices was 5.1 days — more than a day faster than the 7-day requirement.

Fast Fact!

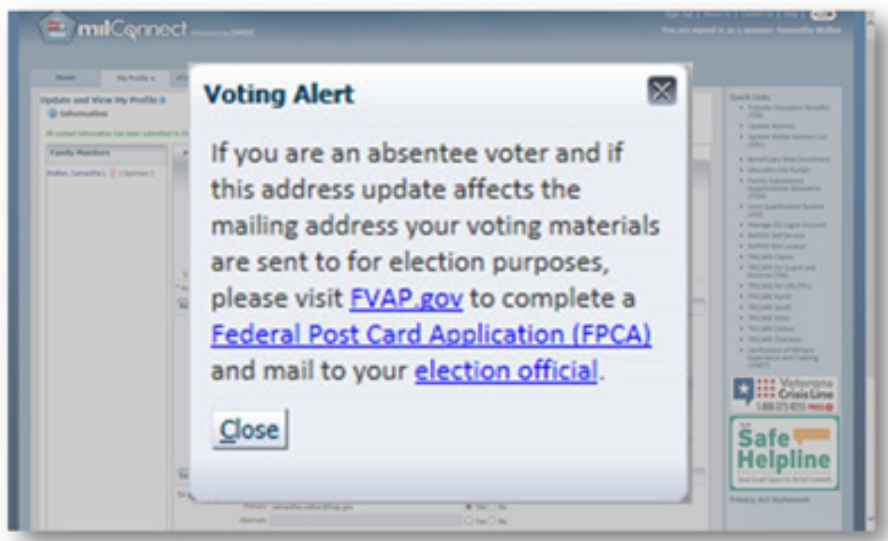
Military PARS



Proactive Address Updates

It is critically important for local election officials to have a military member's accurate and current mailing address. In 2014, FVAP integrated a proactive address-change message for Service members into milConnect, which is a system Service members use to access and update personal information for various federal benefits. A pop-up message reminds users changing mailing address information within the system to also update their address information with their local election official by visiting FVAP.gov and completing a Federal Post Card Application.

Pop-up message on milConnect



Expediting and Tracking Overseas Uniformed Services Ballots

Section 20304 of title 52, U.S.C., requires expedited mail delivery service for marked absentee ballots of overseas military personnel in federal general elections. The voted ballots of overseas military members are processed using the Express Mail Service Label 11-DoD. Upon receipt from the military voter, Military Postal Clerks applied the label to each ballot, ensuring expedited delivery to the local election office. The label provided voters and MPSA the ability to track ballots from acceptance through delivery using scans at the initial intake point, en route, upon arrival at the U.S. International Gateways of Chicago, New York, San Francisco and Miami, and a final delivery scan conducted by USPS demonstrating delivery at the election office address.

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



Voters were informed of this process in part via FVAP's voter notification emails sent through the military global network. MPSA also highlighted the Label 11-DoD

in its Strategic Postal Voting Action Plan, which provided policy, guidance and clarification to the Services and MPOs to ensure military postal activities were in compliance with voting laws. The Services' implementing guidance included procedures for addressing unique missions and intermittent transportation networks to support absentee voting.

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 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 2014 to improve processes, programs and tools, there is still much ahead. 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; and
3. Enhance measures of effectiveness and participation.

Using lessons learned since the 2012 election cycle, FVAP explored how to further 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.

Reduce Obstacles to Active Duty Military Voting Success

This section describes efforts to reduce obstacles faced by *UOCAVA* voters. However, one of the most immediate methods for removing barriers from the absentee voting process is through the use of DoD voting assistance resources, which increases the likelihood of an active duty member returning his or her absentee ballot. FVAP will continue its efforts to improve awareness to enhance usage of the available resources.

Improved Forms for Voters

In preparation for the 2014 election cycle, 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 feedback received through the Federal Register review process, the forms were revised with the following improvements:

- Simplified instructions for all voters;
- Clarified classification selection for activated National Guard members on State orders and U.S. citizens who have never resided in the United States; and
- Increased signature block size on the FPCA 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. FVAP received positive feedback from the *UOCAVA* community.

Fast Fact!

The improved forms are products of collaboration; FVAP sought feedback and considered all comments and perspectives from various stakeholders.

In an effort to continue to provide the most user friendly forms possible, FVAP evaluates the forms every two years. In November 2014, FVAP again published a Federal Register notice opening the forms for review and public comment. Based on

the feedback received, FVAP determined it should reexamine the forms for possible design, usability and content changes following the 2016 General Election.

Redesigned Voting Assistance Guide

FVAP publishes the *Voting Assistance Guide (VAG)* for use by military and Department of State Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs), overseas citizen organizations and State and local election officials (LEOs). The *VAG*, 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 FPCA and FWAB.

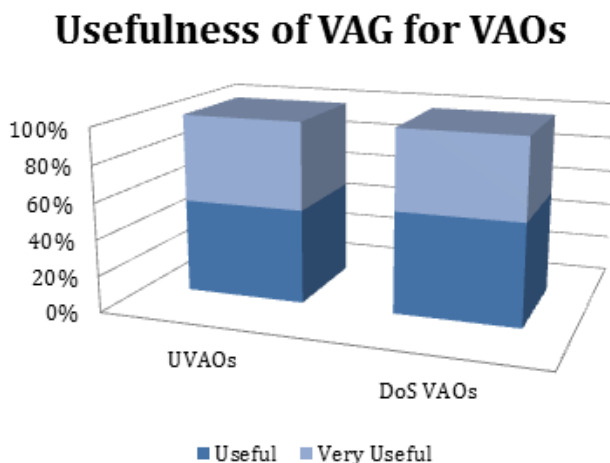
In an effort to make it more usable, FVAP worked with election assistance professionals to employ best practices in election material design and updated fonts to increase readability. New State-specific information callout boxes highlight essential information upfront, answering questions voters frequently ask about the absentee voting process. FVAP continues to distribute its *VAG* in multiple formats to accommodate the various environments in which U.S. citizens reside. Whether it is in hardcopy format or accessed via the FVAP website, this material is a resource available for people across a wide spectrum of conditions ranging from domestic Installation Voting Assistance Officers, personnel on ships at sea, Peace Corps volunteers, missionaries, business people, students and military members deployed at Forward Operating Bases.

LOOKING AHEAD:
FVAP is standardizing *VAG* content and rewriting in plain language for the 2016 election.

For the 2014 election, a large percentage of Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs) and Department of State Voting Assistance Officers (DOS VAOs) found the *VAG* useful; 83% of UVAOs and 75% of DOS VAOs found it useful.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs, Question 29; 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of DOS VAOs, Question 22

Figure 9: Usefulness of VAG for Voting Assistance Officers



FVAP is currently updating the *VAG* for the 2016 Presidential election. FVAP is further standardizing the content and embracing plain language principles to continue improvement of this important resource, which often serves as a single source of information for both VAOs and voters alike.

Optimized FVAP.gov Website

Leading up to the 2014 election cycle, FVAP conducted a usability study and redesigned its information-rich website to accommodate those findings. FVAP's redesign effort included mobile browser compatibility for any visitors accessing the site via mobile device or tablet; this accounted for 33% of users during 2014.

FVAP.gov offers online training modules for VAOs and election officials that inform them about their duties and responsibilities when interacting with *UOCAVA* voters. The site also features State-landing pages that contain State-specific information, providing a personalized experience for any user navigating the site.

The online assistant at FVAP.gov provides an intuitive, step-by-step process to help voters register to vote, request an absentee ballot and complete the federal backup ballot. The online tool assists the user with fully completing the FPCA and FWAB forms, and helps to eliminate potential errors.

Fast Fact!

Military members, Voting Assistance Officers and local election officials reported that FVAP.gov is a valuable resource.

FVAP.gov Utilization

Of the active duty military (ADM) who reported seeking voting information or assistance from FVAP, 91% reported using FVAP.gov or the FVAP online assistant,⁵⁵ and of those members, 79% reported they were successful in receiving the assistance they needed.⁵⁶ The ADM largely agreed that FVAP.gov is a valuable resource.⁵⁷

- 71% agreed State voting information and instructions were easy to understand;
- 69% agreed contact information was easy to find;
- 66% agreed they were able to find the materials and forms they needed in order to vote;
- 60% agreed the search feature met their needs; and
- 58% agreed they were able to find what they needed quickly and easily.⁵⁸

The website is an important resource for VAOs, as well. When asked to report how often they perform various forms of assistance, both UVAOs and DOS VAOs reported that they most often direct voters to FVAP's online assistant to complete voting forms.⁵⁹ Further, the ADM reported that when UVAOs or IVA Offices directed them to voting resources, 76% directed them to visit FVAP.gov to find the needed information.⁶⁰

UVAOs and DOS VAOs who visited FVAP.gov found the website useful and were satisfied with their experience.⁶¹ The data show that 87% of UVAOs and 84% of DOS VAOs found FVAP.gov useful,⁶² and 93% of local election officials found the site

55 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 46

56 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 46 & 48

57 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 51

58 'Agreed' percentages include both 'agree' and 'strongly agree' responses; 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 51

59 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs, Question 27; 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of DOS VAOs Question 20

60 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 50

61 'Useful' percentages include both 'useful' and 'very useful' responses.

62 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs, Question 37; 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of DOS VAOs, Question 30

useful and ranked it as the most frequently used FVAP resource.⁶³

Figure 10: FVAP.gov Site Sessions by Month⁶⁴

The data collected from use of the online assistant provide a glimpse of absentee voter activity. Figure 11 illustrates the overall transaction frequencies from users visiting and downloading either the FPCA or FWAB from FVAP.gov.

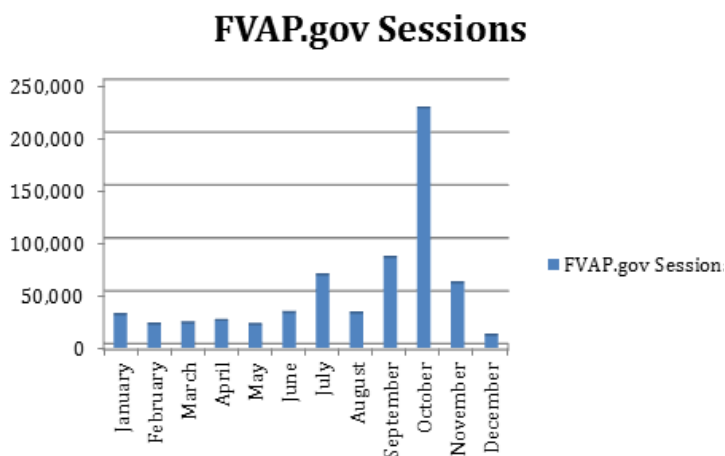
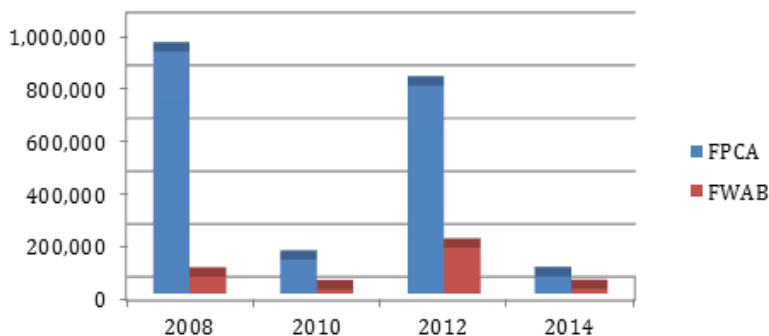


Figure 11: FPCA & FWAB Transactions from FVAP.gov

Though the frequency of FPCA downloads decreased from the last midterm election, it is important to note that comparing downloads for 2014 with the 2010 midterm does not provide an accurate picture, as the landscape of available online assistance has improved.

**Total FPCA & FWAB Transactions
2008-2014**



The data showing a drop in web traffic and use of the FPCAs from FVAP.gov does align with a finding from the survey of the ADM who reported more of a reliance on State and local registration forms.

⁶³ 2014 Post-Election Qualitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Questions 3 & 5

⁶⁴ Figure shows total number of sessions within the date range. A session is the period time a user is actively engaged with a website, app, etc. All usage data is associated with a session.

Due to survey design improvements made in 2012 and 2014, FVAP is unable to compare FPCA usage by the ADM for the 2010 election. However, the 2012 survey of the ADM showed that the FPCA was the primary means by which they applied for an absentee ballot. In 2014, this was no longer the case and points to a potentially troubling development, as the FPCA is the only standardized instrument that maximizes a voter's eligibility for voting in all federal elections under *UOCAVA*. Between 2012 and 2014, the percent of the ADM who reported using an FPCA to request their absentee ballot dropped from 47% to 30%.⁶⁵

Fast Fact!

More ADM use State or local absentee ballot request forms. FVAP to identify whether forms maximize eligibility under *UOCAVA*.

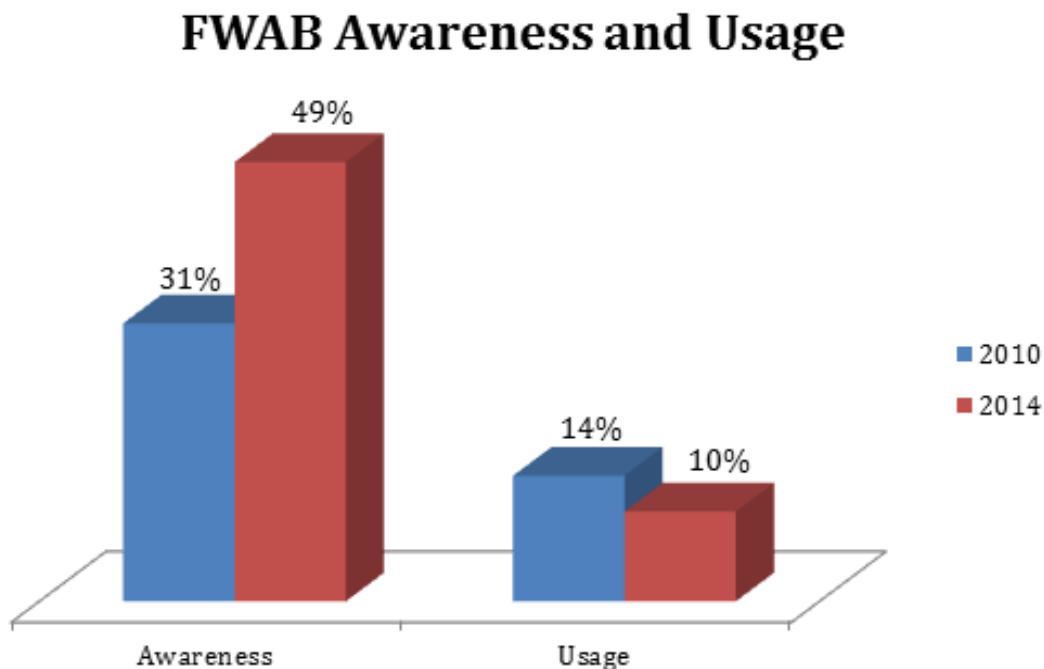
With more ADM voters using State or local absentee ballot request forms in lieu of the FPCA, FVAP must identify whether these forms are maximizing ADM eligibility under *UOCAVA*. This is a key observation and one that FVAP will be focused on in its preparations for the 2016 election cycle and to determine if this is the start of a trend or a unique characteristic of the 2014 election.

In contrast to the FPCA, the rate of FWAB downloads in 2014 was higher, reflecting an increase of 11% from the 2010 election. This increase could be attributed to FVAP's increased communications through the military global network and outreach activities reminding *UOCAVA* voters to use the FWAB as a back-up ballot to ensure their vote for federal office was received in time by the local election official. As shown in Figure 12, this is reflected in the 2014 survey data, which indicate that more ADM were aware of the availability of the FWAB in 2014 than in 2010.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ The percentage of the ADM who reported using an FPCA to request their absentee ballot in 2012 was limited to active duty only in order to make it comparable to the 2014 survey; 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 19; 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 20

⁶⁶ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 38; 2010 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 41& 42. Note: Because the 2010 survey (Q42) limited FWAB awareness and usage for those ADM who reported they voted absentee, or did not vote but requested a ballot, the 2014 rates shown here were constructed for comparison and limited to those who reported voting absentee or to those who did not vote, but requested a ballot.

Figure 12: FWAB Awareness and Usage



Worked with Local Election Officials

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

During the 2014 election cycle, 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 provide FVAP the opportunity to work with election officials to make sure they are aware of their responsibilities under federal law.

Fast Fact!

Majority of local election officials found FVAP products and services useful.

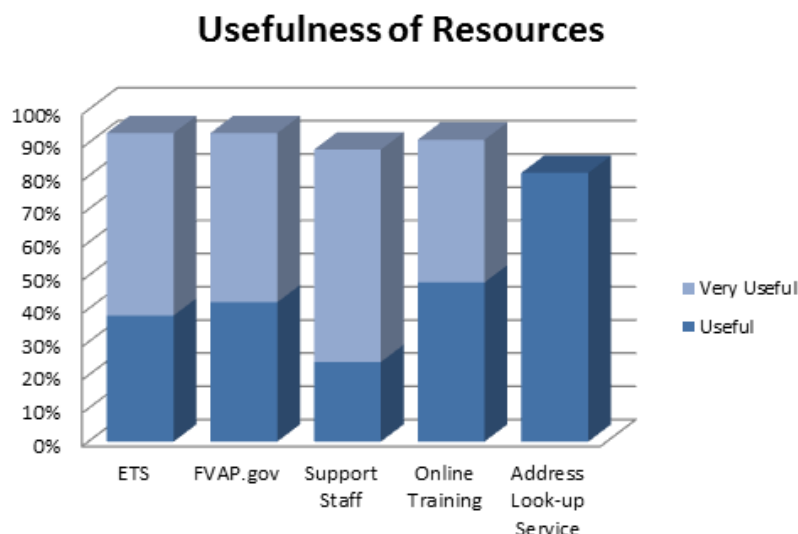
In an effort to assist those who support *UOCAVA* voters, FVAP met with election officials at conferences conducted by State and local officials to discuss current procedures and trends, as well as identify how FVAP can improve its communication with voters.

To gauge the reach and efficacy of the services and support offered to LEOs, FVAP conducted a qualitative survey of LEOs following the 2014 General Election. Of the LEOs who reported using FVAP products or services, the vast majority indicated they were ‘useful’ or ‘very useful.’ Usefulness ratings of FVAP products and services ranged between 81% and 93% and are noted below and in Figure 13.⁶⁷

- ETS: 93% useful
- FVAP.gov: 93% useful
- Support Staff: 87% useful
- Online Training: 92% useful
- Address Look-up Service: 81% useful

Figure 13: Usefulness of FVAP Resources by LEOs⁶⁸

The FVAP online training course for election officials is beneficial for both new and seasoned officials. It introduces *UOCAVA* and the State requirements, explains how to process the FPCA and FWAB forms, and it provides a sense of the challenges faced by military and overseas

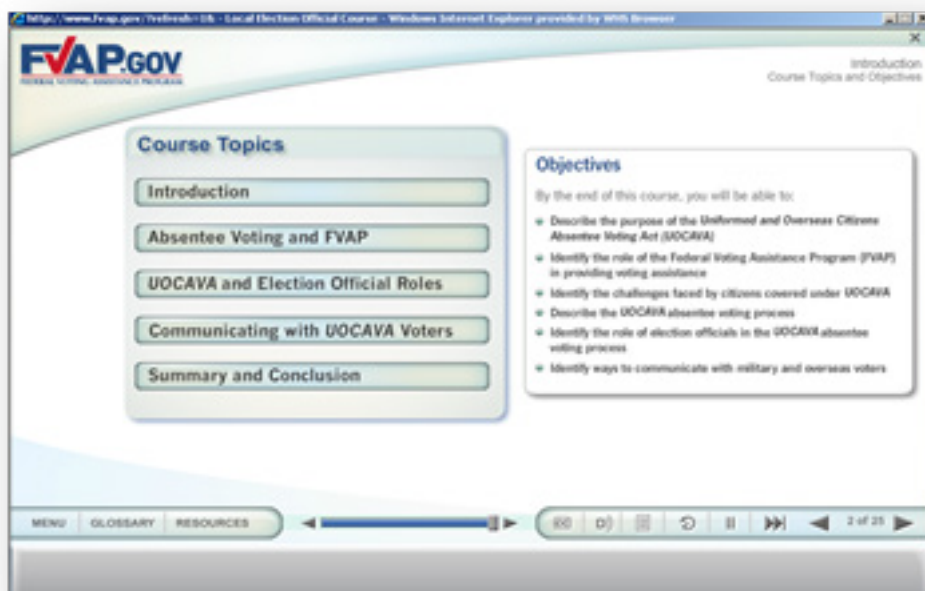


⁶⁷ ‘Useful’ percentages include both ‘useful’ and ‘very useful’ responses; 2014 Post-Election Qualitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Question 3

⁶⁸ Individual ratings for ‘useful’ and ‘very useful’ for the address look-up service were not reportable due to low cell sizes and high residual standard errors. Only the combination of useful and very useful was reportable.

citizen voters and how election officials can help them through the process. Of the LEOs that utilized the online training, 92% found it useful or very useful.⁶⁹

Election Official Guided Training



LOOKING AHEAD:

FVAP will increase outreach to election officials to improve awareness of resources.

A total of 43% of LEOs reported they were not aware FVAP offered online training and 20% were unaware of FVAP.gov.⁷⁰ FVAP plans to address this through more aggressive promotion of its products and services for LEOs.

The qualitative survey data also indicate that FVAP can still improve in engaging LEOs to inform them of FVAP products and services. Most importantly, the data point to LEOs' reliance upon their respective State election officials and conferences for assistance with *UOCAVA*-related questions and to learn about FVAP products and services.⁷¹ FVAP will expand its direct outreach

⁶⁹ 2014 Post-Election Qualitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Question 3e

⁷⁰ 2014 Post-Election Qualitative Voting Survey of LEOs, Question 2

⁷¹ Post-Election Voting Survey of LEOs, Questions 6 & 7

with the States and ensure it serves as a resource at State conferences as local election officials prepare for the 2016 election cycle.

Developed Relationship 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.

CSG created two working groups consisting of State and local election officials. The policy group is examining the Presidential Commission on Election Administration's military and overseas voter recommendations. It will provide its own policy recommendations to State and local election officials. The technology group is exploring issues regarding the development and implementation of a *UOCAVA*-related common data format for potential use by election officials to assist with post-election research, identifying best practices with the use of technology to assist *UOCAVA* voters and identify key points of interest that warrant more research and discussion.

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

FVAP developed a new suite of education and outreach materials and executed an active, comprehensive communications campaign to increase awareness of available tools especially for those who are absent from their voting jurisdiction.

Efforts to Increase Awareness: Refined Marketing Campaigns and Developed Training Materials

Leading up to the 2014 election cycle, FVAP developed branded education and outreach materials, such as brochures, wallet cards, the *Voting Assistance Guide*, FVAP.gov website, fact sheets and posters, as part of FVAP's election preparation efforts.



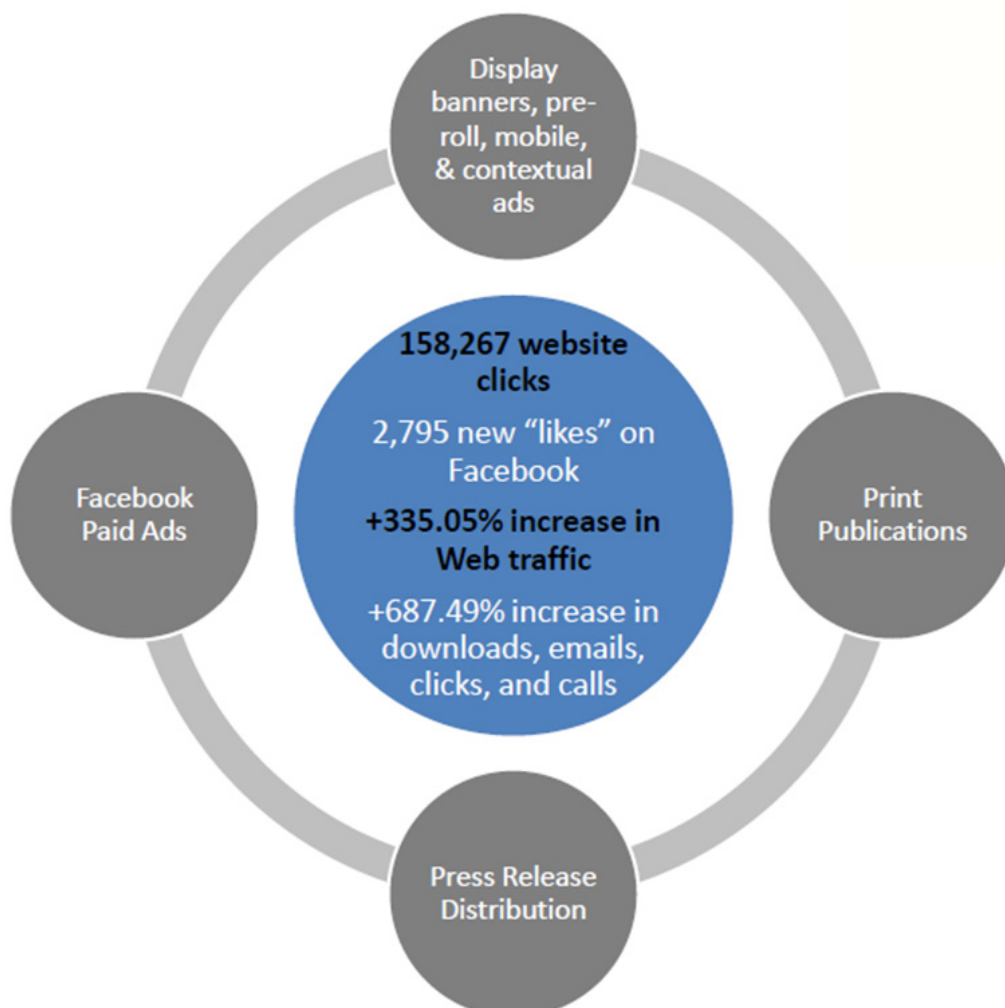
Guard, and Guard and Reserve personnel. Examples are provided below.



In an effort to appeal to younger, first-time voters and make absentee voting feel approachable, FVAP's "Voting is Easy" campaign encompassed print, digital and social media to reach the target 18- to 24-year-old demographic. The 2014 plan

reached more than 150 million military personnel, their families and overseas citizens. Social media efforts pulled in the greatest amount of web traffic. Facebook generated more than 33 million impressions, driving 180,152 clicks to FVAP.gov. Online ads reached nearly 99 million people, driving more than 158,000 website clicks. FVAP will build 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.

“Voting is Easy” Campaign Results



“Voting is Easy” Print Ads



FVAP created video and radio Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to provide direct-to-voter information on the *UOCAVA* absentee voting process. These PSAs were tailored to military members, their families and overseas citizens. The video PSAs were disbursed to a wide range of media outlets and resulted in free placements with a media value of over \$1,000,000. The videos were aired 4,614 times across 59 stations (e.g., CNN, Food Network, Travel Channel, HGTV, and a variety of ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, CW, TV affiliates), reaching nearly 133,000,000 viewers. Radio PSAs augmented the campaign and resulted in free placements with a media value of more than \$340,000. They were aired 7,079 times across 101 radio stations, reaching more than 10,500,000 listeners. Listen to them at www.fvap.gov/info/outreach.

Fast Fact!

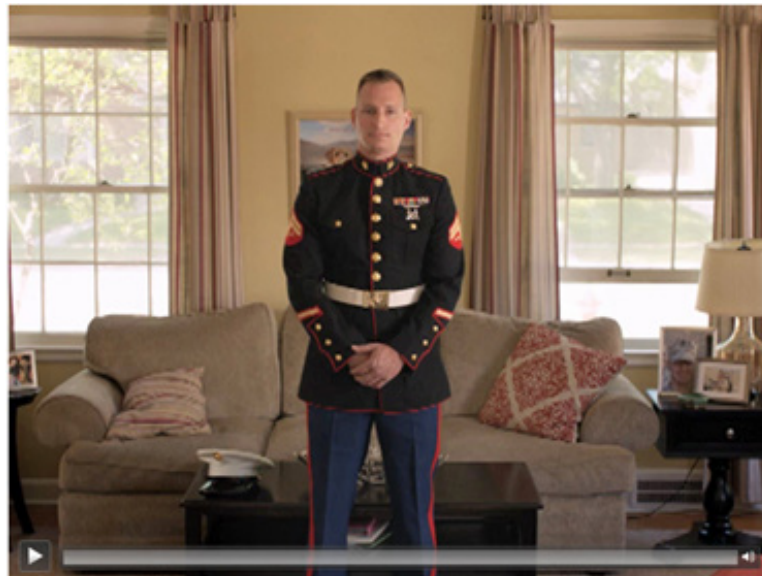
FVAP PSA campaign resulted in more than \$1,340,000 in free television and radio placements.

Checkboxes PSA

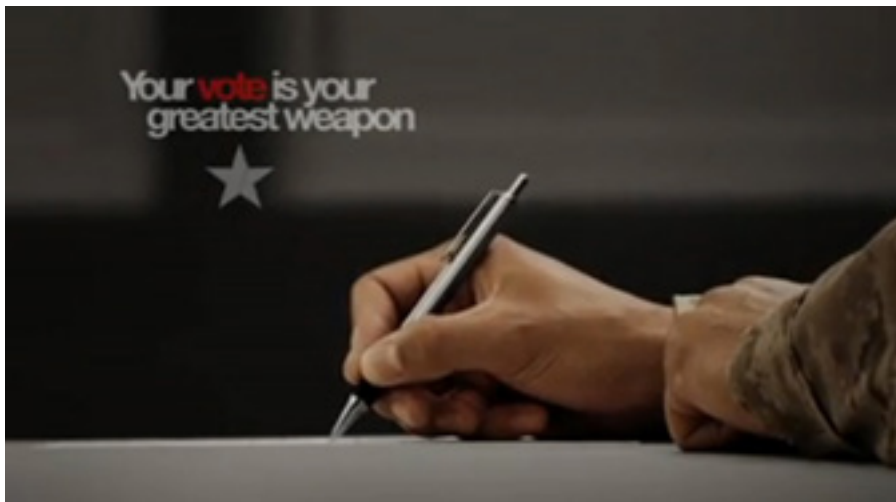


Opinions PSA

Watch the PSAs at FVAP.gov!



Greatest Weapon PSA



Though FVAP increased outreach and communication efforts, 2014 survey data indicate further improvement is needed, as 43% of active duty military members did not report seeing or receiving any outreach materials.⁷²

However, FVAP's key target audience is absentee voters. Of the active duty military (ADM) who reported they needed information or assistance and voted absentee in the election, 75% reported they were aware of FVAP.⁷³ Of those ADM who needed information or assistance, reported it was their first-time voting or trying to vote in-person or absentee and voted absentee in the election, 68% reported they were aware of FVAP.⁷⁴

Awareness of FVAP, Unit Voting Assistance Officer (UVAO) and Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Office resources are provided in Figure 14. To further highlight absentee voters' experience, it also provides awareness levels isolated for those ADM who reported voting absentee. These findings point to a continued need for FVAP and the Services to increase awareness of the available resources among *UOCAVA* voters, but it also illustrates that those members who serve away from their voting jurisdictions are connecting with their status as an absentee voter and know where to

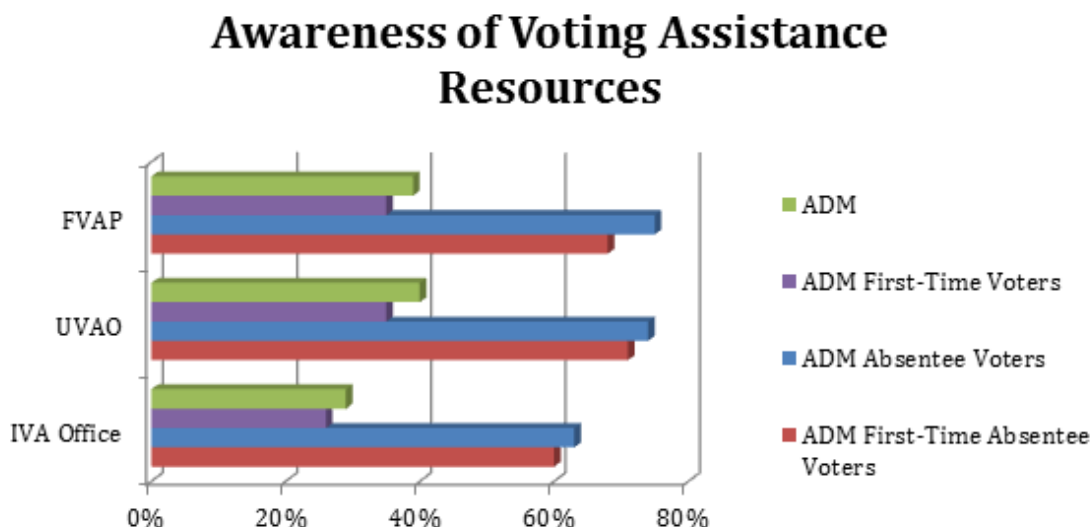
⁷² 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 55

⁷³ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 34 & 45

⁷⁴ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 34, 37 & 45

go for assistance.⁷⁵

Figure 14: Awareness of Voting Assistance Resources⁷⁶



In support of the 2014 election, FVAP also updated its online training for VAOs and local election officials to improve comprehension and usage of the FPCA and FWAB. FVAP is currently developing a direct-to-the-voter training to augment the existing

LOOKING AHEAD:

FVAP is developing a direct-to-voter training video to inform individual *UOCAVA* citizens of their right to vote, and show them how and where to find resources.

modules at FVAP.gov. FVAP's goal is to reach every *UOCAVA* citizen to ensure that anyone who wants to vote knows how to do so and can easily find the available resources. FVAP will work with the Services to ensure extensive promotion of the training. FVAP hopes the new resource will help enable the Services to identify FVAP as the lead resource for absentee voting assistance.

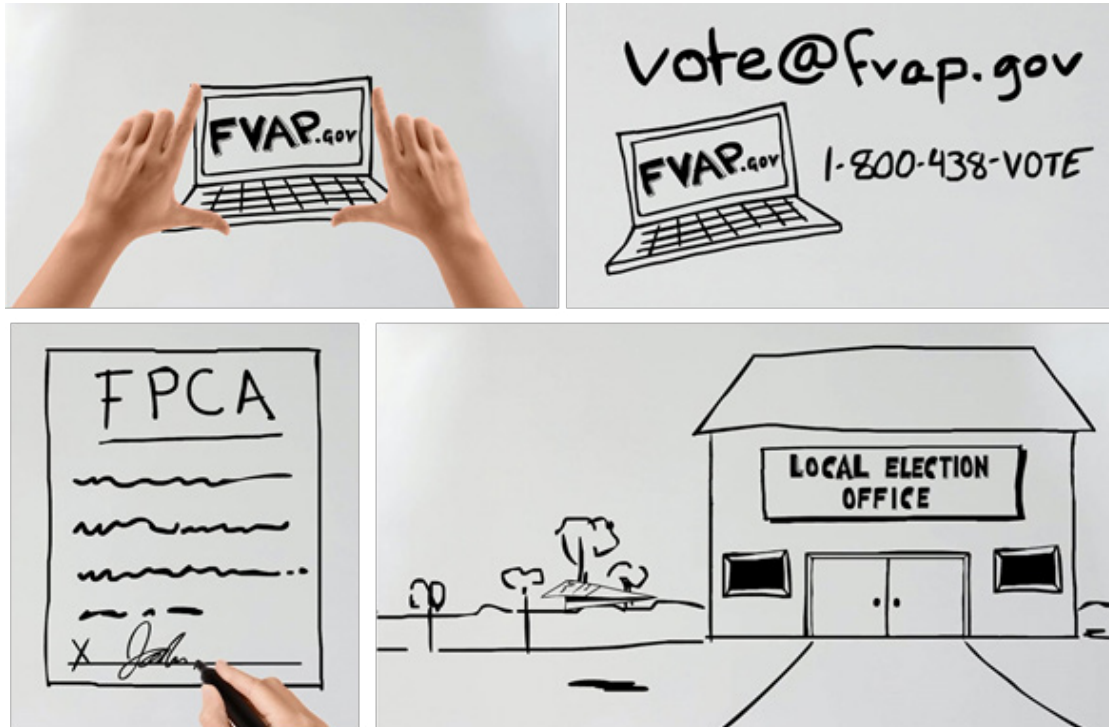
FVAP is also developing short, attention-grabbing videos for online placement targeted at 18- to 24-year-old voters in the hopes of increasing overall awareness of FVAP. These videos

⁷⁵ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 45

⁷⁶ ADM first-time voters include the ADM who reported it was their first time voting or trying to vote in-person or absentee in an election; ADM first-time absentee voters include the ADM who reported it was their first time voting or trying to vote absentee in an election and voted absentee; 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 34, 37 & 45

will introduce specific topics such as the use of the FPCA, how absentee voting works and how to update their contact information with local election officials. FVAP plans to implement these videos across social media platforms, and encourage viewers to go to FVAP.gov to take further training and/or begin the absentee voting process. Selected still shots from the forthcoming video series are below.

Examples of upcoming video series for 2016



Section 20305 of title 52, U.S.C. requires that FVAP release notifications via the military global network 90, 60 and 30 days prior to each federal election. While FVAP has used email outreach during previous election cycles, it was employed as a refined, targeted instrument for the 2014 election. On five separate occasions during the election cycle, FVAP sent reminder emails directly to Service members (more than seven million messages sent). These emails were simple, concise messages that provided the date of the election and upcoming deadlines. Emails were sent to all members with a .mil email address (based on their listed State of residence in the

Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) database) and to those who subscribed at FVAP.gov to receive State-specific information. However, despite the more than seven million emails sent, only 36% of the ADM reported receiving FVAP's email reminders.⁷⁷ This may point to the need for more innovative outreach methods.

In addition to the email blasts, FVAP identified specific groups and sub-groups to receive voting-related emails. For instance, when DMDC identified military members who recently updated their address, FVAP sent an email to those potential voters and reminded them they may need to update their address with their election official.

Outreach to military and overseas voters is a continuous focus for FVAP. Other key education and outreach efforts included:

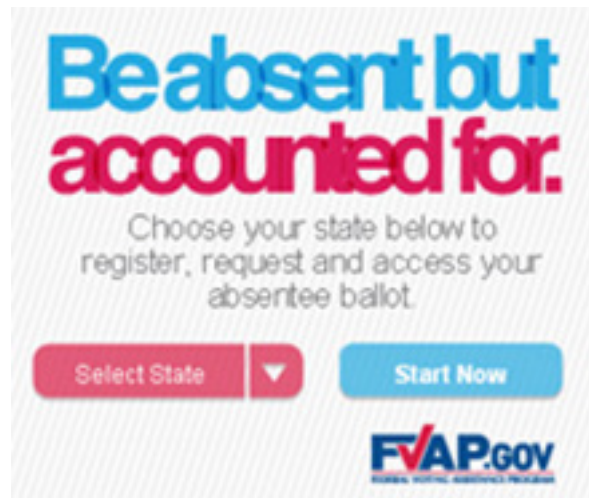
- **Voting Emphasis Weeks:** Every two years FVAP, working in coordination with the Services, conducts voting emphasis weeks. In 2014, both the Armed Forces Voters Week/Overseas Citizens Voters Week (June 28 – July 7) and the Absentee Voting Week (September 27 – October 4) resulted in voter awareness events around the world. Photos from events were shared on FVAP's Facebook page.
- **Senior DoD Leadership Voting Messages:** Senior DoD leadership was engaged throughout the 2014 election cycle. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Service leadership delivered video voting messages and reinforced the importance of command emphasis.
- **Exhibits:** FVAP participated at seven military-focused exhibits to speak directly with military members, increase awareness of resources and dispel common absentee voting myths.
- **"I Voted" Social Media Sticker:** To promote sharing and posting of FVAP information via social media, FVAP created an "I Voted" sticker. FVAP encouraged its social media audience to post and share the "sticker" once they voted absentee.
- **FVAP "Widget":** FVAP posted a "widget" that bloggers could post on their site to quickly send visitors to FVAP.gov

⁷⁷ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 55

“Sticker” for Social Media Sharing



FVAP “Widget”



2014 Secretary of Defense Video Voting Message



Provided Call Center Support

FVAP provided a full service Federal Voting Assistance Call Center resourced in-house by FVAP staff members. FVAP provided continuous business-hours phone coverage through Election Day. FVAP received more than 4,450 inquiries and achieved a customer satisfaction survey rate of 4.4 out of 5; customer service survey response rate was 16%. Further, data from the survey of the ADM indicate that of those who needed assistance and who sought voting information or assistance from FVAP, 19% used FVAP's call center for voting assistance.⁷⁸

Enhancing Measures of Effectiveness and Participation

In its 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP identified a need to improve the Department's ability to evaluate program effectiveness. In support of the 2014 election cycle, FVAP continued to standardize metrics for the Services to measure effect and performance, and consolidated survey efforts with the Election Assistance Commission to improve the quality of voter data reported by the States.

Developed Standardized Metrics

Since 2013, FVAP has continued its work with a Federally Funded Research & Development Center (FFRDC) to further enhance FVAP metrics collection, research the most appropriate methods for evaluating voter behavior and trends and gather insight on how to measure voting assistance effectiveness.

In September 2014, FVAP provided the Services with new "Measures of Effect and Performance," guidance that was developed based on the adjustments FVAP made to its metrics using research provided by the FFRDC.⁷⁹ The Services' VAOs began tracking these new measures on Jan. 1, 2015. The improved metrics are designed to provide FVAP with a more accurate representation of the utilization of specific

⁷⁸ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 46

⁷⁹ View the guidance memo from FVAP to the Senior Service Voting Representatives at https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/VAO/2015-Metrics-Memo_20141015.pdf.

resources for voting assistance and determine the level and type of assistance that is being sought by the ADM.

Additionally, FVAP continues to explore the potential for data standardization amongst State and local election officials to understand what is occurring at the individual voter level and then determine how much of these data could be provided to FVAP in a structured manner in order to offset the reliance on surveys alone.

Consolidated Federal Survey Efforts

In its 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 survey (EAC) to improve data quality and reduce the overall burden on election officials. FVAP and the EAC worked together to complete this goal and established a joint survey effort for 2014.

As a result of this successful interagency initiative, FVAP and the EAC issued a single survey that included FVAP's *UOCAVA* survey questions as part of the EAC's post-election survey of election officials (Section B). The EAC now collects the survey data and shares it with the Department of Defense; FVAP serves as the lead for analyzing these data. The consolidated survey is much appreciated among State election officials who are required to respond to the EAC survey.

The survey data, which is reported in the "Local Election Officials" section of this report, will enable FVAP to focus on areas of high *UOCAVA* voter concentration and understand more about State challenges.

FVAP improved metrics for Services to measure voting assistance effectiveness. View guidance memo at FVAP.gov.

Fast Fact!

Thanks to interagency collaboration, FVAP and the EAC issued a single survey that included FVAP's *UOCAVA* questions as part of the EAC's post-election survey of election officials.

Fast Fact!

Identified Barriers to Voting Success

In 2014, FVAP concluded an extensive research effort that included in-depth interviews, ethnographies and focus groups with various stakeholders to identify potential deficiencies, risks and pitfalls that serve as barriers to voting success. Local election officials noted that voters often make errors on returned ballots that prevent them from counting the votes. They also reported difficulties in reaching *UOCAVA* voters who have made mistakes on their ballots, especially when the voter is overseas.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Voters are unaware of mistakes they make on forms. FVAP will work to improve form comprehension.

Voters, however, reported few problems when it came to filling out the ballot: voters are unaware of mistakes they have made. This illustrates a significant disconnect between the voters' experiences and those of election officials. Coupling findings like this from FVAP's qualitative research with its quantitative research data will allow the Department to further hone State and

local assistance efforts and ultimately help remove barriers to the *UOCAVA* voting process.⁸⁰

***Check out the full research report
findings at FVAP.gov!***

⁸⁰ “Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act Voting: Successes and Challenges” available at <http://www.fvap.gov/info/reports-surveys/search-reports-surveys> (use “qualitative” in keyword search).

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 Electronic Absentee Systems for Elections (EASE) Research Grant Program and its cooperative relationship with the Department of Justice.

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 Electronic Absentee System for Elections (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 is creating 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 the Council of State Governments 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.

Preliminary observations and descriptions of how some States used research grant funds are provided below.

As intended, States have used the research funds in some innovative ways. Several States show promising preliminary results based on the reports submitted following the 2014 General Election:

- The Commonwealth of Kentucky's electronic blank ballot delivery system for military and overseas voters included the option for them to electronically sign and submit the Federal Post Card Application. This eliminated the need for the voter to print out the request form, physically sign it and then scan it in before submission.
- The Innovative Overseas Absentee-Balloting System in the State of South Dakota utilized existing Department of Defense digital identification cards (Common Access Cards) to aid in completing absentee ballot applications by retrieving existing voter registration information. The system allows military voters to register to vote, request an absentee ballot, receive an absentee ballot and mark an absentee ballot all in one location. The voted ballot is then printed and returned

for counting.

- The State of Maryland is researching the single-point-of-contact concept and found a very low number of bounced emails (only 32 of 4,000) sent to *UOCAVA* voters. This may be attributable to the centralized data processing and increased data quality control enabled by the single-point-of-contact process.
- The State of Colorado faces a unique logistical challenge with a short 15-day window between the certification of final ballot content and the federally mandated mailing deadline of 45 days before an election for military and overseas voters. Colorado used EASE research funds to explore the implementation of a statewide rollout of ballot-on-demand printers. More than 9,500 ballots were printed and sent to these voters in 2014 with no issues reported in meeting the mailing deadline.
- The State of Rhode Island added safeguards to its website that enables a greater net number of military voters to access and utilize the Rhode Island Military Ballot Acceleration Project system. Essentially, the system can now check each incoming communication on a case-by-case basis and allows more legitimate traffic through. Previously, the system blocked huge swaths of incoming traffic based on the origin of the incoming traffic.
- The State of South Carolina used its EASE research grant to fund an online voter registration and ballot delivery system. The average ballot return time for voters who used the grant-funded process was 3.52 days versus 15.69 days for traditional voters. Overseas citizens who used the grant-funded system experienced an average ballot return time of 4.67 days versus 15.62 days for traditional overseas voters.
- A consortium of Washington State counties teamed up for a research grant to fund their “Votes Away” initiative for the acquisition and implementation of a web-based electronic ballot delivery system for military members and overseas citizens. The fielded system enabled the voter to register online, receive notification of ballot availability, access the ballot online and mark the ballot online. Nearly a quarter of the voters who used the system said they would not have participated in the election if the system had not been available to them.
- The Chicago Board of Elections now provides an EASE-funded online ballot marking tool and 2D bar code that consists of the ballot style, precinct and the voter’s preferences. This bar code provides an effective and efficient means of duplicating a non-machine readable ballot to a tabulation-ready ballot produced by a ballot-on-demand system. The envelope template provided to the voter

with the blank ballot contains a bar code with the voter's unique ID. This bar code enables identification of the voter when the ballot envelope is scanned by the sorter when received, flagging the voter in the voter registration system as having returned the ballot, thus enabling voters' awareness of their ballot status. Approximately four out of five voters using the system for ballot downloads in 2014 were outside of the U.S.

- The State of Wisconsin's "My Vote Wisconsin" (MyVote.wi.gov) website allowed Wisconsin military and overseas citizen voters to receive their ballots online for the 2014 primary and general election. Officials reported an average reduction in ballot return time of eight days for voters receiving their ballot through the EASE-funded system. Voters were also provided an online portal to initiate updates to their voter registration information. Additionally, the "My Vote Wisconsin" website provided a way for citizens to submit comments, which allowed election officials to respond quickly to inquiries regardless of their originating time zones.

UOCAVA Waivers and Cooperation with the Department of Justice

Under *UOCAVA*, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has the authority to enforce the provisions of the statute, and is the only Federal agency that can take legal action against a State for noncompliance. During the 2014 election cycle, FVAP and the Voting Section of DOJ continued to work cooperatively and coordinate when issues arose related to FVAP's role in administering *UOCAVA*.

In 2014, the State of West Virginia applied for a waiver from *UOCAVA*'s 45-day advance transmission requirement following a ballot challenge proceeding in West Virginia's Supreme Court of Appeals. This was the first time a State had applied for a waiver under *UOCAVA*'s category of a delay in generating ballots due to a legal contest. This type of waiver request requires a decision, after consultation with DOJ, within five business days. Throughout the process, including a conference call with State officials, FVAP coordinated closely with DOJ in order to ensure it was able to meet the deadline. On October 20, 2014, DoD issued a timely determination denying West Virginia's application for a waiver.

FVAP also continued to provide assistance in expediting the dissemination of information to military and overseas voters affected by the remedies provided by DOJ enforcement actions.

Military and Department of State Voting Assistance Programs

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

Military Voting Assistance Programs

Each Military Service has assigned a Service Voting Action Officer (SVAO) to act as the Service's voting program manager. SVAOs provide Installation Voting Assistance Officers (IVAOs), Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices and Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs) with support, and work directly with FVAP to develop programs and policies for the Services' respective programs. The Services are responsible for execution and compliance and are required to submit annual reports outlining the effectiveness of their programs.

Figure 15 depicts a breakdown of the key members in each Service voting assistance program.

Figure 15: Service Voting Assistance Program Key Members

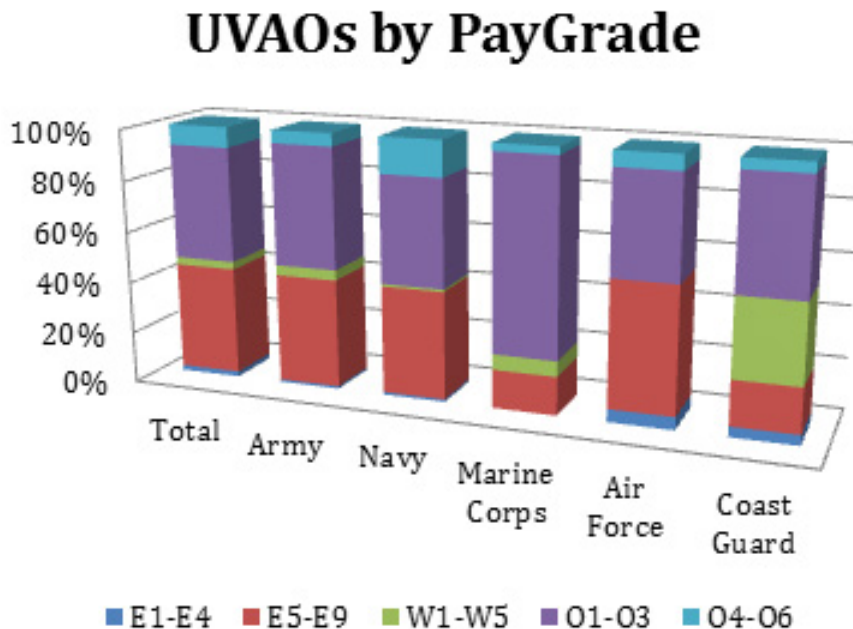
Unit Voting Assistance Officers

UVAOs are designated individuals who provide nonpartisan voting information and assistance



to military voters, their spouses and eligible dependents on installations or in units. DoDI 1000.04 prescribes that a UVAO at the O-2/E-7 level or above be designated within each unit of 25 or more permanently assigned members. However, those of a lower grade who desire the job may be designated as the UVAO if they have enough authority to carry out the responsibilities.

Figure 16: 2014 Paygrades of UVAOs



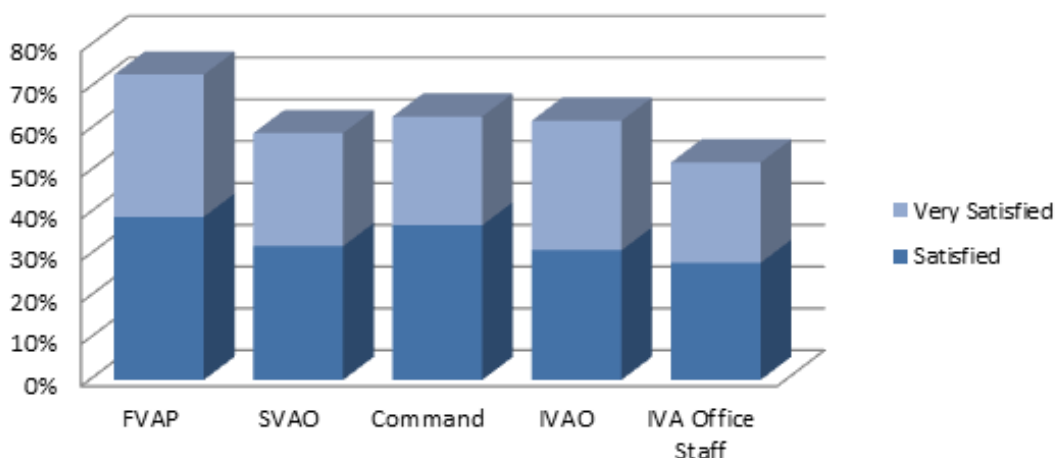
Survey data show that 39% of UVAOs are enlisted members and 49% are officers.⁸¹ Figure 16 illustrates a breakdown of UVAOs by rank and Service.

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

⁸¹ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs, Question 3

Figure 17: UVAO Satisfaction with Support

Percent UVAO Satisfaction with Support Received



As shown in Figure 17, UVAOs were largely satisfied with the level of support received from FVAP, their SVAO, command, IVAO and IVA Office staff.⁸²

Survey data for 2014 show that of the active duty military (ADM) who needed voting information or assistance, 11% sought information or assistance from a UVAO⁸³ and, 66% were successful in receiving the information they needed.⁸⁴ Of those ADM who needed assistance, 29% stated they were aware of the resource while 60% reported they were unaware.⁸⁵ As previously discussed, this reflects a need for increased promotion of the availability of UVAOs.

⁸² 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs, Question 25

⁸³ These data reflect those ADM who sought assistance from UVAOs and does not account for the instances in which UVAOs proactively provided assistance (as required by Department policy).

⁸⁴ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Questions 45 & 48

⁸⁵ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 45

Installation Voter Assistance Offices

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

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

Under that same statute, the Secretary of Defense authorized the Service Secretaries to designate IVA Offices as voter registration agencies under the *National Voter Registration Act*. DoDI 1000.04 enhances Department policy by outlining specific IVA Office requirements in greater detail than previous guidance.

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

Since the 2012 election when the Department initially experienced difficulty in providing updated contact information, FVAP has continued to monitor the accuracy of contact information for IVA Offices and conducts regular outreach to all offices. Additionally, FVAP continues to visit IVA offices in conjunction with FVAP training workshops. The most recent Department of Defense Inspector General report assessing voting assistance programs, released in April 2015, concurred with the Services' Inspectors General determination that their respective Services' Voting Assistance Programs are compliant with federal statutes and DoD policies.

FVAP's 2014 survey data indicate that of the ADM who needed voting information or assistance, 5% sought voting information or assistance from an IVA Office.⁸⁶ Of the ADM who used the IVA Office, 73% were successful in receiving the voting

86 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 45

information they needed.⁸⁷

Of those who needed assistance, 25% of the ADM reported they were aware — but did not use — the IVA Office, while 71% said they were not aware of the resource.⁸⁸ This reflects a need for increased installation-level promotion of the availability of IVA Offices.

Voting Assistance Officer Training

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

FVAP provided multi-modal voting assistance training for the 2014 election cycle. This flexible approach allowed VAOs to receive training when it best fit their individual schedules and preferences. Voter assistance training was offered online via the Services' learning management systems (LMS) and in-person by FVAP employees. 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. In-person training provided FVAP with an opportunity to provide direct guidance, conduct on-site assistance visits to voting programs and IVA Offices, and answer questions in an interactive environment.

The 2014 post-election data show that 96% of UVAOs reported they received either the FVAP in-person workshop training, the FVAP online training module or training provided by their Service.⁸⁹ As depicted in Figure 18, the 2014 training approach resulted in a greater percentage of UVAOs who reported they received training than

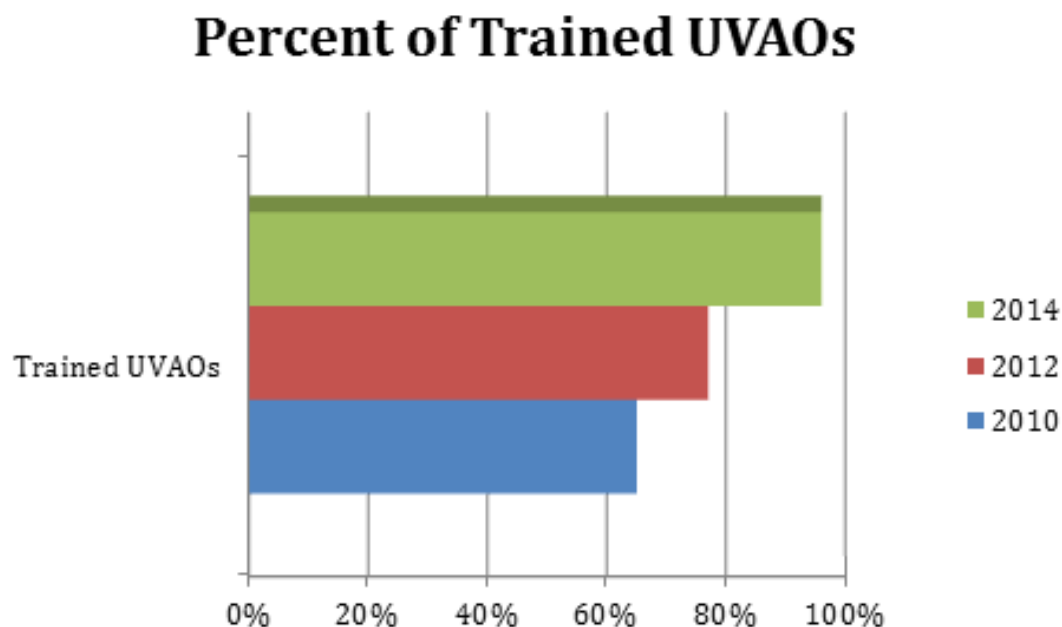
⁸⁷ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 48

⁸⁸ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of the ADM, Question 45

⁸⁹ Due to improvements in survey sampling methods in 2014, some considerations should be made when comparing the 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs to the 2010 or 2012 UVAO surveys. For the previous iterations of this survey, the sampling frame consisted of a list of all units requiring a UVAO. For 2014, in order to create a frame that more closely matched the population of UVAOs, the sampling frame consisted of all known UVAOs in each Service. In order to develop the frame, Service Voting Action Officers for the Navy and Marine Corps provided a list of all known UVAOs for their respective Services. For Army, Air Force and Coast Guard, the list of UVAOs who provided their information using FVAP's data portal was used. Please see the 2010, 2012 and 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs Statistical Methods Report for a more detailed explanation of the sampling methods used for each survey at <http://www.fvap.gov/info/reports-surveys>.

in 2010 or 2012.⁹⁰

Figure 18: UVAO Training Rates



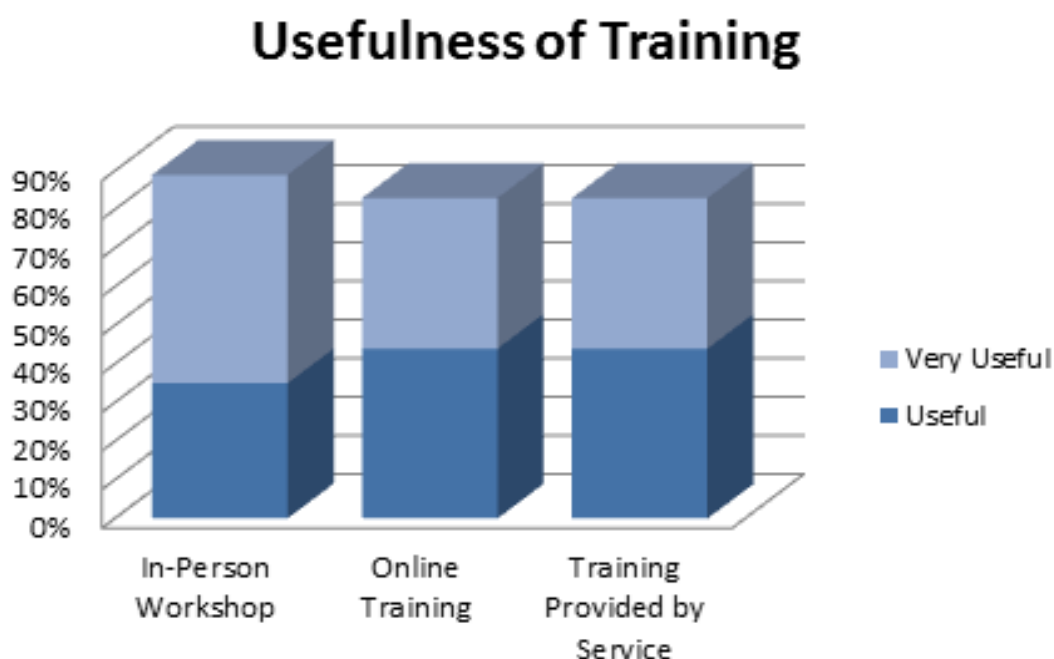
One method to measure the efficacy of these trainings is via self-assessments. Following the trainings, VAOs complete an evaluation to gauge the training's effectiveness. During post-training evaluations the VAOs were asked to rate themselves on how knowledgeable they were with regard to completing their responsibilities. The assessment asked VAOs to rate themselves on a scale of 1 (unknowledgeable) to 5 (very knowledgeable) both prior to and after receiving the training. The average self-assessment increased from 2.4 before the training to 4.5 after the training, demonstrating a drastic improvement in competency and confidence. When asked how prepared the VAOs felt in completing their voting assistance duties following the training, the average response was 4.4.

As shown in Figure 19, FVAP's 2014 post-election survey findings indicate that most

⁹⁰ 2014 & 2010 Post-Election Voting Surveys of UVAOs, Question 13; 2012 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs, Question 14

UVAOs found the various modes of training useful.⁹¹

Figure 19: Usefulness of UVAO Training



Service-Reported Metrics

Voting assistance is provided throughout the year. The Military Services are required to report on the voting assistance they provide to military members. To do so, metrics are collected every time a military member goes to an IVA Office or UVAO 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

⁹¹ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of UVAOs, Question 14

and reporting by VAOs.⁹² Metrics were standardized, explained and justified more concisely and concretely in order to clarify what data are to be reported. The resulting standardized metrics being collected and reported provide a comprehensive overview and help enable the Department to better assess the voting assistance being provided across the Services. Services' voting metrics for calendar year 2014, by quarter, are provided at FVAP.gov.⁹³

Service Assessment of Voting Assistance Programs

Per *UOCAVA*, this section provides a description of the utilization of voter registration assistance under section 1566a of title 10.

Service-wide Activities and Specials Events:

- All Services made forms available electronically and in hard copy versions throughout the year — and specifically in January and July to meet the required distribution of the Federal Post Card Application. Forms were also made available for eligible family members.
- The Services used multiple opportunities and approaches to increase awareness of *UOCAVA* voting rights and the absentee voting process:
 - *Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and
 - *Published articles.

Installation-wide Activities and Specials Events:

Installations used multiple opportunities and approaches to increase awareness of *UOCAVA* voting rights and the absentee voting process:

- Held IVAO-hosted awareness and participation events;
- Supported FVAP workshop training at installations;
- Set up tables in high-traffic areas (e.g., exchange, commissary);
- Participated in several installation events, to include:
 - *Installation job fairs;
 - *In- and out-process briefs;

92 View at https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/VAO/2015-Metrics-Memo_20141015.pdf

93 See Appendix at <http://www.fvap.gov/info/reports-surveys/search-reports-surveys> (use “2014 appendix” in keyword search).

- *Hispanic and Black History events; and
- Published articles in installation newspapers and on local media websites.

Service-wide Communication:

- PSAs promoted on websites across the Services;
- Dissemination of FVAP educational materials (e.g., brochures, wallet cards, posters, banners, fact sheets);
- Voting information dissemination via:
 - *Leave and earnings statements;
 - *Installation marquees;
 - *Social media; and
 - *Print media;
- Service memorandums and Service-wide messages;
- Online Portals (e.g., Marine-On-Line);
- Monthly newsletters to the field;
- Published articles via eBulletin; and
- Promulgated guidance and information via the FVAP portal to VAOs.

Command Emphasis by Flag and General Officers:

- PSAs featuring senior leadership;
- Memorandums from senior leadership;
- Senior Service Voting Representative (SSVR) and Deputy SSVR PSAs;
- All-hands calls and town halls which were open to military members, their families and civilians; and
- Joint signature memorandum signed by the Air Force's Service Secretary, Service Chief of Staff and the Senior Enlisted member of the Service.

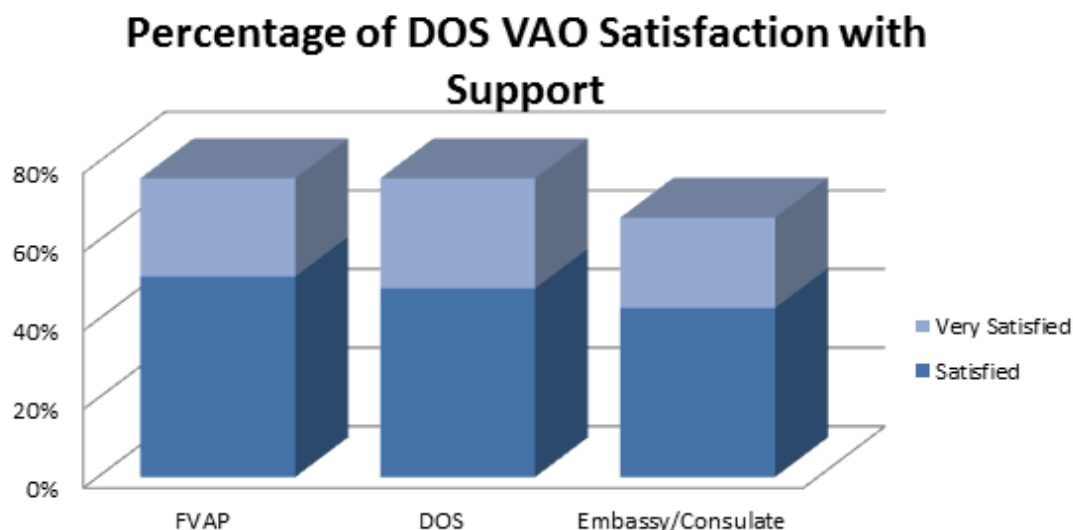
Department of State Voting Assistance Program

Similar to UVAOs, DOS VAOs assist overseas U.S. citizens who wish to participate in U.S. elections for federal office. The Department of State administers its program

through VAOs at 238 U.S. embassies and consulates around the world. The State Department provided extensive guidance on the absentee voting process, voter outreach and voter assistance through consular officers at U.S. embassies and consulates. For the 2014 election cycle, the Department of State partnered with FVAP to host 22 workshops at embassies and consulates. The State Department issued guidance on collaborating with private U.S. citizens groups and nonpartisan political organizations, and provided recommendations for successful voter outreach events.

In 2014, the State Department began utilizing social media more extensively for voting outreach, releasing pre-cleared voting tweets for use by U.S. embassies and consulates. The State Department also created the #ProudOverseasVoter Twitter hashtag for U.S. citizens to use when tweeting about their participation in U.S. elections from abroad. For the first time, the Department of State produced its own motivational voting posters and graphics, and provided them to consular sections globally. U.S. embassy and consulate websites and Facebook pages shared absentee voting information, and many U.S. Chiefs of Mission created outreach videos regarding the importance of absentee voting, which were posted on their homepages and social media outlets.

Figure 20: DOS VAO Satisfaction with Support



As depicted in Figure 20, during 2014, DOS VAOs were largely satisfied with the support they received from FVAP and DOS.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ 2014 Post-Election Voting Survey of DOS VAOs, Question 18

Conclusions

Although FVAP made important advancements in the array of resources it makes available to its stakeholders, increasing awareness of these resources remains one of FVAP's top priorities.

In its 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP identified three themes it took for action:

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.

Based on 2014 election data and program activities, these three themes continue as areas of focus that FVAP will undertake in support of the upcoming 2016 election cycle.

Reduce Obstacles to Active Duty Military Voting Success

From developing and implementing a myriad of online resources to leveraging its network of Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) across the world, the Department's voting assistance toolbox has never been as robust. Initiatives to reduce obstacles included revision and publication of the Federal Post Card Application and the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot forms, redesign of the FVAP.gov website and outreach with local election officials. However, one of the most immediate methods for removing barriers from the absentee voting process is through the use of DoD voting assistance, which increases the likelihood of an active duty member returning his or her absentee ballot.

Building upon 2012 research, FVAP continued to identify a statistically significant relationship between the use of the DoD network of voting assistance resources, including FVAP, Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs) and Installation Voter

Assistance (IVA) Offices, and the likelihood of an active duty member returning his or her absentee ballot. Whether a military member uses the FVAP website, speaks with a UVAO or visits an IVA Office, the resources work together to support the military voter's ability to participate in the electoral process.

As with all U.S. citizens, the decision whether to cast a vote in an election is a personal choice. And while participation may be an indicator, it does not provide a complete picture of FVAP's ability to effectively assist voters or reduce obstacles to voter success.

Based on the 2014 election, FVAP will undertake the following activities to improve active duty military voter success:

- Develop a direct-to-the-voter training module to improve voters' comprehension of the absentee voting process and the steps required to register and request absentee ballots and how to vote and return their ballots.
- Improve voters' comprehension of absentee voting forms through the use of outreach education materials; develop short, attention-grabbing video series to introduce specific topics such as the use of key forms, tips for successful voting experience and how to update contact information with election officials.
- Work directly with State election officials to understand how *UOCAVA* ballots are handled, reasons for rejection and how FVAP can improve its communications to voters to reduce errors in the absentee voting process.
- Leverage collaborative effort with the Council of State Governments (CSG) to standardize and collect data on the individual *UOCAVA* voter experience; gain an improved sense of the root causes for ballot rejections.
- Standardize *Voting Assistance Guide* into plain language to better support VAOs in the field and individual voters who visit FVAP.gov.
- Assess the effect of the newly modernized mail systems on the number of undeliverable-as-addressed ballots.

FVAP believes these initiatives will support a military member's ability to successfully receive, cast and have his or her ballot counted.

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

As first detailed in FVAP's 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress, although overall awareness of Department tools and resources needs improvement, voters are more likely to return their ballots when they use a voting assistance resource. To leverage this statistically significant positive relationship, FVAP developed a new suite of education and outreach materials and executed an active, comprehensive communications campaign to increase awareness of available tools. However, the 2014 post-election data show that FVAP must further expand its efforts.

In addition, marital status is an important predictor of voting behavior, underscoring the potential value for FVAP to improve outreach to spouses and leverage their influence in FVAP's education and awareness efforts. Conversely, this points to a continued need for FVAP to target younger, first-time voters to help ensure they are informed of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so from anywhere in the world.

FVAP will focus on the following improvements:

- Increase awareness and encourage usage of its tools with innovative marketing and improved outreach for first-time voters.
- Work with the Services to ensure extensive promotion of new direct-to-voter training video.
- Develop short, attention-grabbing video series to introduce specific topics such as the use of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB), how absentee voting works and how to update contact information with local election officials; implement across social media and digital advertising platforms.
- Refine marketing and awareness campaigns to further stress the use of the FPCA with each change of address.
- Refine informational and training materials to improve voter comprehension of FPCA and FWAB usage and the varying State requirements.
- Encourage Installation Voting Assistance Officers to target military family readiness groups to leverage the statistically significant spousal influence on voting behavior.

- Target direct outreach efforts to the States as opportunities for training on the challenges faced by the *UOCAVA* voter, share lessons learned and create a dialogue on how best to improve the overall process from an election administrator's viewpoint.

FVAP believes these targeted improvements to communications and outreach activities will improve awareness and enhance resource utilization.

Enhance Measures of Effectiveness and Participation

Since delivery of the 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP has made important strides in enhancing its measures of effectiveness. FVAP has continued its work with a Federally Funded Research & Development Center to further improve FVAP metrics collection, research the most appropriate methods for evaluating voter behavior and trends and gather insight on how to measure voting assistance effectiveness. FVAP standardized metrics for the Services to measure effect and performance and consolidated survey efforts with the Election Assistance Commission to improve data reported by the States.

Additionally, 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).

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. FVAP will conduct further research to isolate factors that are contributing the most to this relationship and how FVAP can build from it.

FVAP will continue work to improve its ability to evaluate program effectiveness:

- Conduct additional analysis on the 2014 post-election survey data using the full range of demographic factors that should be accounted for when comparing ADM

and CVAP registration and participation rates; release subsequent research note that provides the improved comparison of the ADM and CVAP rates, clarifies why the differences exist and highlight the role demographic characteristics play in explaining voting behavior.

- Research the viability of a new methodology and statistical modeling approach to capture more information on the demographics of overseas citizens in order to estimate registration and participation rates.
- Conduct in-depth analysis of qualitative research on barriers to voting success; triangulate with quantitative data to further refine FVAP's survey program.

Glossary

ADM	active duty military
CSG	Council of State Governments
CVAP	citizen voting age population
DMDC	Defense Manpower Data Center
DoD	Department of Defense
DoDI	Department of Defense Instruction
DOJ	Department of Justice
DOS VAO	Department of State Voting Assistance Officer
EAC	Election Assistance Commission
EASE	Electronic Absentee System for Elections (research grant program)
EAVS	Election Administration and Voting Survey
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
LEO	local election official
<i>MOVE Act</i>	<i>Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act</i>
MPO	Military Postal Office
MPSA	Military Postal Service Agency
NCOA	National Change of Address
PEV Survey	Post-Election Voting Survey
PSA	public service announcement
SSVR	Senior Service Voting Representative
SVAO	Service Voting Action Officer
UAA	undeliverable as addressed
<i>UOCAVA</i>	<i>Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act</i>
USPS	United States Postal Service
UVAO	Unit Voting Assistance Officer
<i>VAG</i>	<i>Voting Assistance Guide</i>
VAO	Voting Assistance Officer



Federal Voting Assistance Program

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About the cover picture:

The United States Army Parachute Team, nicknamed The Golden Knights, is the U.S. Army's official aerial demonstration team. They perform parachute demonstrations at air shows, major league football and baseball games, and special events, connecting the Army with the American people.

Photo courtesy of CPT Darren Ekey and Judith Higgs - Fort Bragg, NC

