

# Americans can vote.

## Wherever they are.

### 2017 Annual Report to Congress



This report fulfills the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) requirement under section 20308(b) of title 52, United States Code. The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$6,030 for the 2017 Fiscal Year. This includes \$100 in expenses and \$5,930 in DoD labor. Generated on 2018Mar27. RefID: 8-A12D504



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FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



## 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 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.

### Assessment of FVAP Activities

In fulfilling the Secretary of Defense's and the Department of Defense's (DoD) responsibilities under the law, FVAP is committed to two voting assistance tenets: promoting awareness of the right to vote, and eliminating barriers for those who choose to exercise that right. In its 2016 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP recommended three areas for action to improve its effectiveness:

1. Reduce obstacles to active duty military voting success;
2. Expand *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* voter awareness and outreach initiatives for all populations; and
3. Enhance measures of effectiveness and participation.

Using lessons learned from the 2016 election cycle, FVAP further explored how to reduce obstacles by improving its resources throughout DoD, establishing mechanisms to expand voter awareness, and enhancing measures of effectiveness that refine its research approach and identify exactly what challenges remain for *UOCAVA* voters.

Thanks to collaboration with its many stakeholders — Congressional leaders, Department of State, state and local election officials (LEO), the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC), advocacy organizations, and the Military Services — FVAP made solid progress in those initiatives. This year's report provides greater detail on those initiatives and introduces new efforts to support voters and stakeholders during the 2018 election cycle.

### *Reduced obstacles to active duty military voting success:*

FVAP leveraged its time in 2017 by making improvements to many of its resources, workshops, and research efforts in preparation for the 2018 election cycle. Obstacles to *UOCAVA* voter success vary depending on the voter's location, access to resources, training opportunities, and the availability of voter assistance. To reduce these obstacles, FVAP made progress in the following key areas:

1. Improving key absentee voting forms – FVAP made key adjustments to its registration and ballot request form and absentee backup ballot using a combination of form development best practices, focus groups, and public comment.
2. Realigned Voting Assistance Guide – to reflect changes to absentee voting forms, absentee voting instructions, and State and local election official contact information.

3. Enhanced FVAP.gov website and portal – improvements to site usability are ongoing based on comprehensive web analytics data and key site achievement metrics such as site visits and the number of form downloads.
4. Revamped training for Voting Assistance Officers (IVAO) – changes reflect greater content alignment across training modules and platforms.
5. Conducted Installation Voting Assistance Officer Workshops – this new training guided IVAOs in setting up Voting Assistance Offices that are in compliance with UOCAVA and Service instructions.
6. Initiated examination of alternative methods for roll out of IVA offices.
7. Enhanced customer service metrics to isolate trends among voters, election officials, and Service members submitting inquiries to the FVAP call center.

FVAP's efforts in 2017 effectively set the foundation for execution of its voting assistance program across the Department for 2018 as well as possible longer term enhancements for 2020. FVAP will continue to monitor and measure how these changes effectively reduce obstacles to voting success throughout the 2018 election cycle.

#### *Efforts to Increase Awareness: Refined Marketing Campaigns and Outreach Efforts*

Each year following an election, FVAP assesses its marketing and outreach activities and makes changes to its engagement strategies using industry best practices and evaluations of past activities. FVAP develops outreach strategies each election cycle to increase awareness of FVAP resources around election deadlines and through periodic voter alerts and reminders. FVAP continues to focus on customer service oriented resource activities and leverage its stakeholder relationships to saturate its messaging and information awareness efforts.

One example of these outreach methods includes FVAP's new Direct-to-Voter training video. The video includes actors who typify the active duty military voters who need greater levels of assistance. FVAP's approach targets this audience using actors of similar demographic backgrounds, namely unmarried active duty voters ages 18-24. The video includes short, step-based segments on how to register to vote absentee, request an absentee ballot, and identify the resources available throughout the process. FVAP derived the video content, creative content and structure from 2016 post-election research and outreach best practices.

FVAP continues to refine its outreach efforts to include a wider range of external stakeholders, which include: various non-profits at home and abroad where U.S. citizens may work or maintain affiliation, service-focused associations, as well as U.S. companies operating overseas.

#### *Enhanced Measures of Effectiveness and Participation*

In 2017, FVAP identified five additional areas for key research and analysis that impact UOCAVA voters and election officials across the United States. These include:

- The extent of voting rights for citizens who live outside the U.S. and who have never resided in the U.S. or its territories;

- Improvements to the United States Election Assistance Commission’s Election Administration and Voting Survey related to *UOCAVA* and supporting election data standardization efforts;
- Tracking of military ballots dispatched to military personnel serving overseas;
- A survey of U.S. overseas citizens to meet Congressional reporting requirements; and
- A research note examining a new metric that isolates the impact and effectiveness of the Department’s absentee voting program

FVAP used this research to prepare for 2018 election cycles and leverages its findings to make informed changes to voting assistance efforts, but also identify longer term program enhancements.

## **Special Elections for Federal Office**

To provide an assessment of voter registration and participation by absent uniformed Service members, and overseas voters who are not members of the uniformed Services, FVAP requested information from the States that conducted special elections for federal office in 2017. However, because the elections were not regularly scheduled (i.e., held in even-numbered years), the States were not required to provide the data. FVAP sincerely thanks the states of Alabama, Utah, Georgia, California, South Carolina, and Kansas for voluntarily sharing its *UOCAVA* ballot transmission data. An overview of the data is provided in the “Special Elections for Federal Office” section of this report.

## **Federal and State Cooperation**

### *State and Local Relations*

In 2017 FVAP expanded its work with state and local election officials (EO). A great deal of absentee voting assistance relies on EOs being educated on the nuances of *UOCAVA* and the challenges that face federal absentee voters. FVAP works to increase awareness of the election community’s requirements when administering provisions codified under Federal law and sharing research on how best to provide customer service to *UOCAVA* citizens.

FVAP attended numerous conferences throughout the year to both educate EO stakeholders on *UOCAVA* challenges and FVAP activities, as well as discuss state level policy developments that might impact the overall *UOCAVA* community.

FVAP continues to serve as a resource for state legislators and the election community when election laws are being considered in state legislatures that may impact the absentee voting process for *UOCAVA* voters. Recent policy topics include: witness requirements on returned absentee ballots, consideration of voter identification requirements for *UOCAVA* voters, technical consideration on the use of digital signatures and the common access card, and clarification of *UOCAVA* eligibility for particular classes of voters (i.e., voters never resided, voters temporarily residing overseas).



### *Cooperative Agreement with the Council of State Governments*

Since 2013 FVAP has worked with the Council of State Governments (CSG) through a four-year cooperative agreement that allowed FVAP to build awareness amongst state election administrators and policy makers of the Department's voting assistance mission. The end of calendar year 2017 also marks the completion of this cooperative agreement.

The cooperative agreement yielded several research initiatives aimed at improving the absentee voting process. In 2017, the CSG completed reports on its efforts to improve the United States Election Assistance Commission's Election Administration Voting Survey, specifically Section B relating to *UOCAVA*. CSG will release remaining reports on the conduct of the Military Ballot Tracking Pilot and its final closeout report in 2018 related to broader policy, technology recommendations, and support for *UOCAVA* voters.

### *Electronic Absentee System for Elections (EASE) Grants*

In 2011 and 2013, FVAP offered five-year grants to states and localities to research improving services to military and overseas voters. The EASE research grants funded programs including online blank ballot delivery, online voter registration, online ballot requests, automated ballot duplication, and online ballot tracking.

Many grants were funded through the 2016 election. However, several grants remain open through December 2018. A comprehensive assessment will be conducted once the final round of grants concludes in 2018 and included in the 2018 report to Congress.

### *Cooperation with Department of Justice*

Under *UOCAVA*, DOJ is the Federal agency assigned to enforce the provisions of the statute. FVAP and the Voting Section of DOJ continue to work cooperatively and coordinate when issues arise related to FVAP's role in administering *UOCAVA*. FVAP continues to work with DOJ to address issues FVAP has identified that potentially impact states' compliance with *UOCAVA*.

### **Military Voting Assistance Programs**

The Military Services continued to provide voting assistance in 2017 to support special elections for Federal office. This assistance was provided via Voting Assistance Officers at the installation and unit levels, Installation Voter Assistance Offices, and online resources such as FVAP.gov.

FVAP will continue its efforts and build upon the lessons learned, as shared in this report, throughout the 2018 election cycle. Together, with its stakeholders — Congressional leaders, Department of State, state and local election officials, the Election Assistance Commission, advocacy organizations, and the Military Services — FVAP can help ensure that Service members, their families, and overseas citizens can successfully exercise democracy's most important responsibility, the right to vote.

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## Message from the FVAP Director

It is my distinct pleasure to present the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) 2017 Annual Report to the President and Congress. This report provides an assessment of our activities supporting the special elections for federal office in 2017 – and our preparations for the 2018 election cycle. It is important to remember that FVAP is an assistance agency — our mission is to inform voters of the right to vote and provide the tools and resources to help those who want to vote do so successfully from anywhere in the world.



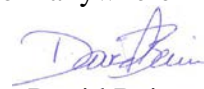
Though 2017 was a less visible year in terms of elections for federal office, it was nonetheless a very busy year for FVAP. We worked continuously to ensure voters covered by the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* were armed with the information and assistance needed to successfully participate in special elections. FVAP also dedicated time and resources to planning and advancing recommendations in support of the 2018 election cycle.

Using lessons learned since the 2016 election cycle, FVAP further explored how to reduce obstacles by improving its resources throughout the Department of Defense, establishing mechanisms to expand voter awareness, and enhancing measures of effectiveness to refine its research approach to identify exactly what challenges remain with *UOCAVA* voters.

Thanks to collaboration with our many stakeholders — Congressional Leaders, Department of State, state and local election officials, the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC), advocacy organizations, and the Military Services — FVAP made important strides in fulfilling those initiatives. Significant accomplishments in 2017 include:

- Improved key absentee voting forms;
- Updated the *Voting Assistance Guide*;
- Enhanced FVAP.gov website and Portal for greater usability;
- Revamped training for Voting Assistance Officers and election officials;
- Developed a standardized dataset to improve *UOCAVA* studies;
- Conducted additional analyses on 2016 post-election data; and,
- Initiated a survey of overseas citizens to learn their 2016 voting experiences.

This report provides greater detail on these initiatives and introduces new efforts to support our stakeholders during the 2018 election cycle. I look forward to the opportunities and accomplishments ahead, and I know that together, in partnership with the dedicated *UOCAVA* community, we can reach our shared vision: Military members, their families, and Americans living abroad can successfully exercise the right to vote from anywhere in the world.

  
David Beirne

## Background

This report fulfills FVAP's requirement for its annual report under section 20308(b) of title 52, United States Code (U.S.C.).

### The Law and its Requirements

*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 (DoDI) 1000.04, "Federal Voting Assistance Program," directs the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to perform the responsibilities of the presidential designee; the responsibilities are carried out by the Director of FVAP. Under these authorities, FVAP provides voter registration and voting information to those eligible to vote in U.S. elections for federal office.

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 FWAB for all Federal elections;
- Prohibits notarization requirements; and,
- Requires DoD to field a number of online tools for FVAP-prescribed forms.

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

- The effectiveness of FVAP activities carried out under section 20305 of the above title;
- An assessment of voter registration and participation by absent Uniformed Services voters;
- An assessment of voter registration and participation by overseas citizens not members of the Uniformed Services;
- A description of cooperation between states and the Federal Government in carrying out the requirements of *UOCAVA*; and,
- A description of the utilization of voter assistance under section 1566 of title 10, U.S.C.



## Assessment of FVAP Activities

Recognizing that military and overseas voters face unique challenges when participating in elections, Congress enacted a set of protections to make voting in Federal elections easier and more accessible. These protections are set forth in *UOCAVA*.

In fulfilling DoD's responsibilities under the law, FVAP is committed to two voting assistance tenets: promoting awareness of the right to vote and eliminating barriers for those who choose to exercise that right. Each odd-numbered year reflects FVAP's activities in supporting special elections for Federal office and operational improvements to support the next general election cycle, including the conduct of primary elections for Federal office. In its 2016 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP recommended three areas for action to improve its effectiveness:

1. Reduce obstacles to active duty military (ADM) voting success;
2. Expand *UOCAVA* voter awareness and outreach initiatives; and,
3. Enhance measures of effectiveness and participation.

Using lessons learned since the 2016 election cycle, FVAP further explored how to reduce obstacles by improving its resources throughout DoD, establishing mechanisms to expand voter awareness, and enhancing measures of effectiveness that refine its research approach and identify 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 form usability issues and obstacles facing some *UOCAVA* voters. One of the most immediate methods for removing barriers from the absentee voting process continues to be through the use of DoD voting assistance resources, which increase the likelihood of an active duty member returning his or her absentee ballot. FVAP will continue its efforts to improve awareness and enhance usage of the available resources.

#### *Improved Key Absentee Voting Forms*

In preparation for the 2018 election cycle, FVAP updated the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB). Service members, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens may use the FPCA to register to vote, request absentee ballots, and update contact information. If they do not receive their requested absentee ballot from their State, they can vote using the FWAB as a backup ballot.

UOCAVA requires FVAP to prescribe both standard forms, which are accepted by all States and territories in elections for Federal office. Both forms require review and public comment every three years. The forms are available at FVAP.gov, and through an online assistant for completion. While voters also have the option of using other types of absentee ballot request forms, states may not be able to grant official UOCAVA status due to ambiguous or missing information. Therefore, the FPCA should be the primary means for UOCAVA voters to maximize these benefits such as: the option to receive their blank ballot electronically, and the requirement for election offices to send ballots to voters at least 45 days before elections for federal office.

The image shows two overlapping forms from the Federal Voting Assistance Project (FVAP). The top form is the 'Voter Registration and Absentee Ballot Request Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)'. It features a header with the FVAP logo and a red box containing important instructions. The form is divided into sections for 'Voter Information', 'Ballot Request Information', and 'Signature'. The bottom form is the 'Voter Registration and Absentee Ballot Request Federal Write-In Ballot Application (FWAB)'. It also has a header with the FVAP logo and a red box with instructions. This form includes sections for 'Voter Information', 'Ballot Request Information', and 'Write-In Ballot'. Both forms use high-contrast colors and clear text to enhance readability.

*Color contrasts enhance FVAP forms for 2018*

To develop the new forms, FVAP leveraged an iterative process of expert design input, information gathering and testing with election officials, voters, and other stakeholders. Thanks to these efforts and the feedback received during public comment periods through the Federal Register, the forms have been improved with easier-to-understand instructions and visual cues, including larger text and color, to simplify form completion and clarify the submission process.

The improved forms are products of stakeholder collaboration, usability testing, and valuable input from the public. They represent the latest example of FVAP's dedication to continuous process improvement and applied research to increase the opportunity for military members, their families, and overseas citizens to successfully cast an absentee ballot.

Due to administrative controls established with the publication and adoption of new forms, the Office of Management and Budget requires a notice on the bottom of each form, "Previous editions are obsolete." Based on current inventories across the Services and distribution channels, FVAP educates state and local election officials on the importance of accepting previous editions of the official FPCA and FWAB provided it adheres to state law. The newest editions of the FPCA and FWAB were adopted as of September 13, 2017.

## *Realigned Voting Assistance Guide*

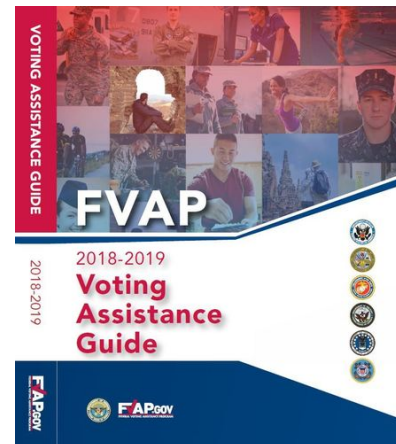
The *UOCAVA* absentee voting process is different than the process for individuals voting in-person or using a state's absentee process and requires different knowledge and skills. The states administer U.S. elections and while the basic process is the same, each state and territory may have different rules and deadlines for the processing of registration applications, ballot requests, and ballots. Given this complexity, FVAP has made great strides with standardizing and adopting plain language in its publications to reconcile federal law with state law as part of its effort to make the absentee voting process more welcoming and easier to navigate for *UOCAVA* voters. Additionally, FVAP's pursuit of standardized language in the Voting Assistance Guide embraces the importance of the FPCA as the single standardized form across all states.

FVAP publishes the *Guide* for use by voters, military and State Department Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs), overseas citizen organizations, and election officials. The *Guide*, printed every two years and continually updated online, is a compilation of absentee voting regulations, laws, and deadlines across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the four U.S. territories covered under *UOCAVA*. It provides the procedures military and overseas voters need to follow to successfully register to vote and cast a ballot using the FPCA and FWAB. The 2018-2019 version of the *Guide* includes all of the changes recently made to these forms to ensure greater ease of use for voters in 2018.

This important resource serves as a single source of information for both VAOs and individual voters alike. In making it more usable, FVAP worked closely with election officials to condense states' absentee voting guidelines into the standardized, plain language *Guide*.

FVAP continues to distribute the *Guide* in multiple formats to accommodate the various environments and levels of available infrastructure in which U.S. citizens reside. Whether it is in hardcopy format, the FVAP website, or a PDF downloaded on to a tablet or phone, this material is a resource available for people across a wide spectrum of conditions ranging from domestic Installation VAOs, students studying abroad, personnel on ships at sea, Peace Corps volunteers, and military members deployed at forward operating bases.

The updated 2018-2019 *Guide* content is available at [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) for the 2018 election cycle, and hard copies were provided to the Military Services in December 2017.



*FVAP's Voting Assistance Guide remains a critical resource to Voting Assistance Officers in the field.*

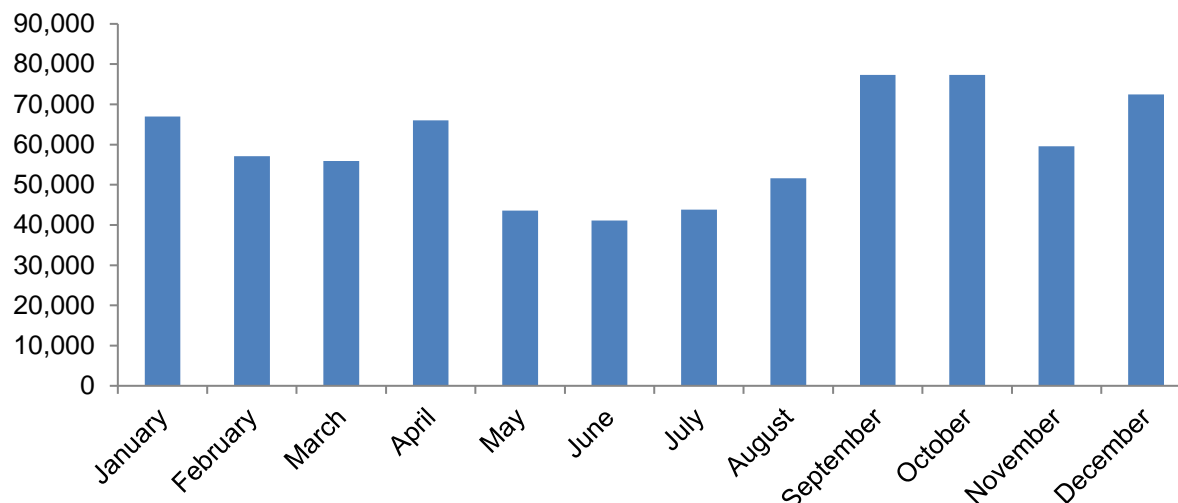
### *Enhanced FVAP.gov Website and Portal*

FVAP.gov is an information-rich site with an intuitive online assistant that guides the user through completing the FPCA and FWAB to print, sign, and send to their election office. It also offers educational materials that help simplify the *UOCAVA* voting process, directs users to state websites offering online voter registration and ballot request tools, and provides election news, state-specific voting deadlines, requirements, and contact information. In 2017, FVAP conducted usability testing and implemented content enhancements for 2018 while considering timing and scope of future redesign efforts.

### *Website usage in 2017*

During calendar year 2017 – a year with no regularly scheduled federal elections – the FPCA was downloaded 13,967 times, and the FWAB 3,257 times. The chart below shows the number of visits to FVAP.gov, by month, during 2017.

**FVAP.gov Users by Month<sup>1</sup>**



*FVAP website visitor traffic closely aligns with the conduct of various special elections in 2017 as well as non-federal elections occurring in November 2017 (i.e., Texas, Ohio, Virginia, New York and New Jersey).*

The Military Services are required to report data on the voting assistance they provide to Service members. To help streamline the Services' data collection processes, FVAP continues to provide a single source for VAO metrics collection via the FVAP.gov portal. All of the Services can leverage the same system, decreasing the resources needed to develop their own systems.

Additional information regarding the metrics is provided in the "Military Voting Assistance Programs" section of this report. FVAP continues to work with each of the Services to ensure

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<sup>1</sup> Figure shows total number of unique visitors to the website within the date range.

reported metrics are used as an effective management tool rather than solely as compliance lever in order to reflect activities under DoDI 1000.04.

### *Revamped Training for Voting Assistance Officers*

FVAP continues to provide multimodal voting assistance training for the 2018 election cycle. This flexible approach allows VAOs to receive training when it best fits their individual schedules and preferences. Voter assistance training is offered online via the FVAP training modules and in-person by FVAP employees.

In 2017, FVAP updated the interactive online VAO and Installation Voter Assistance Office training courses for 2018 to reflect greater content alignment between in-person training and those attending online. Not all VAOs are able to attend in-person training opportunities so FVAP applied 2016 findings from its workshops to ensure both modes of training focus more on training VAOs on core requirements, but also managing their overall programs. This content alignment supports the more effective use of the online training module to satisfy mandatory training requirements for each VAO.

As of January 8, 2018, all learning modules are updated to reflect the latest guidance from FVAP.

### *Conducted Installation Voting Assistance Officer Workshops*

To help address concerns regarding the implementation of Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices, FVAP designed a workshop series specifically for Installation Voting Assistance Officers (IVAOs). In 2017, FVAP hosted a series of regional workshops for IVAOs that provided critical information on the voting process and the resources and tools needed for the successful performance of IVAO duties.

FVAP designed the workshops to be interactive, hands-on training sessions involving participants in discussions about program requirements for a successful IVA Office and Installation Voting Program. Given the unique nature of the services offered by IVA Offices, the workshops provided an opportunity for colleagues within and across each of the Services to collaborate and identify best practices and areas for improvement. This led to an increase in the understanding by IVAOs of their responsibilities and duties and increased FVAP's own awareness on implementation challenges.

This training allowed IVAOs, whether experienced or new to the program, the opportunity to see a functioning Installation Voting Assistance Office, understand the pros and cons of the office location in relation to the base community, and to identify corrective measures that might need to be taken at their own IVA offices. IVAOs found the workshops to be informative and useful in the completion of their duties, and found that in-person training was of more value than webinar training or online training using learning modules.

During these workshops IVAOs brought several concerns to the attention of FVAP:



- Several IVAOs noted that they are being inundated with voting information that they do not want and feel overwhelmed by the amount of voting outreach from FVAP and other sources. FVAP took these concerns into consideration as marketing and outreach plans for the 2018 election were developed.
- Concerns from Air Force IVAOs regarding the transition of the voting assistance duties to the Airman and Family Readiness Center and the lack of formal guidance provided by the Air Force on this transition. 2017 was a year of transition for realigning responsibility of the Voting Assistance Program to installation Airman and Family Readiness Centers (AFRC); this re-alignment centralized installation voting efforts and reduced unit-level additional duty requirements. To support this approach, Air Force Guidance Memorandum to Air Force Instruction 36-3107, Voting Assistance Program, was released (November 14, 2017) and contains updated policy and procedural guidance for supporting the Federal Voting Assistance Program at the installation-level. This model is designed to enhance program effectiveness and efficiencies; the AFRC is a pivotal community support platform with many touchpoints with Airmen and their families.
- IVAOs had concerns with the functional separation requirements of ensuring that IVA Offices were functionally separate from other office activities. This gave FVAP the opportunity to provide further clarification on these requirements.
- IVAOs raised concerns about the coverage of offices during business hours, particularly given the low-traffic that offices received. FVAP noted that voting assistance should be available during working hours, but that the office did not necessarily need to be manned at every hour as long as someone is available to offer assistance.

More than 130 installation-level VAOs attended the 2017 IVA office workshops. Based on the success of these trainings tailored for IVAOs, FVAP will continue to leverage these opportunities in 2018 and beyond.

#### *Initiated Research on Installation Voter Assistance Alternative Approach*

In an attempt to address past challenges with Installation Voter Assistance Office (IVA office) implementation in the areas of staffing, office movement, and supporting logistics, FVAP initiated research to explore alternative implementation approaches for Installation Voting Assistance Offices. Under discretion exercised by SecDef, each Installation Voter Assistance Office operates as a National Voter Registration Agency, covered under provisions of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA). To explore greater levels of efficiencies and to address concerns with the overall administrative burden of VAO responsibilities, FVAP is researching the relative cost and administrative efficiencies, if any, of locating IVA office with another core service on an installation. Results from this research will further support the Services as they consider alternatives in the future that do not detract from overall voting assistance effectiveness, but may reduce the administrative burden on IVAOs and Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAO).

### *Active Cooperation with Election Officials*

Effective relationships between FVAP and election officials are essential to FVAP's ability to accurately inform and serve absent military and overseas citizen voters. The products and services targeted to election officials include the FVAP.gov website, Voting Assistance Call Center, FVAP's State Affairs Specialists, a military address look-up service, and in-person and interactive online training.

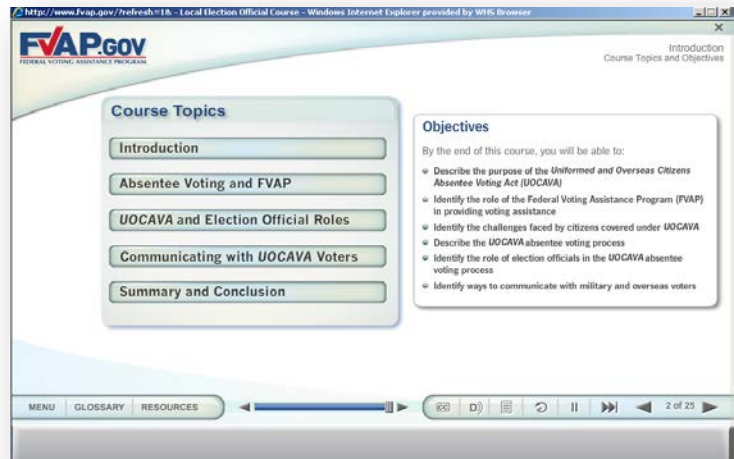
As part of its ongoing effort to raise awareness on election official requirements under *UOCAVA* and the particular challenges military and overseas voters face in the absentee voting process, FVAP presented at conferences hosted by state and local election officials across the country. Discussions with this critical stakeholder group focused on observations resulting from the 2016 election and prompted discussions on trends for assisting *UOCAVA* voters. FVAP continued to provide resource correspondence to States considering legislation that could impact the *UOCAVA* voter experience.

FVAP also updated its online training module for election officials. The training course is beneficial for both new and seasoned officials. It introduces State requirements under *UOCAVA*, explains how to process the FPCA and FWAB forms, and provides a sense of the challenges faced by military and overseas citizen voters, and how election officials can help them through the process.

### *Enhanced Voting Assistance Center Services and Metrics*

FVAP continued to provide its full service Voting Assistance Center operated in-house by FVAP staff members. In 2017, FVAP responded to nearly 2,602 inquiries and achieved a customer satisfaction survey rate of 4.2 out of 5; the customer service survey response rate was 10 percent.

Following the 2016 election, FVAP reviewed its legacy Electronic Transmission Service (ETS). At its inception, the intent of the ETS was to support the return of balloting materials to those jurisdictions that only permit fax transmissions for returned materials (beyond regular mail). During the 2016 election cycle, FVAP received a large number of email requests from voters for transmission to jurisdictions that permit the return of materials via email. In those situations, the voters could have emailed their materials directly to their election office. As such, there is no benefit for FVAP to assist in a transaction best handled between the voter and election



*FVAP's online training modules not only ensure compliance for VAOs, but increase awareness of UOCAVA for election officials.*

official. Due to the extremely high volume of ETS email requests in 2016, FVAP updated its procedures to explicitly limit this service to email-to-fax conversion.

Effective January 1, 2018, FVAP implemented the following changes:

- Voters whose states accept materials by email are instructed to send those materials directly to their election officials via email and not use the ETS;
- FVAP continues to provide fax services for voters whose jurisdictions permit fax transmissions only for return of their election materials; and
- Voters attempting to fax materials will be encouraged to fax directly to their election office.

Going forward this change will allow FVAP to focus this service on those voters who face the greatest challenges in returning their election materials to their home voting jurisdictions from abroad.

## Expand *UOCAVA* Voter Awareness and Outreach Initiatives

Leveraging findings from its 2016 post-election research, FVAP enhanced its suite of education and outreach materials and developed an active, comprehensive 2018 communications plan to increase awareness of available tools especially for those who are absent from their voting jurisdiction.

### *Efforts to Increase Awareness: Refined Marketing Campaigns and Outreach Efforts*

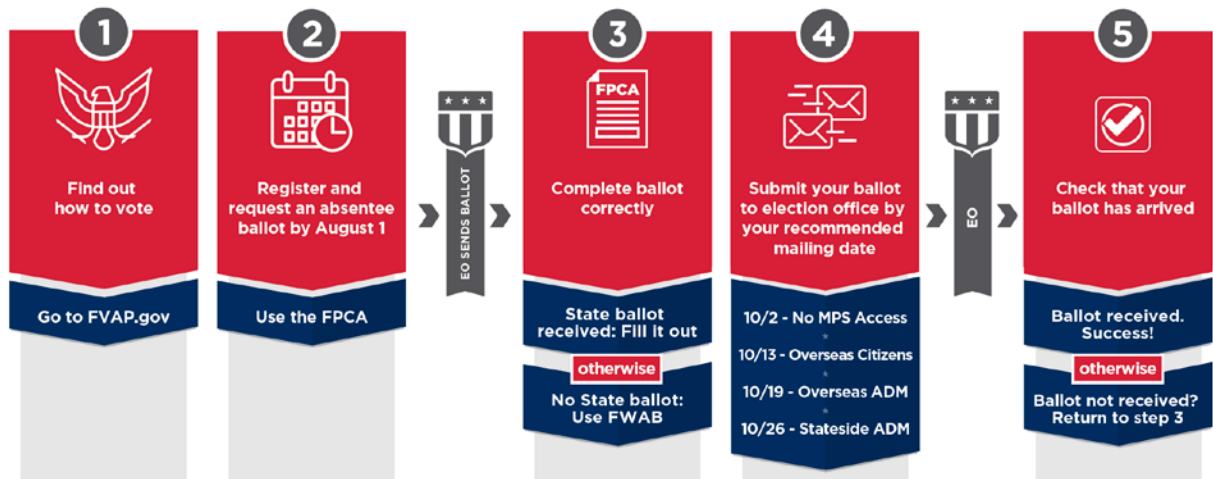
Leading up to the 2016 election cycle, FVAP embraced best practices to enhance its marketing and outreach strategies. FVAP's multipronged campaign leveraged research and demographic data to saturate its messaging to key audiences through various platforms. Post-election survey data indicate that 2016 efforts were more effective than previous campaigns and that awareness of resources increased. However, FVAP also learned younger military members have a higher need for voting assistance and information on key absentee voting steps.

In 2017, FVAP leveraged 2016 successes to plan for the 2018 election cycle. FVAP will continue these approaches in 2018 and implement new targeting and tactical approaches suggested by the evaluation of the 2016 campaign and voter behavior.

**Strategy:** Make it *easier* for *UOCAVA* voters *who want to vote absentee* do so successfully by helping them overcome barriers they may face in the absentee voting process. FVAP provides people who want to vote with deadlines to spur action, reminders about those deadlines, information and resources with a customer service orientation, and access to tools that simplify the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB).

2016 post-election data revealed that successfully receiving voting assistance from FVAP, UVAOs, or an IVA Office was positively associated with higher levels of awareness about key election deadlines and all key steps in the absentee process with the exception of the FWAB. Further, receiving FVAP marketing materials had an across-the-board positive and significant relationship on voting knowledge, especially as related to FPCA and FWAB knowledge. This suggested it would be beneficial for FVAP to continue focusing voter materials on completing steps in the absentee ballot process which will be a key messaging tactic in 2018.

## Key Messaging Milestones Scheduled for November 2018 General Election



FVAP also plans on continuing to target groups identified as most in need of voting assistance from our 2016 data. This includes 18-24 year old ADM voters, as well as individuals that fall into demographic categories that are most often associated with first time voters such as: race, enlisted or warrant officers, Marines, and college educated individuals. FVAP's efforts to leverage these data include focusing on *UOCAVA* communities that can serve as formal and informal influencers of voting groups in need of greater assistance. This includes targeting the spouses of ADM deployed overseas and known overseas citizen voters. Both act as primary influencers in their respective communities.

### *New Direct-to-Voter Training Video*

In 2017, FVAP developed short, attention-grabbing shareable videos of the new direct-to-voter training in the hopes of increasing overall awareness of the new training and other voting assistance resources. The videos provide a brief overview of the specific topics as related to absentee voting, such as how to use the FPCA or update contact information with an election office. They can be viewed separately, covering a single topic like using the FPCA, or together to provide a full overview of the absentee voting process. Since FVAP is using these videos to reach the younger demographic, FVAP is posting them to various social media platforms to encourage engagement and visits to FVAP.gov for more training and information. These videos will also be available to other influencers within the military and overseas citizen communities.

In order to develop a solid foundation for its training methodology, FVAP conducted a gap analysis and background research - which included in-person interviews with SVAOs, IVAOs, and UVAOs - to determine the best practices for creating successful training videos. Each Service has their own requirements for absentee voter training, though potential voters across the Services all have access to similar resources across installations. This indicated that an effective training could be consistent in content and still reach the targeted audience across demographic groups. FVAP's research did indicate that SVAO coordinated top-down distribution of a



training video would be the most effective in reaching voters in different groups across the Services. Selected still shots from the video series are provided below.



*FVAP completed production of a Direct-to-Voter Training Video to resonate with the younger demographics of active duty personnel and assist with awareness training for each Service member.*

#### *Partnership Outreach with External Stakeholders*

FVAP's voter-focused customer service model includes working with a variety of external stakeholders. Through a variety of outreach and training opportunities, FVAP shares important UOCAVA information with partner organizations that serve active duty military and overseas citizen voters – making sure they have the correct information concerning UOCAVA voters. These efforts help ensure that UOCAVA voters experience fewer barriers in the absentee voting process by having access to a well-informed community of voting assistance organizations, personnel, and election officials.

FVAP reaches out to numerous external stakeholders that assist all UOCAVA voters, including the American Chamber of Commerce network, the Election Assistance Commission, and the Society for Human Resource Management to name a few. Other organizations include those that serve military spouses and children, such as Military Officers Association of America. 2016 post-election survey data indicated that ADM voters who are unmarried and aged 18-24 were significantly less likely to vote than their older or married counterparts. Such data provide us the opportunity to target these voters using alternative social or family networks.

Outreach also targets U.S. companies with a large number of American employees. In the past, FVAP leveraged the Foreign Commercial Services in U.S. embassies to facilitate connecting with the private sector will continue to do so in 2018. These organizations have helped spread information about *UOCAVA* absentee voting, FVAP, and FVAP's online resources.

## Enhance Measures of Effectiveness and Participation

In its 2016 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP identified a need to conduct additional research to better understand the decline in active duty military members' registration and participation rates during the 2016 election. FVAP has made important progress in identifying a new metric to compare military voting rates and assess DoD-wide policy changes and external influences on *UOCAVA* military voter participation. FVAP also contributed to additional research assessing the voting-age overseas citizen population, and published a policy brief on overseas citizen voters who have never resided in the United States. Other research activities continue to be undertaken in partnership with the Council of State Governments.

### *Conducted Additional Analyses on 2016 Post-Election Data*

Following the 2016 election, FVAP conducted additional analyses of post-election data and released key research notes supplemental to its 2016 Post-Election Report to Congress. This research covered:

1. U.S. Citizens with "Never Resided" Status Policy Brief
2. The *UOCAVA* Gap

FVAP will continue its analyses of 2016 post-election survey data through 2018. Continued research in this area will also guide FVAP on how to best allocate resources and effectively reach potential ADM voters across various election cycles.

### *Policy Brief on "Never Resided" Voters*

FVAP refers to U.S. citizens who are 18 years or older and were born abroad, but have never resided in the United States, as "never resided" voters. While certain federal statutes provide protections for voter eligibility in federal elections, elections are administered entirely at the state and local levels. A key component that determines a person's voting eligibility is whether he or she meets the residency requirements of the state they are seeking to vote in. Due to varying residency requirements across states, some states do not allow citizens who have never resided in the U.S. to register to vote in that state. Other states allow "never resided" citizens to register using their parents' last known U.S. address.

*UOCAVA* does require the establishment of residency so the issue of these "never resided citizens" is one left for the States to consider when determining eligibility. This policy brief highlights the questions and concerns FVAP encountered during the 2016 election when providing assistance to *UOCAVA* stakeholders, and the challenges voters face in navigating different state requirements for eligibility. The brief serves to educate *UOCAVA* stakeholders of these concerns so they have greater awareness of the latest trends identified by FVAP and can

take action if state law is ambiguous on how these voters are extending voting rights in federal elections.

During its evaluation of the 2014 Overseas Citizen Population Survey, FVAP identified that many overseas citizens have resided overseas for more than twelve years. Based on this finding, FVAP anticipates the issue of voting eligibility for these American citizens who never established full residency due to their overseas birth will remain an outstanding policy issue for the future.

### *Research Note on the UOCAVA Gap*

In December, 2017, FVAP released a research note titled “Measuring Obstacles to Voting for UOCAVA ADM - Introducing the UOCAVA Gap.” This research identifies a new metric that will help FVAP isolate the impact and effectiveness of its absentee voting program even as Department of Defense policies and regulation change or levels of interest in an election fluctuate. FVAP conducted this research in response to its 2016 findings on active duty military participation and registration rates reflecting an overall drop in participation compared to the citizen voting age population (CVAP). Since FVAP is focused on providing voting assistance rather than driving participation, the overall participation and registration rate findings may obscure what is truly occurring for the absentee voting population and FVAP’s overall program effectiveness.

Previous FVAP research focused on comparisons between the ADM and CVAP voters covered by UOCAVA. This previous research presented several limitation as these two groups differ in many demographic characteristics (e.g., age, sex, employment). The *UOCAVA Gap* metric addresses these limitations by comparing ADM voters whose duty station is located within their voting jurisdiction (non-UOCAVA) to ADM whose duty station is outside their voting jurisdiction (UOCAVA). This new study found that the voting participation rate of UOCAVA ADM has remained stable over the past four election cycles despite large fluctuations among the entire ADM population which suggests that the obstacles to absentee voting have not increased for UOCAVA ADM relative to non-UOCAVA ADM in this period, assuming both groups have similar motivations to vote. This metric will effectively provide greater context and control for research conducted on the ADM population going forward.

### **Forthcoming Analyses on 2016 Post-Election Data**

#### *EAC EAVS Section B and Data Standardization Report*

In 2014, FVAP began a new research effort to create significant improvements to the UOCAVA voting process in the future and to more thoroughly assess the reforms enacted under UOCAVA. FVAP directed the development of a working group to consider the benefits of having a single data standard for collecting and reporting UOCAVA-specific voter data at the transaction level – each critical interaction between the voter and state or local election office. Currently, FVAP and other election researchers study voters’ experiences using data that is aggregated at the local jurisdiction level; the EAC’s Election Administration Voting Survey data is aggregated this way.

Aggregate data can be analyzed in many ways but there are limits to how it can be used. For example, examining the rate of *UOCAVA* ballots that were rejected can indicate an issue exists, or if there are multiple issues occurring across a ballot's life cycle. Individual or transaction-level data, on the other hand, allows for a much more granular level of analysis to connect specific outcomes, such as ballot request and submission, and ballot success or failure, to individual characteristics. Additionally, isolating transactional information will isolate the impact of electronic blank ballot delivery and the impact of federal requirements for transmitting ballots 45 days prior to each federal election. This will enable FVAP to identify more clearly the challenges that hinder *UOCAVA* voters and more effectively assess the impact of legislative reforms resulting from the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act of 2009.

FVAP created a standardized dataset for the *UOCAVA* section of the EAC's survey and the resulting analyses illustrate the benefits of these data. For example, individual-level data collected from the participants typically included the date when the ballot was requested, the date the local election office transmitted the ballot to the voter, the date the ballot was received by the local election office from the voter, and whether the ballot was accepted or rejected. Under *UOCAVA*, voters who request a ballot at least 45 days prior to the election are also required to be sent their ballot by their local election office at least 45 days prior to the election. Using individual-level data, it is possible to determine if voters who receive their ballots earlier are more likely to return their ballots and are less likely to have their ballots rejected. It is also possible to determine if delivering the voter their blank ballot electronically—typically by email—results in a faster ballot return and if it impacts the likelihood that the ballots are counted. The pilot also identified three issues associated with data quality: time inconsistency, coding inconsistency, and coverage inconsistency; however, FVAP's pilot demonstrated the benefits that can come from adopting such a data standard.

FVAP will continue to explore the implementation of this data standard across key states and localities to enable a statistical analysis for 90% of the *UOCAVA* population. If successful, FVAP will be able to offer recommendations for a significant reduction in the administrative burden for state and local election officials in reporting data for Section B of the post-election of the Election and Administration Post-Election Voting Surveys. FVAP will also be able to leverage these data for longer term success in conducting its assessment of program effectiveness. Collecting these data provides an exciting opportunity — the coupling of aggregate and individual-level data to tell the full story that the election community needs in order to make meaningful changes. FVAP is confident that if states adopt the data standard, it will be able to conduct more sophisticated studies that will lead to improvements to the *UOCAVA* voting process over the long-term.

### *The 2016 Overseas Citizens Survey*

Historically, FVAP has been unable to provide voter behavior data for Americans residing abroad due to challenges associated with quantifying and identifying the overseas citizen population. Following the 2014 election FVAP conducted the Overseas Citizen Population Analysis (OCPA) to determine the viability of a new methodology and statistical modeling approach to capture more information on the demographics of this population and estimate voter

registration and participation rates. The resulting report provided a detailed analysis of American voters overseas that estimated the population of eligible voters and included results of the first-ever representative survey of registered overseas voters who requested an absentee ballot for the 2014 General Election.

In 2016, FVAP continued to refine the OCPA estimation prototype and is currently conducting the survey again to continue to report an estimation of overseas citizen voter registration and participation rates. FVAP anticipates release of its 2016 Overseas Citizen Survey later in 2018.



## Special Elections for Federal Office

To provide an assessment of voter registration and participation by absent Uniformed Service members, and overseas voters who are not members of the Uniformed Services, FVAP requested information from the states that conducted special elections for federal office in 2017. However, because the elections were not regularly scheduled (i.e., held in even-numbered years), the states were not required to provide the data. FVAP sincerely thanks the states of Alabama, Utah, Georgia, California, South Carolina, and Kansas for voluntarily sharing its *UOCAVA* ballot transmission data.

There were several elections for federal office in 2017:

- **Alabama:** Special Primary Election for U.S. Senate; August 15, 2017, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Jeff Sessions following his appointment as Attorney General of the United States.
  - Of the 82 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 27 were returned and 25 were accepted.
- **Alabama:** Special Primary Runoff for U.S. Senate; September 26, 2017, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Jeff Sessions following his appointment as Attorney General of the United States.
  - Of the 139 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 63 were returned and 61 were accepted.
- **Alabama:** Special General Election for U.S. Senate; December 12, 2017, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Jeff Sessions following his appointment as Attorney General of the United States.
  - Of the 486 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 226 were returned and 220 were accepted.
- **California:** Special Primary Election for 34th Congressional District; April 4, 2017, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Xavier Becerra following his appointment as Attorney General of California.
  - Of the 1,284 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 55 were returned and 54 were accepted.
- **California:** Special General Election for 34th Congressional District; June 6, 2017, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Xavier Becerra following his appointment as Attorney General of California..
  - Of the 1,316 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 62 were returned and 62 were accepted.
- **Georgia:** Special Primary Election for 6th Congressional District; April 18, 2017, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Tom Price following his appointment as the U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary.
  - Of the 1,897 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 215 were returned and 208 were accepted.
- **Georgia:** Special Runoff Election for 6th Congressional District; June 20, 2017, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Tom Price following his appointment as the U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary.
  - Of the 1,936 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 433 were returned and 430 were accepted.

- **Kansas:** Special General Election for 4th Congressional District; April 11, 2017, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mike Pompeo following his appointment as the U.S. Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.
  - Of the 60 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 45 returned and 45 ballots were accepted.
- **South Carolina:** Special Primary Election for 5th Congressional District; May 2, 2017, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mick Mulvaney following his appointment as the Director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.
  - Of the 748 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 76 were returned and 76 were accepted.
- **South Carolina:** Special General Election for 5th Congressional District; June 20, 2017, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mick Mulvaney following his appointment as the Director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.
  - Of the 396 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 49 were returned and 49 were accepted.
- **Utah:** Special Primary Election for 3rd Congressional District; August 15, 2017, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Representative Jason Chaffetz.
  - Of the 935 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 85 were returned and 69 were accepted.
- **Utah:** Special Runoff Election for 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District; November 7, 2017, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Representative Jason Chaffetz.
  - Of the 958 *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, 202 were returned and 197 were accepted.

## Federal and State Cooperation

FVAP works with the States to improve the *UOCAVA* absentee voting process and provide 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 State and Local Relations program, cooperative agreement with CSG, the MBTP, Electronic Absentee Systems for Elections (EASE) Research Grant Program, and its cooperative relationship with the Department of Justice (DOJ).

### State and Local Relations

FVAP reinforced its commitment to supporting improvement to the voting experience for military and overseas voters and serving as a critical information source for policymakers through its State and Local Relations program. In 2015 and 2016, FVAP State Affairs Specialists fostered and strengthened relationships with state and local government officials to identify and assess areas for improvement to the *UOCAVA* absentee voting process.

FVAP State Affairs Specialists work to ensure that state and local election officials are aware of its on-going activities, such as its voter outreach efforts and voting assistance training activities. Election official trainings are available online and in person by request. FVAP expands these activities to include presentations on *UOCAVA* and absentee voters at election official coordinated state and regional conferences over the course of the year. The trainings bring election officials up to speed on their responsibilities under *UOCAVA*, on the use of, and changes to, the FPCA and FWAB, as well as implications for *UOCAVA* voter participation in future elections using post-election survey data. In 2017, State Affairs Specialists presented in 10 states and two regional conferences.

Post-election data from state election officials indicate FVAP's policy-related products are useful.<sup>2</sup> FVAP is continuing its work with state- and local-level stakeholders and plans to release additional policy research on the topics of the intended use of the FPCA and the overall status of state laws since efforts to enact the Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act (*UMOVA*), a model law promulgated by the Uniform Law Commission in 2010. *UMOVA* was intended to make state *UOCAVA* laws uniform while extending *UOCAVA* protections to additional classifications of voters and from federal elections to state and local elections as well. To date, 16 states and territories have adopted the legislation.

### Cooperative Agreement with the Council of State Governments (CSG)

In late 2013, FVAP entered into a four-year cooperative agreement with CSG in an effort to build state election administrators' and policymakers' awareness and understanding of the Department's voting assistance mission, as well as learn ways to improve the absentee voting

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<sup>2</sup> 2016 PEVS of SEOs, Q10

process. Throughout the active period of this cooperative agreement, which officially ended in 2017, CSG developed a number of actionable and valuable recommendations through its work with various working groups consisting of state and local election officials. CSG's Overseas Voting Initiative (OVI) created policy and technology working groups resulting in recommendations for improvements to the *UOCAVA* voting process and provide real-world examples that will serve as a model for legislators and election officials throughout the country.

The OVI Policy Working Group was tasked with looking at the following *UOCAVA*-related areas: voter communication; FPCA usage and processing; online voter registration; and improving election official engagement with the U.S. military community. Final recommendations from this group included items such as using plain language in voter communication; communicating to voters that their registration/ballot request was accepted; accepting the FPCA for permanent registration; and establishing a default validity period for absentee ballot requests of one full general election cycles.<sup>3</sup>

The OVI Technology Working Group focused its efforts on the core areas of duplication methods for unreadable/damaged ballots; potential uses of digital signatures originating from DoD common access cards; and using data standardization and performance metric methodologies to inform policy decisions for the improvement of the *UOCAVA* process. The group's recommendations were released in 2017.<sup>4</sup>

The OVI Section B Working Group was part of an interagency effort between FVAP and the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to reduce the overall burden associated with completing Section B of the EAC's post-election survey. Section B is solely focused on election data reported from the states such as number of *UOCAVA* ballots transmitted, *UOCAVA* ballots received and the number of *UOCAVA* ballots rejected. In 2014, FVAP and the EAC combined their respective surveys of election officials into one instrument. That instrument did not reflect a single survey as much as a collision of two existing surveys. The Section B working group examined the need to refine the survey instructions and target various questions for elimination. As a result of these efforts, the EAC 2016 survey reflected these enhancements by eliminating requirements to respond to needless or duplicative questions.

The Council of State Governments anticipates release of its full report on the Overseas Voting Initiative by March 2018.

### *Forthcoming Report on Military Ballot Tracking Pilot*

As first reported in FVAP's 2016 Post-Election Report to Congress, FVAP facilitated the conduct of the Military Ballot Tracking Pilot (MBTP) with the CSG and direct support from U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) to provide full ballot tracking of overseas military absentee ballots through the mail stream for the 2016 General Election. FVAP is working with CSG to finalize and release the MBTP report.

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<sup>3</sup> Found at: <http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/system/files/CSG%20OVI%20Recommendations%20Report%20Updated.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.csg.org/OVI/documents/KKOVITechRecs.pdf>

The MBTP examined the feasibility of providing a full life cycle tracking of ballots to and from military personnel serving overseas as a method of increasing customer service and visibility, and improving data collection so that systemic problems with the mailing of balloting materials to military personnel serving overseas could be identified through quantitative data rather than the use of personal anecdotes.

Domestic mail may be tracked currently using widely available bar code tracking techniques available through the USPS and commercial mail service providers. However, no standard mechanism exists for tracking military mail dispatched and returned overseas. The MBTP successfully created this mechanism for approximately 1,600 ballots dispatched from key local election official partners in Orange County, CA; The City and County of Denver, CO; Escambia County, FL; Okaloosa County, CA; San Diego County, CA; and Harris County, TX.

Based on the MBTP's success, the USPS is examining the development of new products or services to enable local election officials to offer a similar ballot tracking experience to military personnel overseas for the 2018 general election, with the possibility of continued enhancements in time for the 2020 presidential election.

The Council of State Governments anticipates releasing the full report on the conduct of the MBTP by March 2018.

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

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

In 2013, FVAP facilitated a second round of EASE research grants that 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.

Many of the research grants were funded through the 2016 General Election, with the remaining grants coming to a close in December 2018. FVAP will release its full report on the EASE Grant Program to Congress in 2019.

### **Cooperation with the Department of Justice and UOCAVA Waivers**

Under *UOCAVA*, DOJ is the Federal agency assigned to enforce the provisions of the statute. FVAP and the Voting Section of DOJ continue to work cooperatively and coordinate if and when issues arise related to FVAP's role in administering *UOCAVA*.

In 2017, there were no applications for waivers from *UOCAVA*'s 45-day advance transmission requirement.



## Military Voting Assistance Programs

FVAP works closely with the Military Services and State Department to carry out the federal requirements under *UOCAVA*. DoDI 1000.04 provides DoD policy, requirements, and procedures for the Services in establishing and maintaining voting assistance programs.

FVAP prescribes standardized policy guidance to the Services on the implementation of their voting assistance programs through the publication of DoDI 1000.04. This instruction attempts to standardize the voting assistance program elements across the Services so each individual Service member is afforded ample opportunities to seek voting assistance regardless of their chosen Service. The Services apply this guidance and accommodate operational conditions through the publication of their respective Service instructions and adoption of corresponding Voting Action Plans.

In 2017, two Services implemented substantial changes to their networks of voting assistance officers in response to concerns over collateral duties assigned to VAOs. The Navy issued a NAVADMIN that eliminated voting assistance officers aboard ships. Current efforts to restructure their voting assistance programs may add these responsibilities to the Administrative Officers at the unit and installation levels. The current IVA office structure did not change; however, all changes, once enacted, will be reflected in the subsequent release of the NAVADMIN.

The Air Force implemented a new structure for its voting assistance program. The Air Force eliminated Unit Voting Assistance Officers throughout the Air Force. Voting assistance services are now located in the Installation Voter Assistance Offices. All Installation Voter Assistance Offices throughout the Air Force were consolidated and centralized at installation AFRCs. Voting duties were assigned as a primary duty of permanent government civilian employees using an established organizational structure who report directly to the installation commander for voting matters. The re-alignment releases military members from performing extensive additional duties and synchronizes voting assistance within a well-established community function that has a high-user footprint. The installation AFRCs have well-entrenched community outreach and established support connections with all users, unit commanders, and members. The Military Services are required to report on the voting assistance they provide to Service members. To do so, they collect metrics each time a Service member goes to an Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Office or 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 and reporting by VAOs.<sup>5</sup> In response to DoD IG recommendations, FVAP worked with the Services to define key metrics

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<sup>5</sup> View at [https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/VAO/2015-Metrics-Memo\\_20141015.pdf](https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/VAO/2015-Metrics-Memo_20141015.pdf)

and what they intend to capture to further assistance with effectiveness and compliance reviews of the Service voting assistance programs.

FVAP cannot use these metrics to assess compliance, but FVAP has developed a performance dashboard that will incorporate these metrics as leading indicators during an election cycle and to assist with its post-election evaluations. This performance dashboard will provide greater visualization and analysis of performance trends and assist with identifying areas of improvement throughout each branch of service and individual installation. FVAP plans to begin implementation of the dashboard in 2018.

The table below shows the Military Service voting metrics for 2017.

	Assisted FPCA (2017)	Assisted FWAB (2017)	Assisted NVRF (2017)	General Assistance (2017)	Total (2017)
# of Service Members Assisted	263,305	43,113	3,891	735,162	1,045,471
# of Family Members Assisted	8,445	2,858	342	29,635	41,280
# of Civilians/ Contractors Assisted	46,926	28,869	495	287,088	363,378
<b>Total Assisted</b>	<b>318,676</b>	<b>74,840</b>	<b>4,728</b>	<b>1,051,885</b>	<b>1,450,129</b>

	Distributed FPCA (2017)	Distributed FWAB (2017)	Distributed NVRF (2017)	Total (2017)
<b>Forms distributed</b>	697,083	238,145	8,858	944,086

Section 1566 to title 10, U.S. Code also requires each military department to regularly assess its voting assistance programs. A description of each Service's respective programs can be found at [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov). These Voting Action Plans help the Services ensure messaging remains consistent throughout the Service, and that key milestones such as Voting Emphasis Weeks are appropriately addressed.

## Conclusions

Using lessons learned since the 2016 election cycle, FVAP leveraged 2017 to further explore how to reduce obstacles by improving its resources throughout DoD in 2018 and beyond while supporting various federal special elections. FVAP remains committed to establishing mechanisms to expand voter awareness, enhancing measures of effectiveness that refine its research approach and identifying exactly what challenges remain with *UOCAVA* voters through more effective research. As described in the “Assessment of FVAP Activities” section, FVAP spent much of 2017 planning and advancing recommendations in support of the 2018 election cycle. This section provides a preview of initiatives planned specifically for the 2018 cycle.

### VAO Workshops

In January 2018, FVAP kicked off its Voting Assistance Officer (VAO) training workshops in support of the 2018 election cycle. Throughout 2018, FVAP will conduct trainings around the world, strategically placed for optimal participation from VAOs and Embassy contacts. These workshops will cover embassies, consulates, and installations that are both large and central hubs for overseas citizens and ADM populations such as: Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Israel, Germany, the U.K., France, Italy, Brazil, Panama, Chile, and China. Military installations include: Naval Base San Diego, Fort Belvoir, Camp Pendleton, Fort Bragg, Fort Lee, Joint Base Langley, Naval Base Bahrain, Fort Bliss, USAG Wiesbaden, USAG Vicenza, and Fort Knox, to name a few. Estimates of attendance can range from 50 to over 200 per workshop depending on a base or embassy’s ability to accommodate other Service members or U.S. citizens in the immediate geographic area.

### Publishing the Military Postal Pilot Project

In 2015, FVAP began examining the use of a pilot program through CSG’s Overseas Voting Initiative and in full cooperation with USPS and the Military Postal Service Agency to provide full ballot tracking of overseas in the mail stream for the November 2016 General Election. The objectives of this pilot include increasing the visibility of blank ballots and voted ballots for military voters stationed overseas as to where the ballots are within the overall postal system and providing valuable research data into any underlying points of disruption. The final report is currently under review at the USPS and expected to be published in March 2018.

Based on the level of success in this effort, FVAP anticipates future discussions on how to formalize the gains from this project into a permanent product offering for election officials.

### Direct-to-Voter Video

In 2017, FVAP developed short, attention-grabbing shareable videos of the new direct-to-voter training in the hopes of increasing overall awareness of the new training and other voting assistance resources. The videos provide a brief overview of the specific topics as related to absentee voting, such as how to use the FPCA or update contact information with an election office. They can be viewed separately, covering a single topic like using the FPCA, or together

to provide a full overview of the absentee voting process. FVAP plans to target younger voters with this video through social media, as well as through service and community influencers.

## Release of 2016 Overseas Citizen Survey Analysis

FVAP anticipates releasing 2016 Overseas Citizen Survey data during the summer of 2018. The Overseas Citizen Survey satisfies Congressional Reporting requirements for FVAP to report registration and participation rates of military and overseas citizens. This effort reflects the second instance of this prototype survey. Based on 2014 and 2016 survey efforts, FVAP anticipates moving this survey into its permanent suite of post-election surveys and creating better time alignment to support inclusion of these survey findings in formal Congressional reporting requirements proceeding each general election.

## Voter Awareness and Education Outreach

In 2017, FVAP developed the strategic communications plan and education tools that it will implement throughout the mid-term election cycle. In addition to producing the Military Voter Training Video and overhauling the entire VAO online training module, FVAP redefined its target audiences and developed innovative ways to reach them based on results from its 2016 digital media campaign. FVAP's key stakeholders and outreach methods are outlined in the graphic below.

### TARGET AUDIENCES

In addition to *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* voters, FVAP directs communications to people who formally or informally support voting efforts of active duty military (ADM), their dependents, and overseas citizens.

#### UOCAVA VOTERS



##### Active Duty Military (ADM)

- Especially those aged 18-24 (first-time voters)
- Interested in voting
- Stationed away from their voting state



##### ADM Spouses

- As ADM influencers (especially overseas ADM)
- As UOCAVA eligible voters if living away from their voting state



##### Overseas Citizens

- Emphasize cities and countries with high numbers of UOCAVA-eligible voters



#### INFLUENCERS

##### VOTING ASSISTANCE OFFICERS

Service Voting Action Officers (SVAO)  
Installation Voting Assistance Officers (IVAO)  
Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices  
Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAO)

##### STATE AND LOCAL ELECTION OFFICIALS

##### OTHER INFLUENCERS

Embassy and consulate staff  
Employers of overseas citizens  
Family and friends

UOCAVA VOTERS

### FVAP'S COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN

PAID	EARNED	SHARED	OWNED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook</li> <li>• Twitter</li> <li>• Search engine marketing</li> <li>• Niche sponsored content</li> <li>• Web display ads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct outreach to curated, targeted media lists:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Research releases</li> <li>» Voting emphasis weeks</li> <li>» Infographic/mattee release distribution</li> </ul> </li> <li>• PSA placement on local stations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital toolkits</li> <li>• Conduct outreach to potential partners/intermediaries</li> <li>• New videos on Armed Forces Network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organic social media marketing</li> <li>• "I Voted" digital sticker</li> <li>• GovDelivery emails</li> <li>• Leaders video</li> <li>• Collateral materials - posters, flyers, etc.</li> <li>• New FPCA and FWAB forms</li> <li>• Direct-to-voter training video</li> <li>• Optimize user experience of FVAP.gov</li> </ul>

FVAP will continue its efforts and build upon the lessons learned, as shared in this report, throughout the 2017 election cycle. Together, with its stakeholders — Congressional Leaders, Department of State, state and local election officials, the Election Assistance Commission, advocacy organizations, and the Military Services — FVAP can help ensure that Service members, their families and overseas citizens can successfully exercise democracy's most important responsibility, the right to vote.

FVAP is ready for the 2018 election cycle and looks forward to sharing the results of its preparations and efforts in the 2018 Post-Election Report to Congress.

## Glossary

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