

Chapter 3

Guide for Voting Assistance Officers

Your responsibilities

As a Voting Assistance Officer (VAO), you are part of a worldwide network of military members, U.S. government employees and volunteers who aid in ensuring that citizens covered under the ***Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)*** understand their voting rights and know how to vote absentee.

These citizens include:

- active duty members of the Uniformed Services or Merchant Marine
- their eligible family members
- citizens residing outside the U.S.

Keep current

Become familiar with the absentee voting process, the forms, ***FVAP.gov***, your organization and service voting website.

- Keep up-to-date. Sign up to receive news releases from FVAP. To subscribe go online to ***FVAP.gov*** email vote@fvap.gov and provide your email address.
- Take advantage of FVAP training opportunities. Workshops are offered at military installations, U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide. You can find training schedules at ***FVAP.gov***.
- Coordinate on-site FVAP workshops if one is scheduled for your installation.

Help citizens vote

VAOs provide citizens with accurate and non-partisan voting information and assistance.

- Help citizens fill out the FPCA according to their State's specific requirements. Remind them to include an email address, phone and/or fax number so that the local election offices may contact them, if needed (see ***Help voters***, page 460).
- Help family members, include voting information at family events; work with Family Readiness programs or spouse clubs.



A Uniformed Service member who is living within their voting jurisdiction is not covered under ***UOCAVA***.



Web-based training classes for VAOs and Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Office personnel are also available! Visit ***FVAP.gov*** for more information.

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- Refer local residents to the Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Office for local registration (see ***Additional assistance for voters***, page 468).

Promote voter awareness

- Put notices on bulletin boards to increase awareness of how to register and vote. Popular locations include base housing, gyms, exchanges and commissaries.
- Use Armed Forces Voters Week, Overseas Citizens Voters Week and Absentee Voting Week to get the word out (see ***Conduct voter outreach events***, page 464).
- During Absentee Voting Week, announce through various media that voters should return their voted ballots immediately. If citizens have not received their requested State ballot, encourage them to use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB).

Keep voting supplies available

- Keep an adequate supply of FPCAs for all unit members and their families. As a VAO, you are required to send FPCAs to all unit members and their families by January 15th of each year and all potential voters by July 15, 2014 (see ***Dates for the November 2014 Election***, page 460).
- Additionally, ensure you have enough forms for year-round registration, absentee ballot requests and change-of-address requests for citizens deploying, returning from deployments, moving or PCSing.
- Keep an adequate supply of FWABs on hand year-round for citizens to use in case they do not receive their official State absentee ballot (see ***Keeping voting supplies on hand***, page 465).

Manage your program

- Create or continue a Continuity Folder (see ***Continuity Folder***, page 470).
- List your contact information in your installation directory for referrals.
- Work with your Installation Commander to assign an Assistant Voting Assistance Officer to help with your duties as VAO and support voters in your absence.
- If you serve in an Installation Voter Assistance Office, a handbook for Office personnel is available in the VAO section of ***FVAP.gov***.



Contact info for IVA Offices can be found at ***FVAP.gov***.

Local residents may include civilians, contractors or service members living within their voting jurisdiction.



VAOs with access to a computer, internet and printer can use electronic versions of these forms.

Deploying units should take sufficient paper copies in the event of internet connectivity issues.

Share your good ideas

After each Federal election, the Services and Department of State issue After-Action Reports that include good ideas submitted by VAOs to improve the absentee voting process.

Good ideas are processes and procedures that help the citizens you assist and help you to perform your duties. Good ideas enhance lines of communication among VAOs at all levels and enable you to improve your voting assistance efforts.

Your good ideas may come from:

- Personal experiences
- Assessments, audits and appraisals
- Training evaluations
- Operational Readiness Reviews
- Voting activities, such as registration drives

Have a good idea?

- Send it to your Service Voting Action Officer.
- Overseas citizen organization VAOs may submit their ideas directly to FVAP at vote@fvap.gov.

Be sure to include a clear statement of your idea and your complete contact information.



Examples include:

- Developing relationships with the base Public Affairs office to display voting messages on base marquees and FVAP news releases in the base paper.
- Including your contact information on the bottom of motivational posters so unit members know who to contact for assistance.

Help voters

Dates for the November 2014 Election

What	When
Deliver FPCAs to all unit members and their families.	By January 15, 2014
Deliver FPCAs to eligible voters.	By July 15, 2014
Remind voters to send their FPCA by August 1, 2014 to ensure that they receive their ballot in time to vote and return it to be counted.	By August 1, 2014
Local election officials mail ballots to UOCAVA voters by September 20, 45 days before the election.	By September 20, 2014
VAOs should encourage voters who have not received their requested ballot to complete the FWAB.	By October 5, 2014
Voters currently overseas or on deployed naval vessels should send voted ballots to their local election office.	By October 7, 2014
Stateside Uniformed Service members and their families should send voted ballots to their local election office.	By October 28, 2014
Submit unit and installation voting metrics to your Service Voting Action Officer in the requested format.	As requested



FPCAs can be distributed electronically or in hard-copy form in January and July! **Be sure to reach eligible family members.**

Guidance regarding these tasks can be found in the **DoDI 1000.04** and **Service Guidance**. All guidance can also be found on the VAO section of FVAP.gov.

Determining voting residency

To vote in U.S. elections, citizens must have a legal voting residence address in a State or territory. The issue of voting residence can be complex, depending on individual circumstances. Even in States where laws clearly define criteria for determining voting residence, the final determination is generally up to each local election office.

Asking citizens the following questions may help advise them on voting residence:

- Where have you registered to vote or voted?
- What State or territory has issued you a Driver's License, any other license or identification card?
- Where is your motor vehicle registered?
- Where is your home or home of record?
- What State or territory are you from?
- Where did you live before coming here?
- Where did you live immediately before leaving the United States?
- Where does your family live?
- Where do your parents live?
- Where do you own property?
- What State do you claim for tax residency?

For voting purposes, "legal voting residence" can be in the State or territory where the citizen last resided prior to entering military service **or** the State or territory that the citizen has since claimed as their legal residence.

Even though the citizen may no longer maintain formal ties to that residence, the address determines their proper voting jurisdiction. To claim a new legal residence, the citizen must have simultaneous physical presence and intend to return to that location as their primary residence.

Military and their family members may change their legal residence every time they change permanent duty stations, or they may retain their legal residence. This may mean that the family's Uniformed Service member has a different legal voting residence than his/her family members.

Citizens should consult a Judge Advocate General officer or legal counsel before changing legal residence, because there are usually other factors that should be considered besides voting.



A voting residence establishes the jurisdiction to which the citizen must submit voting materials.



Want information on candidates?

Visit your State election website where candidate information may be available 30 days before the election. (Links are available at FVAP.gov.)

Helping citizens to complete the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)

The FPCA can be used by Uniformed Service members, their eligible family members and overseas citizens to simultaneously register to vote and request an absentee ballot. As a VAO, you should help citizens correctly complete their FPCAs if requested. Local election officials determine the citizen's eligibility to vote based on information provided on this application. Citizens should include all contact information (email, telephone, fax and/or mailing address) on their FPCA and submit it early enough for election officials to contact them if there are problems processing the application.

Check that FPCAs are filled out correctly.

- Signature and date
- Complete voting residence address (no P.O. Box addresses)
- Legible handwriting
- All information required by the State
- Party preference if the citizen wants to vote in primary elections (if required by the State)
- Witness signature (if required by the State)

Remind citizens to send the FPCA to their local election official in time to be received by the State registration and/or absentee ballot request deadline - **August 1, 2014**. If you are working in an Installation Voter Assistance Office, offer to mail forms on behalf of the voter. Forms should not be sent to FVAP or an embassy/consulate. Overseas voters must contact their embassy or consulate prior to dropping off forms.



Email addresses for VAOs at embassies/consulates can be found on page 479.

Helping citizens to complete the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)

If Uniformed Service members, their eligible family members and overseas citizens have requested but have not received their State absentee ballot in time to vote and return it before the deadline, they should use the FWAB.

If citizens receive their State absentee ballot after submitting the FWAB, they should vote and return the ballot immediately. If the State absentee ballot arrives by the ballot return deadline, the State will count the State absentee ballot instead of the FWAB.

- To use the FWAB, citizens must have applied for a State ballot before the State's ballot request deadline.
- The FWAB may be used to vote for Federal offices in primary, general, special or runoff elections.
- Some States have expanded the use of the FWAB and accept the FWAB for voting for State and local offices, or allow the FWAB to be used for voter registration and ballot request. Please see State information in **Chapter 2**.

Tips for using the FWAB:

- Citizens who have not received a requested State ballot in time to return it before the election should immediately complete and send the FWAB to their local election office. FVAP recommends voters use a FWAB if they have not received their State ballot within 30 days of the election.
- The FWAB must be received by the local election office no later than the ballot return deadline for that election.
- The transmittal envelope must be signed and dated (and the witness or signature must be included if required by that State).



Federal offices include:

- The President and Vice President
- U.S. Senators
- U.S. Representatives
- U.S. Delegates (American Samoa, District of Columbia, Guam, the Virgin Islands)
- U.S. Resident Commissioner (Puerto Rico)

Conduct voter outreach events

Each Federal election year (every even-numbered year), FVAP works with the Uniformed Services and the Department of State to promote voter registration and absentee voting by conducting Voting Emphasis Weeks.

Armed Forces and Overseas Citizens Voters Week: June 30-July 7, 2014

Your goal: Deliver Federal Post Card Applications (FPCA) to all unit members and their voting age family members. Encourage everyone to fill out and submit the form immediately.

What you can do:

- Conduct a non-partisan voting workshop and registration drive. Invite local election officials from your area to assist.
- Hang voting banners near base entrances or have a voting slogan displayed on base marquees.
- Run voting Public Service Announcements (PSAs) at the base theater.
- Put up motivational posters to tell unit members how to register and request an absentee ballot. Popular areas such as base housing, gyms, commissaries and exchanges serve as great locations. Be sure to include your contact information!
- Help everyone fill out the form.
- Use media outlets to encourage voter registration. Advertise events on Facebook and in base newspapers.
- Plan your events around Independence Day.



Overseas citizen groups and local election officials are excellent resources and VAOs should partner with them to conduct voting events.



Photos from successful Voters Week events can be found on our Facebook page!

Absentee Voting Week: September 29 - October 6, 2014

Your goal: Encourage everyone to return their voted ballots immediately or use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB).

What you can do:

- Ask voters if they've received their requested State ballots. If not, give them a FWAB and tell them how to fill it out and submit it.
- Use media outlets to encourage people to return their State ballot or the FWAB. Run stories in your base newspapers.
- Enlist the help of other VAOs, local election officials or overseas citizen organizations to conduct events to encourage people to return their absentee ballots.

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- Put up posters that tell people how to reach you for help. Hang voting banners near base entrances or having a voting slogan displayed on base marquees.
- Run voting PSAs at the base theater.
- Hold unit or installation “Voting Days” where computer terminals are set up for the express purpose of receiving, printing, and where allowed, returning ballots electronically.

Keep voting supplies on hand

Maintaining an adequate supply of voting materials is an essential function of every VAO. Voting materials include the FPCA and FWAB forms, motivational posters, voting banners, and brochures. To order more materials, follow the instructions below.



These documents and other voting handouts (such as the Election Dates poster) are available for download at FVAP.gov.

Army

Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) are responsible for ensuring that all absentee voting materials are ordered for their unit from the Army Publishing Directorate. You must have an account with APD.

- VAOs located in CONUS and Korea can order their materials at <https://dol.hqda.pentagon.mil/ptclick/index.aspx>.
- VAOs located in Europe or in deployment areas should contact their unit’s publication manager who can order items through the Army in Europe Library & Publications System (AEPUBS) at <https://aepubs.army.mil/ae/public/index.aspx>.
- VAOs located in in the Pacific Theater can order their materials from their local Forms and Publication Control Centers.

The form and publication numbers are: **FPCA (SF 76)**; **FWAB (SF 186)**; **VAG, Misc. Publication 360-02**; **Motivational Poster-DoD 114**.

Navy

Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) are responsible for ensuring that all absentee voting materials are made available to service members. The Navy’s specific ordering instructions are:

- **FPCA (SF 76)** – Primary method of use should be by guiding absentee voters to use the online assistant at FVAP.gov; it will guide voters in creating a completed FPCA. Secondary method of use is via downloadable PDF, available at FVAP.gov. If the primary and secondary methods of use are not possible because of operational constraints or other

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extraneous circumstances, forms may be ordered from the Navy Logistics Library (NLL). Contact vote@navy.mil prior to ordering to discuss circumstances.

- **FWAB (SF 186)** – Primary method of use should be by guiding absentee voters to use the online assistant at FVAP.gov; it will guide voters in creating a completed FWAB. Secondary method of use is via downloadable PDF, available at FVAP.gov. If the primary and secondary methods of use are not possible because of operational constraints or other extraneous circumstances, forms may be ordered from the Navy Logistics Library (NLL). Contact vote@navy.mil prior to ordering to discuss.
- **2014-15 Voting Assistance Guide (VAG)** – Primary method of use should be online at FVAP.gov or downloadable PDF as the guide is updated frequently throughout the election cycle. Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices will also have hard copies of the guide for reference.
- **Posters** – Posters are provided to IVA offices to share with VAOs. Contact your local IVA Office to obtain posters. Additional posters may be downloaded (high resolution) and printed. Several designs are also available on the 'Navy Voting' Facebook page. VAOs are encouraged to use on-base printing services to create hard-copy posters.

Air Force

You can order supplies online at <https://wmsweb.afncr.af.mil/wms/>.

1. Login with CAC. Click on "Accounts" tab. "Associated Accounts" may be "Disabled" under the "Status" column.
2. Click "View Details" and fill in User Details and click "Save" button. Click "Yes" button to confirm creating user access. Click "OK" button on account creation confirmation. Associated Account should now read "Enabled" in "Status" column.
3. Click on "Shop Online." Enter "SF76" or "SF186" (or other materials short title name) in "Keywords" text box and click "Search" link to right.
4. Click on magnifying glass to view details.
5. Enter the quantity required and then click the "+" button to add to shopping cart. Click Arrow "Proceed To Checkout." Click on "Submit Order" link.
6. To check on your order, use the "Track Orders/Order History" link. For assistance, contact Air Force ePublishing at **DSN 754-2438** or **COMM 1-800-848-9577** 0730-1700 Eastern Time or by email at epublishing@pentagon.af.mil.

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Marine Corps

You may order the following voting materials through your unit's publication manager (typically the MMO S-1 office) via Marine Corps Publication Distribution System: **Voting Assistance Guide (PCN: 10006628000)**; **Motivational Poster (PCN: 50100651000)**.

You can order the following voting materials through Direct Support Stock Control Outlets, General Services Administration or through your unit's supply officers via SABRS: **SF76, FPCA (NSN: 7540-00-634-5053)**; **SF186, FWAB (NSN: 7540-01-218-4384)**.

Please provide the PCN or NSN numbers when requesting materials. For assistance, contact your Installation Voting Assistance Officer or the Service Voting Action Officer.

Coast Guard

Voting Assistance Officers should use the online forms as much as possible. If the preference is to keep a stock pile of forms, you can order FPCAs and FWABs from General Services Administration (GSA) using the following data: **SF 76, FPCA (NSN: 7540-00-634-5053)**; **SF 186, FWAB (NSN 7540-01-218-4384)**.

The **Voting Assistance Guide** is also available online. However, you should receive a **Voting Assistance Guide** through the DOT warehouse whenever a new edition is issued. If you do not receive a new **Guide**, contact your Service Voting Action Officer.

State Department

You can order FPCAs and FWABs through the normal General Services Administration (GSA) supply channel.

- For expedited service, send a request to GSA, Attn.: Pat Bright, via email at burlington.cscorder@gsa.gov, by fax: **215-446-5123** or by telephone at **215-446-5088**.
- GSA requires the funding information, the stock number and the quantity. Use the following stock numbers: **SF 76, FPCA (7540-00-634-5053)**; **SF 186, FWAB (7540-01-218-4384)**.

You can order motivational posters and **Voting Assistance Guides** by sending an email request to votinginfo@state.gov. Posters and **Voting Assistance Guides** are free while supplies last and are shipped by diplomatic pouch.

Overseas Citizens Organizations

You can order forms, motivational posters and *Voting Assistance Guides* by sending an email request to vote@fvap.gov or calling 1-800-438-VOTE (8683).

International toll-free numbers can be found on the inside back cover or at FVAP.gov.

Additional assistance for voters

The Uniformed Services have extensive chains of command to provide voting support for military members and their families.

Installation Commanding Officer (CO)

The Installation CO oversees all voting assistance for the installation. The Installation Voter Assistance Office and Installation Voting Assistance Officer report directly to the CO for all voting-related tasks. COs are requested by FVAP to make opening statements at FVAP workshops and facilitate travel arrangements for VAOs to attend workshops at surrounding installations.

Installation Voting Assistance Officer (IVAO)

The IVAO acts as a focal point on military installations in coordinating voting assistance support. IVAOs should maintain a roster of all unit VAOs on the installation, establish communications with VAOs, and provide necessary materials and support. IVAOs coordinate FVAP workshops with organizations from their installation and surrounding installations.

Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Office Personnel

These are people who staff the IVA Office. They provide assistance to military personnel, eligible family members, as well as civilian personnel and other civilians who have access to the office. They provide written instruction on voter registration and absentee ballot procedures and report directly to the installation commander. These individuals can be contacted with questions regarding local voting.

Legal Assistance Officer

This officer can be contacted with legal questions, such as determining voter residency. Often known as a JAG (Judge Advocate General) officer.

Public Affairs/Information Officer

Contact this officer to ensure that voting information is included in installation or unit publications.

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Inspector General (IG)

The IG is required by Federal law to periodically review voting assistance programs to ensure compliance with DoD and Service directives and regulations.

Personnel/Human Resources Officer

Contact this officer to ensure that all newly reporting personnel and naturalized U.S. citizens are provided FPCAs and voting assistance.

Publications, Supply or Distribution Officer

This officer ensures that VAOs receive FPCAs, FWABs and other voting materials.

Officers-in-Charge

These officers of exchanges, commissaries, special services activities, medical and dental facilities, education centers, family centers, etc. can coordinate the display of voting materials for Armed Forces Voters Week and Absentee Voting Week.

Other non-military support organizations that can assist in voter outreach

- Local election officials
- Veterans and Service Organizations, such as: Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Non commissioned Officers Association and the League of Women Voters
- Civic Groups, American Chambers of Commerce, colleges and universities and support organizations for overseas U.S. citizens
- Spouses' Club, Boy/Girl Scouts and other youth groups

Run your program

Legal guidelines

VAOs must not provide partisan voting information from candidates, political parties or partisan organizations. Military VAOs may receive questions from voters regarding whether they can distribute and/or display partisan materials at the military installations. VAOs should consult their Commanding Officer for their interpretation of *DoD Directive 1344.10 Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces on Active Duty*, available at FVAP.gov. Federally employed VAOs should refer to the *Hatch Act, Title 5 U.S.C. Sec. 7321*, link available at FVAP.gov.

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VAOs can advise citizens on locating information on candidates and issues using national, local and Service newspapers, magazines, radio, television, political party and campaign committee offices, overseas newspapers and periodicals, and State election websites.

Continuity Folder

Continuity of your program is important for you, your assistant, your organization and your successor. Create and maintain a Continuity Folder for your reference and to ensure that your successor understands what he or she is supposed to do. It should provide basic details on absentee voting procedures and contain anything that may help your backup or successor. Your folder should also provide a quick orientation of VAO voting responsibilities. It can be in the form of a notebook, file folder, or an online community folder. Make sure it is readily available to other VAOs and assistants.

Your Continuity Folder should contain at a minimum:

- Your VAO Designation Letter (only military VAOs)
- Current FPCAs and FWABs
- Current ***Voting Assistance Guide*** (updates available at FVAP.gov)
- Recent news releases
- Election Dates Calendar (during even-numbered years)
- Current State Department or Service guidance (directive, instruction, order, etc.)
- ***DoD Instruction 1000.04. (Federal Voting Assistance Program)*** and the ***Voting Action Plan***
- Training materials and certificate from workshops
- Good ideas and lessons learned

You can find all materials listed above in the VAO section of FVAP.gov or through your normal service supply chain.

Utilize your program's Continuity Folder to train replacements.



Most VAO and IVA Office Continuity Folder documents can be downloaded in the VAO Continuity Folder section of FVAP.gov.



Never include Personally Identifiable Information about individuals you have assisted!