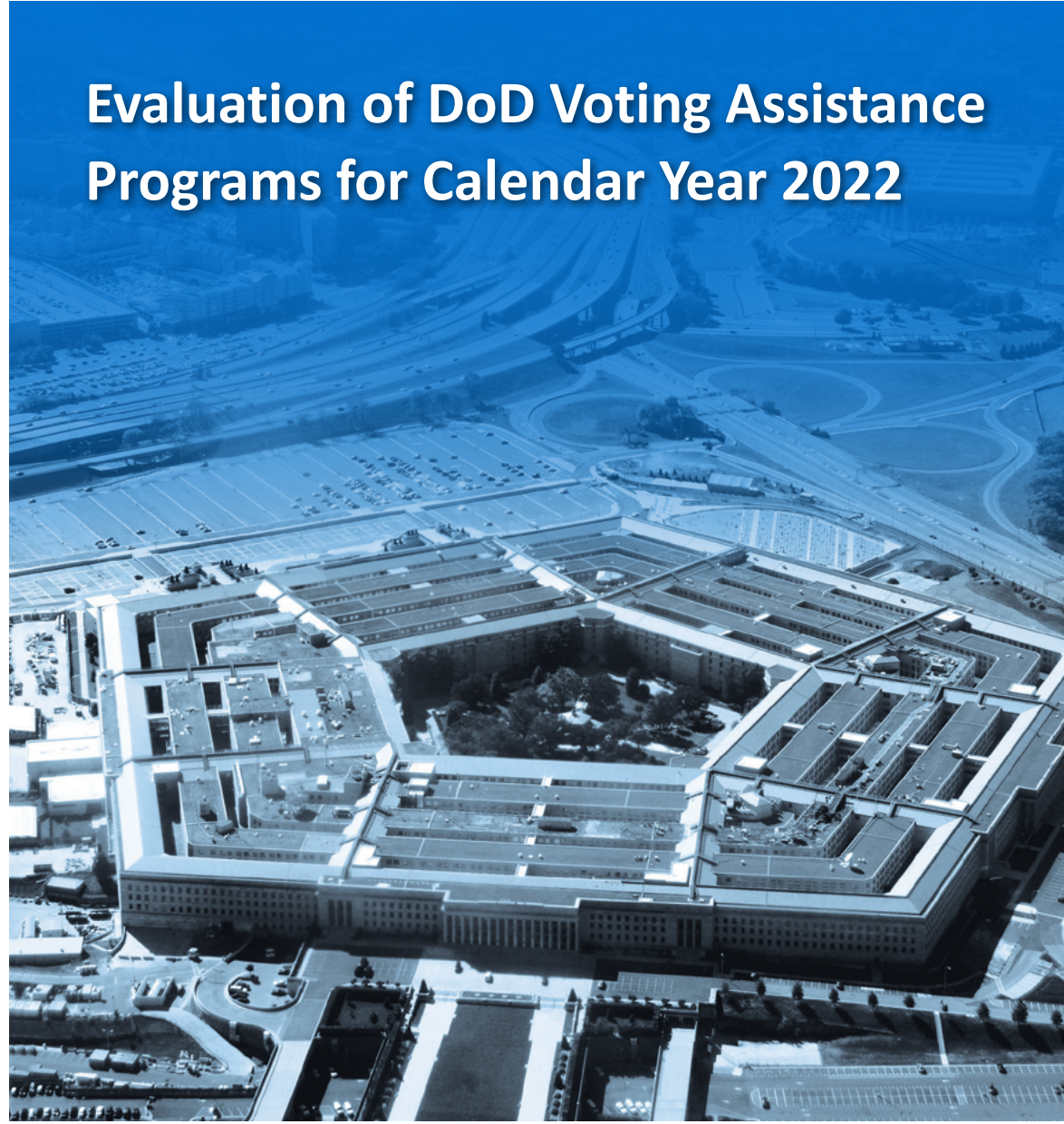




INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Defense

MARCH 30, 2023



Evaluation of DoD Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2022

INTEGRITY ★ INDEPENDENCE ★ EXCELLENCE





Results in Brief

Evaluation of DoD Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2022

March 30, 2023

Objective

The objective of this evaluation was to report on the effectiveness and compliance with the voting assistance programs of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force during calendar year 2022, in accordance with the requirements of section 1566, title 10, United States Code (10 U.S.C. § 1566 [2020]), as amended.

Additionally, we examined whether the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) Office complied with the requirements of Public Law 116–92, Executive Order 14019, DoD Directive 5101.11E, and DoD Instructions 1000.04 and 4525.09, with regard to outreach and access efforts for voters covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA).¹

Background

Public Law 99–410, “The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act,” as modified by the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act and other provisions, establishes voting assistance programs intended to help Service members and their families, and other eligible U.S. citizens overseas register to vote and cast absentee ballots. Another law, 10 U.S.C. § 1566, 2020,

Background (cont’d)

requires the DoD Inspector General (IG) to report to Congress by March 31 of each year, and the IGs of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force to annually review the compliance and effectiveness of their Services’ voting assistance program.

The Service IGs annually assess their respective Service’s voting assistance programs. For 2022, the Service IGs reported that their respective Services’ voting assistance programs were effective and complied with UOCAVA and DoD Instruction 1000.04.

Finding

We reviewed the FVAP Office for compliance with Executive Order 14019 and DoD Instruction 1000.04 with regard to outreach and access efforts for voters covered by UOCAVA. The FVAP Office provided effective outreach and assistance to eligible voters covered by UOCAVA and their family members, as well as stakeholder agencies.

The FVAP Office coordinated with the Services, election officials, eligible voters, and Congress to promote awareness of the right to vote and the resources to exercise that right. Specifically, the FVAP Office met statutory and policy requirements with regard to access and outreach through multiple actions, including:

- Service, election official, and stakeholder engagement;
- direct assistance to eligible voters;
- research and evaluation; and
- congressional reporting.

As a result of actions by the FVAP Office and its coordination with stakeholder agencies, eligible voters had access to the information necessary to participate in the voting process. DoD organizations and leaders also had the necessary tools to help ensure access to vote and comply with Federal law and DoD Instruction 1000.04.

¹ Public Law 116–92, “National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020,” December 20, 2019. Executive Order 14019, “Promoting Access to Voting,” March 7, 2021. DoD Directive 5101.11E, “DoD Executive Agent for the Military Postal Service (MPS) and Official Mail Program (OMP),” March 18, 2021. DoD Instruction 1000.04, “Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP),” November 12, 2019. DoD Instruction 4525.09, “Military Postal Service,” July 10, 2018 (Incorporating Change 2, May 24, 2022).





**INSPECTOR GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
4800 MARK CENTER DRIVE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22350-1500**

March 30, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS
DIRECTOR, FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
DIRECTOR, MILITARY POSTAL SERVICE AGENCY
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE ARMY
NAVAL INSPECTOR GENERAL
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE AIR FORCE
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE SPACE FORCE
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE MARINE CORPS

SUBJECT: Evaluation of DoD Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2022
(Report No. DODIG-2023-063)

This final report provides the results of the DoD Office of Inspector General's evaluation. We are providing this report for information and use. This report does not contain recommendations.

We coordinated a draft of this report with officials from the Federal Voting Assistance Program Office; the Election Assistance Commission; the Council of State Governments; the Departments of Commerce, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice, State, and Transportation; the Military Postal Service Agency; the U.S. Postal Service; and Office of Inspector General representatives from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force. Each organization responded with informal comments concurring with our report and providing technical comments, which we incorporated, as appropriate.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance received during the evaluation. If you have any questions, please contact [REDACTED]

FOR THE INSPECTOR GENERAL:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Maurice L. Foster", is positioned below the text "FOR THE INSPECTOR GENERAL:". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Maurice L. Foster
Acting Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations
Programs, Combatant Commands, and Overseas
Contingency Operations

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Introduction

Objective

The objective of this evaluation was to report on the effectiveness and compliance of the Services' voting assistance programs based on 2022 annual reviews by the respective Service Inspectors General, in accordance with section 1566, title 10, United States Code (10 U.S.C. § 1566 [2020]), as amended by Public Law 116–283, “William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021,” section 924(b)(1)(M).²

Additionally, we examined whether the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) Office complied with the requirements of Public Law 116–92, Executive Order 14019, DoD Directive 5101.11E, and DoD Instructions 1000.04 and 4525.09, with regard to outreach and access efforts for voters covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). Specifically, we focused on access to absentee voter registration for voters covered by the UOCAVA and the handling of those absentee ballots by the DoD.³ See Appendix A for the Scope and Methodology and the Glossary for a definition of the technical terms used in this report.

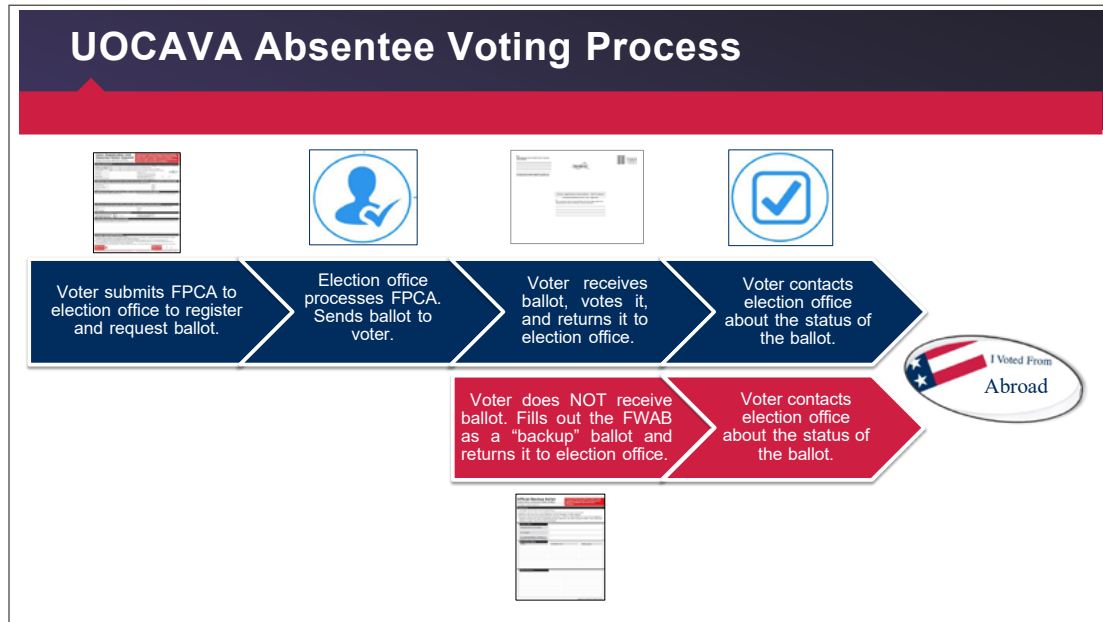
Background

Public Law 99–410, “The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act,” as modified by the “Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act” and other provisions, establishes various voting assistance programs intended to help overseas Service members, their families, and other eligible personnel with the absentee voting process. UOCAVA applies to U.S. citizens who are active members of the Uniformed Services, the Merchant Marine, the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; these U.S. citizens' eligible family members; and U.S. citizens residing outside the United States who are absent from the place of residence where they are otherwise qualified to vote. See Appendix E for information on the locations outside the United States with the largest numbers of adult U.S. citizens. See Figure 1 for the UOCAVA Absentee Voting Process.

² Public Law 116–283, section 924(b)(1)(M), added the Space Force to 10 U.S.C. § 1566.

³ Public Law 116–92, “National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020,” December 20, 2019. Executive Order 14019, “Promoting Access to Voting,” March 7, 2021. DoD Directive 5101.11E, “DoD Executive Agent for the Military Postal Service (MPS) and Official Mail Program (OMP),” March 18, 2021. DoD Instruction 1000.04, “Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP),” November 12, 2019. DoD Instruction 4525.09, “Military Postal Service,” July 10, 2018 (Incorporating Change 2, May 24, 2022).

Figure 1. UOCAVA Absentee Voting Process



LEGEND

UOCAVA Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act

FPCA Federal Post Card Application

FWAB Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot

Source: FVAP UOCAVA Orientation, Federal Agency Partners, September 2022.

The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020, section 850D, "Study on Two-Way Military Ballot Barcode Tracking," required the FVAP Director to study the feasibility of a pilot program providing full ballot tracking of overseas military absentee ballots through the mail in a manner that is similar to the 2016 Military Ballot Tracking Pilot (MBTP) Research program conducted by the FVAP Office, in coordination with the Council of State Governments, the U.S. Postal Service, and the Military Postal Service Agency.⁴ Also, the FVAP Director must submit a report to Congress on the results of the study, including:⁵

- an estimate of the costs and requirements needed to conduct the pilot program;
- a description of the organizations that would provide substantial support for the pilot program;

⁴ In 2016, the FVAP Office, through a cooperative agreement with the Council of State Governments Overseas Voting Initiative, with direct support from the U.S. Postal Service and the Military Postal Service Agency, conducted the first MBTP to track the life cycle of mailed ballots during the 2016 election. Full (or life cycle) ballot tracking is tracking a ballot from the time the ballot leaves the local election official's office, to delivery to the Military Post Office, to delivery to the voter overseas, to the voted ballot's ultimate delivery back to the local election office.

⁵ The FVAP Director submitted his "Military Ballot Tracking Pilot Research" report to Congress in July 2021.

- a timeline for the phased implementation of the pilot program to all military personnel actively serving overseas;
- a method to determine under the pilot program if a ballot was counted, and a way to provide such information to the member of the Armed Forces casting the vote; and
- a description of the efforts being undertaken to ensure a reliable and secure military ballot tracking system.

Executive Order 14019, section 8, “Ensuring Access to Voting for Active Duty Military and Overseas Citizens,” requires the:

- Secretary of Defense to establish procedures, consistent with applicable law, to annually offer each member of the Armed Forces on active duty the opportunity to register to vote in Federal elections, update voter registration information, or request an absentee ballot. In addition, within 200 days of the date of the order (September 22, 2021), the Secretary of Defense must evaluate the feasibility of implementing an online system to facilitate these services.
- Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Department of State, the Military Postal Service Agency, and the U.S. Postal Service, to take all practical steps to establish procedures to enable a comprehensive end-to-end ballot tracking system for all absentee ballots cast by military and other eligible overseas voters under UOCAVA. The Secretary of Defense must also submit a report to the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy with a strategic plan for establishing the ballot tracking system.
- Head of each agency with overseas employees to designate an employee to be responsible for coordinating with the FVAP Office, including to promote voter registration and voting services available to the agency’s overseas employees. The Director of the Office of Management and Budget may issue guidance to assist agencies in making such designations.⁶

The Secretary of Defense Has Federal Responsibilities Under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act

UOCAVA requires the President to designate the head of an Executive department to have responsibility for UOCAVA’s Federal functions.⁷ Executive Order 12642, issued in 1988, designated the Secretary of Defense as the presidential designee.

⁶ The FVAP Director submitted his “Military Ballot Tracking Pilot Research” report to the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, as required by Executive Order 14019, section 8(c).

⁷ 52 U.S.C. § 20301.

It also authorized the Secretary of Defense to delegate UOCAVA responsibilities within the DoD.⁸ As the presidential designee, the Secretary of Defense is tasked with specific duties, summarized as follows:

- consult with and educate state and local election officials on UOCAVA requirements and work with the Election Assistance Commission and state officials to develop standards for reporting and storing absentee ballot data;
- prescribe an official post card form, a Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot, and an envelope design for the ballot, and compile and distribute materials on elections, registration, and voting procedures;
- report annually to Congress and the President on the effectiveness of programs to assist voters covered by UOCAVA after each presidential election;
- prescribe a standard oath to be used to certify UOCAVA voting documents, affirming that a material misstatement of fact in the completion of such a document may constitute grounds for a conviction for perjury;
- implement procedures to collect and deliver absentee ballots of UOCAVA-covered voters, ensure that absentee voters can cast ballots in a private and independent manner, and safeguard all completed absentee ballots cast at DoD locations or facilities; and
- carry out outlined FVAP improvements, including developing an online portal of voting information for absent Uniformed Service overseas voters and a program to notify these voters 90, 60, and 30 days prior to each election for Federal office.⁹

The Secretary of Defense Delegated Responsibility to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

The Secretary of Defense delegated responsibilities under UOCAVA to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. DoD Instruction 1000.04 establishes the responsibilities of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs). Policy support and operational responsibilities are assigned to the Director of the Defense Support Services Center.¹⁰ The Office of the FVAP Director (FVAP Office) is under the Director of the Defense Support Services Center. To carry out its UOCAVA duties, the FVAP Office coordinates with the Election Assistance Commission and the Departments of Commerce, Health

⁸ Executive Order 12642, "Designation of the Secretary of Defense as the Presidential Designee Under Title I of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act," June 8, 1988.

⁹ 52 U.S.C. §§ 20301, 20305.

¹⁰ DoD Instruction 1000.04, "Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)," section 2, "Responsibilities," November 12, 2019.

and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice, State, and Transportation. DoD Instruction 1000.04 also assigns responsibilities to the DoD Components to develop written voting-related policies to support all eligible Uniformed Services personnel and their family members, including those in deployed, dispersed, and tenant organizations.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program Office Carries Out DoD Responsibilities

The FVAP Office carries out the DoD's responsibilities under UOCAVA. The FVAP Office works to ensure that military personnel, their eligible family members, and other overseas citizens are aware of the right to vote and have the tools and resources to do so anywhere in the world. The FVAP Office developed and maintains a website and portal to conduct outreach and inform these groups about voter registration and absentee ballot procedures.¹¹

UOCAVA requires the FVAP Office to report information specified in the law to the President and Congress by March 31 of each year.¹² The report must include descriptions of Military Department voter registration assistance programs and their use, absentee ballot collection and delivery, and cooperation between states and the U.S. Government. The report also includes assessments of absent Uniformed Services and overseas voters' registration and participation. Service after action reports are due to the FVAP Office by January 31 of the year immediately following the election (see Appendix B for further details on the FVAP Office).

The FVAP Office Conducts Outreach with Stakeholder Agencies to Help Overseas Citizens Vote

To ensure that voters covered by UOCAVA can vote worldwide, the FVAP Office conducts outreach with the following stakeholder agencies.

U.S. Postal Service

The U.S. Postal Service processes international election and political mail for eligible U.S. citizens around the world, including military and diplomatic members and their families. International election and political mail is typically processed at one of the five International Service Centers (ISCs), located in New York,

¹¹ The presidential designee is required under 52 U.S.C. § 20305 to develop online portals of information to inform absent Uniformed Services voters regarding voter registration procedures and absentee ballot procedures to be used by voters with respect to elections for Federal office.

¹² We reviewed the FVAP Office's July 2021 reports, "2020 Federal Voting Assistance Program" and the "Military Ballot Tracking Pilot Research."

Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.¹³ The Chicago International and Military Service Center processed about 80 percent of the outbound and inbound international military and diplomatic election mail for the 2020 general election.

International election mail has distinct processing procedures different from those for domestic election mail. For example, U.S. election offices are required to send out international absentee ballots at least 45 days before a Federal election. Also, certain international inbound military election ballots qualify for Express Mail service based on a partnership between the DoD and the Postal Service.

Military Postal Service Agency

The Military Postal Service Agency oversees the Military Postal Service, and is the DoD's and the Military Services' single point of contact with the U.S. Postal Service.

The Military Postal Service operates as an extension of the U.S. Postal Service in more than 55 countries and provides similar postal service to authorized DoD patrons for personal and official mail around the world in contingency and non-contingency operations. Differences in postal service are based on restrictions for the assigned country and type of military operation. DoD mail moves by air, ground, or surface transportation through partnerships among the United States, foreign governments, and the commercial sector with entities such as the U.S. Postal Service, the U.S. Transportation Command, the Military Sealift Command, the Air Mobility Command, and U.S. and foreign flag commercial airlines.

Department of Justice

Although the Secretary of Defense is the presidential designee with primary responsibility for implementing the Federal functions mandated by UOCAVA, the Attorney General may bring a civil action as necessary to carry out UOCAVA's provisions.¹⁴ The Attorney General assigned responsibility for enforcing UOCAVA to the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division. The Department of Justice monitors compliance with UOCAVA provisions.¹⁵

¹³ San Francisco ISC mail processing and retail operations ended in April 2022, and the building was vacated in August 2022, when the building's lease option ended. The Postal Service began transitioning mail processing to other facilities and relocating employees out of the San Francisco ISC in August 2021. The facility employed about 320 Postal Service staff in mid-January 2021 and processed about 33 million pieces of mail in FY 2021.

¹⁴ 52 U.S.C. §§ 20301(a), 20307(a).

¹⁵ According to the Department of Justice, the UOCAVA of 1986, 52 U.S.C. §§ 20301–20311, as amended by the MOVE Act of 2009, Public Law No. 111–84, Subtitle H, §§ 575–589, 123 stat. 2190, 2318–35 (2009), requires states to afford uniformed and overseas voters a meaningful opportunity to register and vote absentee in elections for Federal office. Protecting the voting rights of uniformed and overseas voters remains one of the highest priorities of the Department of Justice.

The Council of State Governments

The Council of State Governments is the nation's largest nonpartisan organization serving all three branches of state elected and appointed officials. The mission of the Council of State Governments is to champion excellence in state government.

The FVAP Office, in cooperation with the Council of State Governments, researched whether a mechanism existed to provide overseas military members with full tracking and visibility of their blank ballots. Since 2015, the FVAP Office has been working with the Council of State Governments' Overseas Voting Initiative to:

- develop a standardized format that captures transactional-level data about uniformed and overseas voters; and
- provide a deeper level of analysis, but to reduce the burden of post-election data reporting for election officials when completing section B (the UOCAVA portion) of the Election Administration and Voting Survey.

Election Assistance Commission

The Election Assistance Commission is an independent Federal agency established by the Help America Vote Act of 2002.¹⁶ UOCAVA directs the presidential designee to work with the Election Assistance Commission and the chief election official of each state to develop standards for reporting data on the number of absentee ballots transmitted and received under 52 U.S.C. § 20302(c) of UOCAVA.

Under 52 U.S.C. § 20302(c), each state and unit of local government that administers a regularly scheduled general election for Federal office must submit a report to the Election Assistance Commission reflecting the data on uniformed and overseas voting.

The Department of State

According to Department of State policy in Foreign Affairs Manual 1500, the Department of State is required to work with the FVAP Office to assist U.S. voters overseas.¹⁷ The Department of State assists the Secretary of Defense in carrying out UOCAVA functions by providing voting assistance to overseas U.S. citizens who do not fall under Secretary of Defense jurisdiction. Department of State Voting Assistance Officers help U.S. citizens with the completion and transmission of absentee voting forms and ballots.

¹⁶ Congress passed the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to reform the Nation's voting process, and improve voting systems and voter access following the 2000 election. The Help America Vote Act created mandatory minimum standards for states to follow in several key areas of election administration. The law provides funding to help states meet these new standards, replace voting systems, and improve election administration. The law also established the Election Assistance Commission, which is responsible for maintaining the national voter registration form; conducting research; and administering a national clearinghouse on elections that includes shared practices, information for voters, and other resources to improve elections.

¹⁷ Department of State, Foreign Affairs Manual 1500, "Overseas Voting Program," August 28, 2018.

Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps

According to Department of Commerce officials, in the past, DoD personnel have reached out to the Department of Commerce to discuss voters covered by UOCAVA. Overseas personnel in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps (a bureau of the Department of Commerce) and their eligible family members are covered by UOCAVA. However, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps does not have a policy or other requirement that defines the level of coordination with and support from the FVAP Office. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps' Commissioned Personnel Center has information about absentee voting, including the FVAP website, which is posted on the Commissioned Officer Corps website.

Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps

Personnel from the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, a subordinate organization to the Department of Health and Human Services, and their eligible family members are also covered by UOCAVA. However, the Commissioned Corps does not have a policy or other requirement that defines the level of coordination with and support from the FVAP Office. The Public Health Service Commissioned Corps has no formal mechanism or process in place to account for or provide voting assistance to voters covered by UOCAVA. According to Public Health Service Commissioned Corps officials, some officers may be aware of or receive information concerning absentee voting, the FVAP voting guide, or agency websites (such as the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institutes of Health, or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention); however, the Commissioned Corps headquarters does not make absentee voting information available.

The Department of Homeland Security, Coast Guard

During peacetime, the Coast Guard falls under the purview of the Department of Homeland Security. However, in accordance with UOCAVA, the Coast Guard carries out the FVAP in the same manner as the Military Services, through DoD Instruction 1000.04 and its own policy, Commandant Instruction 1742.3L.¹⁸ The Instruction applies to all active duty Coast Guard members and their family members. The policy encourages personnel to actively participate in the Federal, state, and local electoral processes of their home states.

¹⁸ Commandant Instruction 1742.3L, "Coast Guard Voting Assistance Program," June 6, 2017.

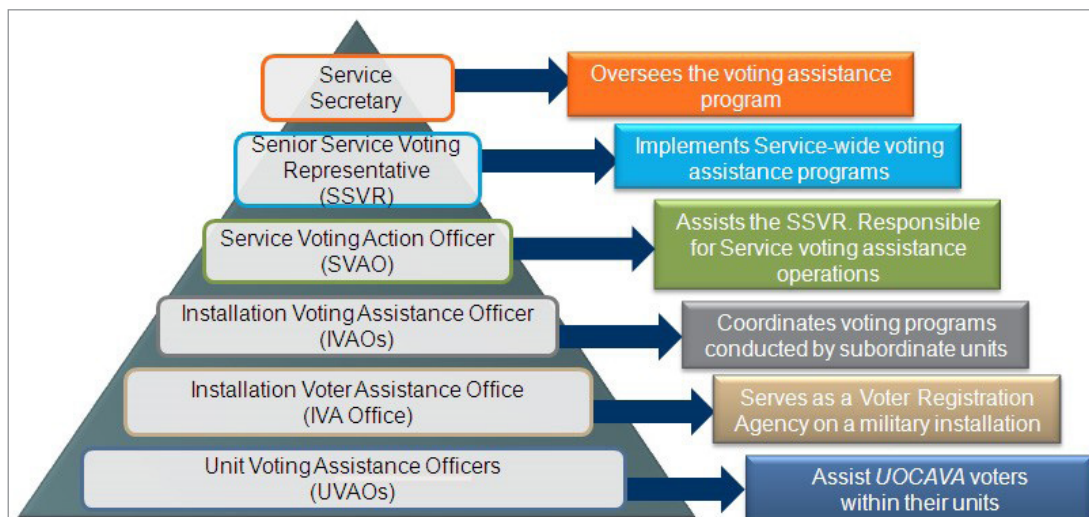
Military Service Inspectors General Reports

Section 1566, title 10, United States Code, 2020, as amended, defines voting assistance programs as those the FVAP carries out under UOCAVA and any similar program. This section of the statute also requires the DoD Inspector General (IG) to complete an annual report on the compliance and effectiveness of voting assistance programs during the preceding calendar year by March 31, and the IGs of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force to annually:

- review the compliance and effectiveness of their Services' voting assistance program, and
- report the results to the DoD IG in time to be reflected in the DoD IG's March 31 report to Congress.¹⁹

DoD Instruction 1000.04 and 10 U.S.C. § 1566, 2020, as amended, require the IGs of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force to submit their reports assessing voting assistance program efforts, along with supporting statistical information, to the DoD IG and the FVAP Office by December 1 of each year.²⁰ DoD Instruction 1000.04 also requires the written designation of personnel at all levels (unit, installation, and Service) to manage the respective Services' voting assistance programs. As shown in Figure 2, the Instruction establishes a hierarchy of voting assistance offices and trained Voting Assistance Officers to provide voter assistance to military personnel, their dependents, civilian Federal employees, and all qualified voters who have access to DoD installations (in the United States and overseas).

Figure 2. Service Voting Assistance Program Key Members



Source: FVAP 2018 Report to Congress.

¹⁹ We reviewed the Service IGs' 2022 voting assistance program reports, which covered calendar year 2022.

²⁰ As a result of this compressed time frame, our ability to review, test, or examine the Service IG reports was limited. While we reviewed the Service IGs' 2022 voting assistance program reports for consistency and reasonableness, we did not validate their data and conclusions.

Inspectors General Found That Military Service Voting Assistance Programs Were Compliant and Effective

We reviewed the annual assessments of the Military Services' voting assistance programs covering calendar year 2022 and submitted by the respective Service IGs. All of the IGs found that their voting assistance programs complied with the requirements of UOCAVA and DoD Instruction 1000.04 and were effective.

Each Service IG:

- applied the measures of performance and effect developed by the FVAP Office (see Appendix C for Service voting assistance program performance metrics and reporting requirements);
- described Service coordination with the FVAP Office, including routine input of voting data to the FVAP web portal;
- identified data used to support distribution of voting materials and contact with eligible voters; and
- applied a standardized checklist, tailored to DoD Instruction 1000.04, the Military Postal Service Agency Strategic Postal Voting Action Plan, and corresponding Service voting policies, for IG inspections of voting assistance programs in seven specific program areas: staffing, training, material distribution, communication and information network, commander and installation-level involvement, program compliance, and program effectiveness.

The Army Inspector General Reported the Service Voting Assistance Program as Effective

The Army IG reported that the Army had an effective voting assistance program during 2022. The criteria the Army IG used for compliance testing included 10 U.S.C. § 1566, DoD Instruction 1000.04, Army Regulation 608-20, and the Military Postal Service Agency's 2022 Strategic Postal Voting Action Plan.²¹ In 2022, the Army IG report compiled inspection results from seven senior-level commands. In addition, this year's inspection focused on the distribution and movement of absentee ballots. The Army IG report highlighted the following.

- The Army IG reported that for 2022, the Army was within Army Voting Assistance Program tolerance in all areas. However, two areas require emphasis in preparation for the 2024 presidential election:
 - continue to conduct Army Voting Assistance Program workshops to prepare for the 2024 presidential election; and

²¹ Army Regulation 608-20, "Army Voting Assistance Program," November 13, 2020. The Military Postal Service Agency's 2022 Strategic Postal Voting Action Plan, May 9, 2022, lists requirements for the Military Services to include implementing guidance on processing balloting material in accordance with the Plan.

- review and understand how absentee ballots are distributed and submitted for future elections.
- All seven of the inspected commands developed redundant systems to either hand-deliver or electronically deliver the Standard Form 76 to eligible voters.²² Installation and Unit Voting Assistance Officers accomplished this task through e-mails with unit-specific distribution lists and via installation and organization websites and portals.
- Military Post Office supervisors and the Joint Military Postal Activity in the continental United States physically monitored all voted ballots to ensure compliance with Military Postal Service Agency guidelines.
- Command Voting Assistance Officers updated the FVAP Office monthly on the personnel status of Voting Assistance Officers and the level of voting assistance provided, using the FVAP database. The Army Voting Assistance Office tracked Voting Assistance Officers' updates and notified the officers if their updates were late. In addition, the Army Voting Assistance Office completed a quarterly voting assistance program report summarizing FVAP-directed "measures of success," including the number of personnel contacted (Soldiers and dependents) and the type of information provided (ballots, absentee ballots, and general information).
- The Army used a Voting Assistance Officer virtual network and numerous web links to allow Soldiers to access voting information and contact a Voting Assistance Officer. The Army Voting Assistance Office maintained the Army voting website (<https://www.hrc.army.mil/content/army%20voting>). Both the Army and FVAP websites had links to Voting Assistance Officers throughout the Army. Soldiers also could access voting information through local installation websites.

The Naval Inspector General Reported the Service Voting Assistance Program as Effective

The Naval IG reported that the Navy had an effective voting assistance program in 2022, with minor discrepancies.²³ The criteria the Naval IG used for compliance testing included 10 U.S.C. § 1566, DoD Instruction 1000.04, and Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 1742.1C.²⁴ The Naval IG evaluated the 31 major commands

²² Standard Form 76, "Voter Registration and Absentee Ballot Request: Federal Post Card Application."

²³ Department of the Navy Office of the Naval Inspector General report, "2021 Navy Voting Assistance Program Assessment," December 30, 2021.

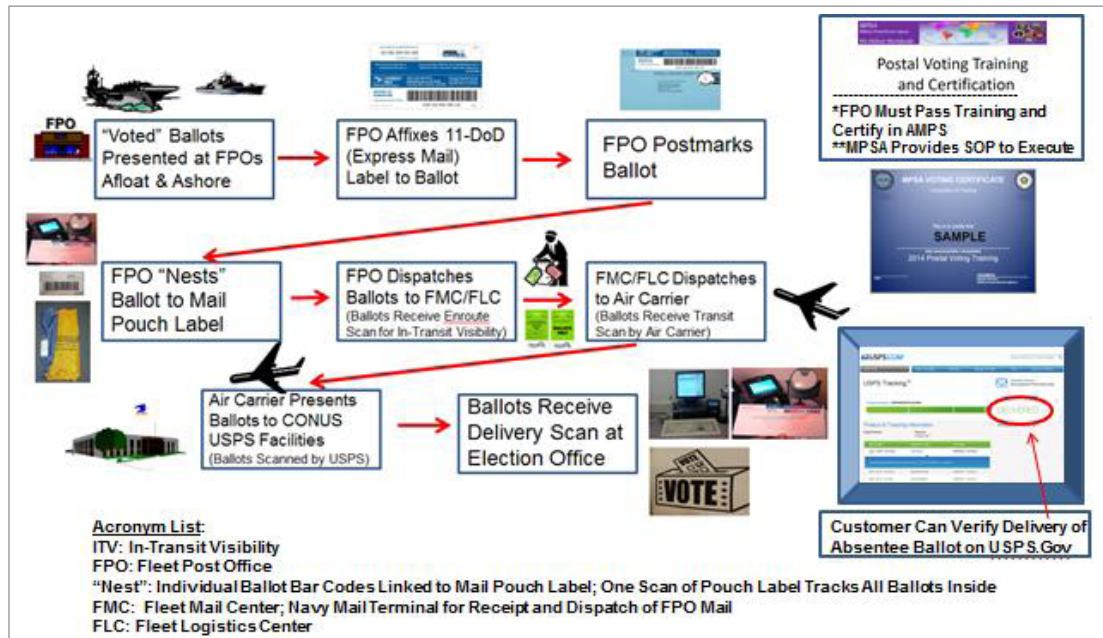
²⁴ Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 1742.1C, "Navy Voting Assistance Program," February 5, 2016.

overseeing all Navy units, including the U.S. Central Command and the Defense Media Activity, which are supported by the Navy. The Naval IG report highlighted the following.

- The Commander, Navy Installations Command encompasses 10 regions and 71 installations.²⁵ Installation Voting Assistance Officers are designated in writing and assigned in the FVAP web portal.
- Of the 31 Naval Commands, 27 (87 percent) appointed Voting Assistance Officers in writing to effectively assist voters for all Federal elections, and 30 of the commands (97 percent) were found to be effective in providing voting assistance. Major commands are responsible for ensuring that subordinate units maintain a Voting Assistance Officer and enter voting assistance metrics through the FVAP web portal. Voting Assistance Officers are required to submit periodic program self-assessments to the unit commanding officer or officer in charge, and the Navy Service Voting Action Officer conducts annual data calls.
- The Naval Education and Training Command was found to be overall compliant and effective, with some discrepancies. Of the 27 recruiting commands, 26 (96 percent) fully trained their personnel in providing voter assistance, and 24 (89 percent) transmitted completed forms within the 5 calendar days allotted by the instruction. However, only 20 of the 27 (74 percent) recruiting commands kept records on file for 2 years documenting that all enlistees were offered voting-related forms.
- Instruction 1742.1C and the Navy's voting action plan established the requirements and deadlines for distributing the Federal Post Card Application. The Service Voting Assistance Officer reminded all unit and installation Voting Assistance Officers of the Federal Post Card Application distribution requirement via a monthly newsletter, and also posted instructions on social media. Unit Voting Assistance Officers also logged distribution metrics for the Federal Post Card Application through the FVAP web portal.
- The Naval Supply Systems Command participates in weekly postal voting calls with the Military Postal Service Agency, ensures that each Fleet Post Office (ashore and afloat) has at least two Postal Voting Representatives trained, and incorporates procedures for collecting absentee ballots for U.S. citizens abroad who are not authorized Fleet Post Office use or access to military installations. Figure 3 shows the Navy's absentee ballot voting process.

²⁵ Commander, Navy Installations Command Enterprise is the name of the organization and does not refer to the person.

Figure 3. Navy Voting Absentee Ballot Processing



Source: Naval Supply Systems Command 2022 Naval Postal Voting Training and Action Plan, August 2022.

The Marine Corps Inspector General Reported the Service Voting Assistance Program as Effective

The Marine Corps IG concluded that the Marine Corps voting assistance program was effective in assisting eligible voters and complied with 10 U.S.C. § 1566, DoD Instruction 1000.04, and Marine Corps Order 1742.1C.²⁶ The Marine Corps IG based this conclusion on the results of inspections of 125 units during 2022. The Marine Corps IG used data submitted by the commands to analyze their voting assistance. The Marine Corps IG report highlighted the following.

- On January 6, 2022, Marine Corps Voting Assistance Officers sent over 185,000 e-mails with a link to the electronic version of the SF 76 (voter registration and absentee ballot request) to all active duty and reserve personnel. In addition, over 39,000 civilian personnel, recruits, and students in training received hard copies of the SF 76. On July 15, 2022, 51,687 additional e-mails were sent to active duty and reserve personnel.
- As of November 15, 2022, recruiters issued over 9,724 voter registration forms (DD Form 2645) to eligible prospective enlistees. The completed forms were processed in accordance with the directives and the appropriate state's election official offices.

²⁶ Marine Corps Order 1742.1C, "Voting Assistance Program," July 25, 2021.

- The Service Voting Action Officer determined compliance with Executive Order 14019, section 8, and established procedures to enable a comprehensive end-to-end ballot tracking system for all absentee ballots cast by military and other eligible overseas voters covered by UOCAVA. In coordination with and per the guidance of the Military Postal Service Agency, Headquarters Marine Corps Postal Affairs established the 2022 Voting Action Plan providing procedural guidance to all Military Post Offices to expedite the transportation process and the tracking of all absentee ballots during the 2022 Federal elections.
- The Marine Corps appointed an Installation Voting Assistance Officer for each of the 18 Marine Corps installations and maintained the established ratio of 1 Unit Voting Assistance Officer per 200 Marines at each command.

The Air Force Inspector General Reported the Service Voting Assistance Program as Effective

The Air Force IG concluded that the Air Force voting assistance program was effective in assisting eligible voters and complied with 10 U.S.C. § 1566, DoD Instruction 1000.04, and Air Force Instruction 36-3107.²⁷ The IG's office interviewed Voting Assistance Officers, inspected their procedures, and collected data from major Air Force commands.

The Air Force IG conducted FVAP inspections across Wings or equivalent units concerning voting initiatives in 2022 and identified 201 deficiencies. As of November 22, 2022, 81 of 191 minor deficiencies remained open and 6 of 10 significant deficiencies remained open. The Air Force IG identified no critical deficiencies. The Air Force IG report highlighted the following.

- Installation Voting Assistance Officers coordinate with appropriate offices to ensure that the Installation Voting Assistance Office is included on in- and out-processing checklists for the required voting services, including:
 - in- and out-processing personnel for permanent change of station or deployments of 6 months or longer;
 - assigned personnel changing their mailing address;
 - upon release from active duty; and
 - upon request by military, civilian, contractors or any U.S. citizen with access to the installation and Installation Voting Assistance Office.

²⁷ Air Force Instruction 36-3107, "Voting Assistance Program," July 1, 2021.

- Instructions on accomplishing these steps are provided to Installation and Unit Voting Assistance Officers in the January 2022 Air Force Voting Action Plan, which is posted on the FVAP Portal. To validate compliance, the Air Force Service Voting Assistance Officer provided the Air Force Office of Inspector General (OIG) and the Air Force Inspection Agency a standardized inspection checklist based on the core requirements of DoD Instruction 1000.04, and is to be used by all installation-level inspectors when conducting annual inspections.
- The Air Force developed a redundant Service-wide messaging system and installation electronic distribution mailing lists. The messaging system reaches 285,000 Service members and 153,000 civilian employees. The Air Force retained records of Federal Post Card Application distribution, and voting information and assistance provided, in accordance with FVAP metric requirements and an Air Force web-based customer service data tracking system.
- The Air Force provided voting information through social media, newspapers, installation marquees, and radio and television from the American Forces Network. Installation Voting Assistance Officers maintained a voting assistance web page on the installation's public website, which the installation public affairs office approved. Unit Voting Assistance Officers also provided absentee voting information that included details about voters' home states, election dates, absentee registration, and voting rules and forms.

The Space Force Inspector General Reported the Service Voting Assistance Program as Effective

The Space Force IG concluded that the Service's voting assistance program was effective in assisting eligible voters and complied with 10 U.S.C. § 1566, DoD Instruction 1000.04, and Air Force Instruction 36-3107.²⁸ The IG's office interviewed Voting Assistance Officers, inspected their procedures, and collected data from one major Space Force command.

The Space Force IG inspected four unit voting assistance offices across six Delta, Garrison, or equivalent unit concerning voting initiatives in 2022, and found that the office was in compliance, with one minor deficiency identified. As of October 27, 2022, the minor deficiency remained open. The Space Force IG did not identify any significant or critical deficiencies in 2022.²⁹

²⁸ Air Force Instruction 36-3107 also applies to the Space Force.

²⁹ The Space Force deactivated three former U.S. Air Force Wings and replaced them with "Space Deltas" and "Garrison" commands. Deltas are commanded by colonels and are trained for specific missions and operations. The Space Force views Deltas as the equivalent of Army Brigades. Garrisons are responsible for providing support functions to Deltas assigned to their installations such as base security, civil engineering, public affairs, physicians, and chaplains.

Finding

Efforts by the Federal Voting Assistance Program Office Were Effective

The FVAP Office conducted effective outreach to assist Service members, overseas civilians, and their eligible family members covered by UOCAVA. The FVAP Office also collaborated with stakeholder agencies to promote access to voting. Specifically, the FVAP Office performed and coordinated outreach, as required by DoD Instruction 1000.04, section 580D of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020, and section 8(c) of Executive Order 14019, through:

- Service engagement, through Voting Assistance Officers and the FVAP portal;
- election official engagement to raise awareness on compliance with Federal law;
- direct assistance to eligible voters;
- congressional reporting of post-election survey results on the effectiveness of the assistance provided to eligible voters;
- research and evaluation, in conjunction with the Council of State Governments and the Election Assistance Commission, through analysis of post-election surveys and data from Voting Assistance Officers;
- external stakeholder agency coordination, including with the Council of State Governments, the Election Assistance Commission, the U.S. Postal Service, the Military Postal Service Agency, and the Departments of Commerce, Health and Human Services, Justice, State, and Transportation;
- the development of written agreements with all external stakeholder agencies to enhance outreach and ensure collaborative and efficient efforts to support voters covered by UOCAVA; and
- the continued development of MBTP research, in conjunction with key stakeholders, on the feasibility of establishing an end-to-end ballot tracking system.

As a result of outreach actions by the FVAP Office, eligible voters had the information necessary to participate in the voting process. While all of the Service IGs found their Service's voting assistance program to be compliant and effective, we also reviewed compliance with DoD Instruction 1000.04 with regard to outreach efforts and assistance to provide voting access to voters covered by UOCAVA and external stakeholder agencies. DoD organizations and leaders also had the necessary tools to ensure voting access and compliance with Federal law and DoD Instruction 1000.04.

The FVAP Office Provided Effective Outreach and Assistance to Promote Voting Access for Eligible Voters Covered by UOCAVA, and to External Stakeholder Agencies

The FVAP Office provided effective outreach and assistance to ensure voting access for eligible voters covered by UOCAVA. The FVAP Office also collaborated with stakeholder agencies to promote access to voting, such as the Council of State Governments; the U.S. Postal Service; the Military Postal Service Agency; the Election Assistance Commission; and the Departments of Commerce, Health and Human Services, Justice, State, and Transportation.

FVAP Office Outreach Processes and Procedures Complied with DoD Instruction 1000.04

FVAP Office outreach processes and procedures provided voters covered by UOCAVA access to voting information. The FVAP Office established policies and procedures that complied with DoD Instruction 1000.04. The FVAP Office coordinated with the Services to help ensure that uniformed and overseas personnel were aware of their right to vote and had the tools and resources to exercise that right. The FVAP Office complied with DoD Instruction 1000.04, section 580D of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020, and section 8(c) of Executive Order 14019 by carrying out:

- Service engagement, through Voting Assistance Officers and the FVAP portal;
- election official engagement to raise awareness on compliance with Federal law;
- direct assistance to eligible voters;
- research and evaluation, through analysis of post-election surveys and Voting Assistance Officer metrics;
- congressional reporting of post-election survey results on the effectiveness of the assistance provided to eligible voters;
- outreach efforts with external stakeholder agencies, including the Departments of Commerce, Health and Human Services, Justice, State, and Transportation;
- written agreements, such as memorandums of understanding, with all external stakeholder agencies to enhance outreach and ensure collaborative and efficient efforts to support voters covered by UOCAVA; and
- continued MBTP research, in conjunction with key stakeholders, on the feasibility of establishing an end-to-end ballot tracking system.

As a result of the outreach by the FVAP Office, eligible voters had access to the information necessary to participate in the voting process. DoD organizations and leaders also had the necessary tools to ensure compliance with Federal law and DoD Instruction 1000.04 (see Appendix D for a description of the outreach materials and support provided by the FVAP Office).

The following sections describe outreach efforts conducted by the FVAP Office, including: Service engagement, election official engagement, direct voter assistance, research and evaluation, congressional reporting, external stakeholder agency engagement, development of written agreements, and provision of required information on MBTP research.

Service Engagement: The FVAP Office Coordinated with Service Voting Assistance Representatives

As part of its stakeholder outreach efforts, the FVAP Office continually monitored and enhanced support to Voting Assistance Officers to train and educate them on their responsibilities to voters. In its 2020 report to Congress, published in 2021, the FVAP Office reported that it reduced obstacles to the ability of voters covered by UOCAVA to vote, expanded voter awareness and outreach initiatives, and enhanced measures of effectiveness and participation. Obstacles varied depending on voters' location, access to resources, training opportunities, and the availability of voter assistance. The most frequently reported challenge experienced by U.S. voters overseas was that they had difficulty with the international mailing system.

To reduce obstacles, the FVAP Office reported progress in the following key areas identified in previous reviews of the FVAP.

- **Increase the availability of election materials in other languages in accordance with Executive Order 14019.** The FVAP Office supported expanded opportunities to raise awareness of voting resources for all DoD personnel, including voter registration, absentee voting, and access to election material in multiple languages.
- **Update the ballot application process to avoid confusion over voter eligibility requirements.** The FVAP Office focused on the election eligibility requirements to avoid confusion and maximize benefits established for voters covered by UOCAVA.
- **Maintain continued alignment with voter issues across the DoD to support Service-level voting assistance programs.** For example, the FVAP Office continued to examine the use of DoD voting resources among active duty Service members who reported voting absentee to better understand these voters who are covered by UOCAVA and form the FVAP's key customer base.

- **Expand the use of virtual training opportunities to support Voting Assistance Officers, voters, and stakeholders throughout the year and closer to the general election.** FVAP Office personnel conducted training workshops with Voting Assistance Officers, both virtually and in person, at 76 locations representing 37 U.S. military installations and 38 U.S. embassies and consulates in 27 countries.

The FVAP Office took substantial steps to offer more comprehensive and effective voter assistance and improve its relationship with stakeholders. For example, the FVAP Office continued to make it easier for stakeholders to identify their web pages, added a page devoted to outreach materials, made it possible to search reports and other resources, and provided more hands-on voting assistance. See Appendix D for a description of the outreach materials and support provided by the FVAP Office.

The FVAP Office developed voting assistance program metrics on October 15, 2014, and the Service OIGs used these metrics as one measure to assess the effectiveness of their programs. The FVAP Office coordinated with each Service on voting assistance program performance metrics and reporting requirements, as required by DoD Instruction 1000.04. Since January 1, 2015, the FVAP Office prescribed the quarterly collection of data elements via the FVAP website (see Appendix C for performance metrics and reporting requirements for the Services' voting assistance programs). Service Voting Assistance Officers are required to input certain data from the installation and unit levels to the portal within 15 days after the end of each quarter, including statistics on voter registration, absentee ballots, and distribution of voter assistance materials.

The FVAP portal shows comparisons of what Voting Assistance Officers reported, the numbers of Voting Assistance Officers who should be assigned and were assigned to each unit, how many voters were assisted, and the quantity of voting assistance materials distributed. In those instances where the command assigned too few Voting Assistance Officers or distributed an insufficient amount of voting materials, the FVAP Office reported the deficiency to the Service's senior Voting Assistance Officer to correct the deficiency.

Election Official Engagement: The FVAP Office Coordinated with State and Local Election Officials

As required by DoD Instruction 1000.04, the FVAP Office conducted engagements with state and local election officials to raise awareness of their responsibilities under UOCAVA. The FVAP Office engaged with state and local election officials, by providing assistance; and by collecting and using information. The FVAP Office

assisted election officials by providing online training and guidance, sending e-mail alerts, funding research grants, participating in conferences, conducting other local outreach, and making direct (person-to-person) contact.

In consultation with the Department of Justice, the FVAP Office also considered and responded to states' requests for waivers of certain legal requirements under the MOVE Act. The FVAP Office also engaged with election officials through data collection, compilation, storage, reporting, and distribution.

To support its mission, the FVAP Office tracks and researches policy and state legislative developments that may have implications for uniformed and overseas voters. The FVAP Office also provides policy-related products to the states. According to the FVAP Office's customer service survey, the Post-Election Voting Survey for State Election Officials, state election officials indicated that they found the FVAP Office's policy-related products useful. In continuance of its work with state and local stakeholders, the FVAP Office plans to release additional policy-related products.

The FVAP Office uses the Post-Election Voting Survey for state Election Officials to assess the usefulness of the FVAP Office's policy-related products and to evaluate the FVAP Office's effectiveness in serving election officials, shaping future products and services, addressing state ballot and registration issues, and clarifying its understanding of state policies. Of the state election officials who reported using FVAP products or services, the vast majority indicated that they were satisfied with the resources. Satisfaction ratings of FVAP products and services ranged from 63 to 93 percent.

Eighty-four percent of state election officials indicated that they referred the FVAP Office to local election officials in 2020, which was slightly more than the 82 percent who reported doing so in 2018.

FVAP Office engagement resources, such as voter alerts, training, grant programs, outreach material, and policy briefs, provide state and local election officials with the information needed to assist voters covered by UOCAVA. The FVAP Office supports election officials and U.S. citizens who vote absentee by providing necessary absentee voting forms, materials, training, and guidance in accordance with UOCAVA requirements. The FVAP Office uses the following tools to support absentee voting through election official engagement.

- **Voter alerts:** Election officials can subscribe to e-mail alerts that the FVAP Office sends to voters to inform them of election dates, important deadlines, changes to state laws, and other important absentee voting information. This allows election officials to see what the FVAP Office is sending to voters so that voters covered by UOCAVA are receiving the data they need and to provide any needed updates to the FVAP Office.

- **Training:** For election officials interested in learning more about the UOCAVA absentee voting process, the FVAP Office created an online training module that was accessible from anywhere. The training module includes an introduction to UOCAVA and responses to frequently asked questions about the UOCAVA absentee voting process.
- **Grant programs:** The FVAP Office established the Electronic Absentee System for Elections research grant program under legislative direction to test the feasibility of new election technology for the benefit of voters covered by UOCAVA. The grant program allows the FVAP Office to test a range of election technologies and examine potential solutions through research grants provided to states and localities. For example, in 2011 and 2013, the FVAP Office offered research grants to states and localities to research how to improve services for uniformed and overseas voters.³⁰ The resulting data from the grant program helped identify improvements to the voting experience for uniformed and overseas voters.
- **Outreach materials:** The FVAP Office created a variety of outreach materials to assist election officials in their efforts to inform and communicate with absentee voters from their jurisdictions. For example, a communications toolkit includes informational graphics, fact sheets, and videos that election officials are encouraged to disseminate.³¹ See Appendix D for a description of the outreach materials and support provided by the FVAP Office.
- **Policy briefs:** The FVAP Office tracks and researches policy developments that may affect uniformed and overseas voters. The most recent policy briefs posted on the FVAP website address voters who have never resided in the United States and automatic voter registration.³² The FVAP Office shares the potential impacts on voters covered by UOCAVA with state election officials and legislators.

³⁰ The Electronic Absentee System for Elections grant program in 2011 funded programs including online blank ballot delivery, online voter registration, online ballot requests, automated ballot duplication, and online ballot tracking. The Electronic Absentee System for Elections 2 grant program in 2013 was a more focused effort, providing funding for the development of online ballot delivery tools and the establishment of a single point of contact in state election offices. Title 32 Code of Federal Regulations part 233, November 6, 2019, removed the responsibility for the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to establish a demonstration project to permit absent Uniformed Services voters to vote for Federal office through an electronic voting system.

³¹ The communications toolkits support organizations in their efforts to help Service members, their families, and overseas citizens vote absentee. Election officials can customize and share content on digital channels like websites, blogs, social media, and e-mail.

³² The 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. These citizens are required to submit a tax form to the Internal Revenue Service each year, and 18-year-old males must register with the Selective Service. The FVAP Office estimates that in 2016 approximately 11,500 registered voters had never resided in the United States. As of 2017, 36 States allow never resided citizens to vote if a parent or legal guardian was last domiciled in that state. Additionally, several states are considering, or have recently considered, automatic voter registration. Automatic voter registration is defined as a statutory system whereby state election officials use information about individuals’ voter eligibility existing in government databases to register qualified individuals to vote without the individuals themselves needing to take action. Citizens are given the opportunity to update their information or opt out of registration.

These resources provide state and local election officials with some of the information and tools needed to assist voters covered by UOCAVA, and all of the required information and tools are located on the FVAP website. We reviewed the voter alerts, training, grant programs, outreach material, and policy briefs that the FVAP Office provided to state and local election officials to assist voters covered by UOCAVA.

The activities that the FVAP Office performed in 2020 aligned with the advancement of its strategic goals and will remain the areas of focus in upcoming election cycles along with specific initiatives within each area for the 2022 election cycle; for example:

- implementing an aggressive engagement strategy for state and local election officials to raise awareness of core responsibilities under Federal law;
- educating states on how to enhance the usability of the absentee voting process for active duty military by authorizing acceptance of electronic signatures from the DoD Common Access Card in the election process, based on the Council of State Governments' Overseas Voting Initiative recommendations; and
- leveraging the Council of State Governments' ongoing work to expand the implementation of a national data standard to more effectively report the impacts of congressional reforms passed in the 2009 MOVE Act, with data collected from approximately 40 percent of the UOCAVA participating voter population, while reducing the post-election reporting burden on the states in partnership with the Election Assistance Commission.

DoD Instruction 1000.04 also requires the FVAP Office to establish and maintain contact with state election officials, state legislators, and with other state and local government officials to improve the absentee voting process for UOCAVA.

Direct Voter Assistance: The FVAP Office Maintains the FVAP Website

The FVAP Office provides direct voter assistance through the FVAP website, a voter call center, and a comprehensive voter assistance guide. The FVAP website contains information for all personnel involved in the voting process, from voters to voting assistance officials. The FVAP website has online assistants that guide users through completion and submission of the Federal Post Card Application and the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot. The site offers educational materials to voters, and those who assist voters, to simplify the UOCAVA voting process.

The FVAP website directs users to state websites offering online voter registration and ballot request features, and provides election news, state-specific voting deadlines, requirements, and contact information.

The FVAP Office prepares a Federal voting assistance program guide with the assistance of state voting officials, the Military Services, and the Department of State. The FVAP Office publishes the guide every 2 years, matching the Federal election cycle, and routinely updates the online version. For the 2022–2023 guide, the FVAP Office reported working closely with state election officials through several rounds of coordination. For the 2022 election year, the guide reflects the FVAP Office’s continued focus on Federal election eligibility and consistent efforts to streamline content to better support Voting Assistance Officers. The use of the Federal Post Card Application is a critical piece to ensure that voters are able to leverage full voting protections authorized under Federal law regardless of duty station or distance from home. Taking action early also ensures access to the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot as a backup ballot should the voter’s official ballot not arrive from the appropriate election official.

The guide also serves as a catalog of state-specific processes and regulations that uniformed and overseas voters should follow to register to vote and cast an absentee ballot. The FVAP Office published the 2022–2023 voting assistance guide in October 2021 and posted it on the FVAP website portal.

The FVAP Office’s Voting Assistance Center provides phone, e-mail, and fax support to voters covered by UOCAVA and those who assist them, including Voting Assistance Officers, election officials, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and Stateside family members. The Voting Assistance Center provided customer service during business hours throughout the 2022 election cycle, with expanded coverage on Election Day. Phone calls were handled by FVAP Office staff members and designated customer service staff from the Defense Support Services Center’s Call Center. Outside of business hours, the FVAP Office’s three Voting Ambassadors, positioned in Europe and Asia, provided real-time assistance. Staff members worked additional time outside of business hours processing transactions.

Our review of the FVAP Office’s direct voter assistance efforts determined that these efforts assist voters’ understanding of their right to vote. Voters had access to the required information to vote, especially through the FVAP website. For example, voters could get their voting questions answered through local Voting Assistance Officers or the call center. Many of the tools for voters and the assistance they require, such as voter registration and ballots, training material, policies, laws, and reports to the President and Congress, are located on the FVAP website, satisfying the requirements of DoD Instruction 1000.04.

Research and Evaluation: The FVAP Office Conducted Studies to Enhance Voter Assistance Efforts

The FVAP Office provided analysis, information, and resources for absentee voters, Voting Assistance Officers, and election officials. Post-election surveys and Voting Assistance Officer metrics serve as research and evaluation tools to assist the FVAP Office with enhancing voter assistance efforts. The FVAP Office coordinated with each Service to determine voting assistance program performance metrics and reporting requirements to meet DoD Instruction 1000.04. Current Service OIG application of FVAP measures of effect and performance are the result of this effort. Since January 1, 2015, the FVAP Office required Service Voting Assistance Officers to upload quarterly entries to the FVAP website no later than 15 days after the end of each quarter. See Appendix C for an example of voting assistance program performance metrics and reporting requirements.

The FVAP Office also conducted post-election voting surveys of active duty military members, Voting Assistance Officers, and state election officials in coordination with the Defense Manpower Data Center. These surveys:

- determine participation in the electoral process by U.S. citizens covered under UOCAVA;
- assess the impact of FVAP efforts to simplify and ease the process of voting absentee;
- evaluate the progress made to facilitate absentee voting participation; and
- identify any remaining obstacles to voting experienced by these absentee voters.

We reviewed post-election surveys reported by the FVAP Office and Voting Assistance Officer metrics. We determined that the FVAP Office's research and evaluation efforts improved the voting process. The FVAP Office reports on improvements and changes to enhance program effectiveness annually to the President and Congress.³³ All of the information and reports to Congress, surveys, and general research reports are available on the FVAP website.

³³ Section 20308(b), title 52, United States Code, requires the presidential designee to submit an annual report on the effectiveness of activities and use of certain procedures to the President and Congress by March 31 of each year.

For example, in 2020, the FVAP Office continued to build upon research-based strategies that proved successful in 2016 and 2018 to raise awareness of FVAP resources, including positioning the FVAP as the leading official source of absentee voting information for the military, their families, and overseas citizens. These strategies included:

- using strategies based on behavior, acknowledging citizens who want to vote but require assistance due to real or perceived challenges;
- focusing on steps in the voting process that voters covered by UOCAVA found most problematic;
- encouraging voters to act earlier to avoid missing deadlines;
- increasing the number of voters covered by UOCAVA reached through advanced data science techniques; and
- reaching voters directly in their homes and through trusted community organizations.

Congressional Reporting: The FVAP Office Submitted Annual Reports to Congress

UOCAVA requires the FVAP Office to submit a report to Congress following each presidential election on the effectiveness, oversight, and compliance with assistance provided to voters covered by UOCAVA, including a statistical analysis of Uniformed Services voter participation, a separate statistical analysis of overseas nonmilitary participation, and a description of state and Federal cooperation.³⁴ The report includes findings from the FVAP's Office's post-election surveys and an assessment of activities supporting annual elections for Federal offices.

The FVAP Office's 2021 report to Congress included the following.

- The 2020 voter registration rate for active duty military was 69 percent, a 3-point increase from 2016.
- The FVAP Office's 2018 "Overseas Citizen Population Analysis" estimated that 4.8 million U.S. citizens lived overseas in 2018, an increase of almost 1 million (23 percent) since 2010.
- Active duty military personnel who received assistance from a DoD voting resource (the FVAP Office, unit Voting Assistance Officers, or installation Voting Assistance Offices) were significantly more likely to submit a ballot than those who did not receive assistance. According to FVAP reporting to Congress, this consistent finding across the last five general

³⁴ 52 U.S.C. § 20308.

elections (2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020) indicates the importance and effectiveness of efforts by the FVAP Office and the Military Departments to raise awareness of available resources and provide direct assistance.

External Stakeholder Agency Engagement: The FVAP Office Coordinated with External Stakeholder Agencies on Behalf of UOCAVA Voters

UOCAVA requires states to transmit requested absentee ballots to voters covered by UOCAVA no later than 45 days before a Federal election. Those citizens protected by the UOCAVA include:

- members of the Uniformed Services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps);
- members of the Merchant Marine;
- eligible family members of the organizations listed above; and
- other U.S. citizens residing outside the United States.

The FVAP Office assists voters through outreach and partnerships with several stakeholders, including the Military Services; the Council of State Governments; the Election Assistance Commission; the Departments of Justice and State; the U.S. Postal Service; and election officials from every state and U.S. territory and the District of Columbia.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

The Attorney General may bring a civil action in Federal court to enforce the provisions of UOCAVA.³⁵ The Attorney General has assigned responsibility for UOCAVA enforcement to the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division. Since Congress enacted UOCAVA in 1986, the Department of Justice has initiated and resolved numerous cases to enforce UOCAVA.

Under the MOVE Act amendments, UOCAVA requires the Attorney General to submit an annual report to Congress by December 31 of each year on any civil action brought under the Attorney General's enforcement authority under UOCAVA during the preceding year (52 U.S.C. § 20307[b]). As detailed in its prior reports to Congress, the Department of Justice has engaged in extensive enforcement of the MOVE Act's requirements since they went into effect for the 2010 general election.

³⁵ Section 20307(a), title 52, United States Code.

The Department of Justice stated that they continue to have effective collaboration with the FVAP Office leadership and staff on UOCAVA-related issues. Throughout 2022, the Department of Justice staff participated in telephone conference calls with FVAP Office leadership and staff as issues of mutual interest arose. For example, in 2022, the Department of Justice coordinated closely with the FVAP Office on the DoD's response to an application by the State of Ohio for an undue hardship waiver under UOCAVA. The Department of Justice also provided input into the DoD's updated guidance for submitting UOCAVA undue hardship waivers, issued in April 2022. The Department of Justice also spoke to FVAP Office officials regarding various other UOCAVA-related issues throughout the year.

For the 2022 Federal election cycle, the Department of Justice undertook its usual nationwide ballot transmission monitoring to ensure that states provided voters covered by UOCAVA with the opportunities to vote absentee contemplated by the statute. The Department of Justice activities in 2022 will be described in the Department's annual report to Congress under UOCAVA. In addition, the Department of Justice provides information on the UOCAVA protections for uniformed services voters and overseas voters on its website. See <https://www.justice.gov/crt/uniformed-and-overseas-citizens-absentee-voting-act> and <https://www.justice.gov/servicemembers/voting>.

UOCAVA requires that the chief state election official, in coordination with local election jurisdictions, have a free access system by which absent Uniformed Services voters or overseas voters may determine whether their absentee ballots have been received by the appropriate state election official. After the MOVE Act added this provision in 2009, the Department of Justice and the FVAP Office communicated with all the state and territory officials to ensure awareness and compliance with this and the other new UOCAVA obligations. Before each Federal election year, the Department of Justice contacts state election officials to remind them of their UOCAVA obligations and to inquire about any new laws or procedures affecting voters covered by UOCAVA.

In accordance with Executive Order 14019, the Department of Justice is taking steps to promote voter registration and voting services available to its overseas employees and ensure that they have access to information and resources concerning their right to register and vote absentee as guaranteed by UOCAVA.

COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

The FVAP Office and the Council of State Governments, through the Overseas Voting Initiative cooperative agreement, implemented the MBTP. The FVAP Office and the Council of State Governments, in cooperation with the U.S. Postal Service

and the Military Postal Service Agency, tracked mail ballots during the 2016 general election at each stage: from the time they left the local election official's office, to delivery to the Military Post Office, to delivery to the voter overseas, to the completed ballots' delivery back to the local election office. The 2016 MBTP was the first to provide full life-cycle tracking of ballots throughout the U.S. Postal Service–Military Postal Service network. It increased customer service for voters and provided valuable research data to help identify areas for improvement on both a Federal and local level.

The evaluation of the MBTP by the FVAP Office and the Council of State Governments included analysis of transactional data furnished by participating local election jurisdictions; parcel scan data from the Military Postal Service Agency and the U.S. Postal Service; technical feedback from the pilot's principal stakeholders (the FVAP Office, the Council of State Governments, the U.S. Postal Service, and the Military Postal Service Agency) and six participating local election jurisdictions; and a customer satisfaction survey of voters who were afforded this tracking service. Additionally, the evaluation included questions for military personnel who received material through the pilot about their overall satisfaction with the pilot.

The role of the Council of State Governments is to support the FVAP Office and state policymakers, including working with states to help disseminate innovative policy solutions and share best practices among states that help reduce the barriers for UOCAVA voters. For example, one Council of State Governments initiative produced a report highlighting UOCAVA voters' limited access to fax devices, even though some states allow electronic return only via fax. The Council of State Governments also published a report on innovative practices to protect systems when states accept electronic ballot returns.³⁶

As a result of section 8 of Executive Order 14019, the FVAP Office tasked the Council of State Governments with coordinating and facilitating meetings between the FVAP Office, the Department of State, the Military Postal Service Agency, and the U.S. Postal Service. From January 2022 until September 2022, all four agencies met weekly to discuss the project. These meetings concluded in September so that the agencies could focus on the 2022 election.

ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

The DoD has a memorandum of understanding with the Election Assistance Commission to coordinate survey efforts to reduce the reporting burden on state and local election officials and consolidate reporting to Congress. Under

³⁶ The two Council of State Governments reports are "Access to and Usage of Faxing by Military and Overseas Voters" (https://ovi.csg.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ovi_fax_history_july2022.pdf), July 2022, and "How the Adoption of Secure Email Accounts and Sandboxing Techniques Strengthen the Electronic Ballot Return Process for South Carolina's Military and Overseas Voters," June 6, 2022 (<https://ovi.csg.org/south-carolina-sandbox/>).

UOCAVA and Executive Order 12642, the Secretary of Defense is required to work with the Election Assistance Commission and the chief election official of each state to develop standards for states to report data on the number of absentee ballots transmitted and received under section 20302, title 52, United States Code (52 U.S.C. § 20302).

Section 20302 requires each state and unit of local government that administers an election to submit a report to the Election Assistance Commission (established under the Help America Vote Act of 2002 [52 U.S.C. § 20901, et seq.]) reflecting these data on uniformed and overseas voting, no later than 90 days after the date of each regularly scheduled general election for Federal office. According to the memorandum of understanding, this coordination effort is limited to section B (the UOCAVA portion) of the Election Administration and Voting Survey and projects that contribute to improving the UOCAVA data collected through the Election Administration and Voting Survey.

UOCAVA requires the Election Assistance Commission to create a standardized format for state reporting of UOCAVA voting information (52 U.S.C. § 20302).

UOCAVA requires that:

Not later than 90 days after the date of each regularly scheduled general election for Federal office, each state and unit of local government which administered the election shall (through the state, in the case of a unit of local government) submit a report to the Election Assistance Commission (established under the Help America Vote Act of 2002) on the combined number of absentee ballots transmitted to absent Uniformed Services voters and overseas voters for the election and the combined number of such ballots which were returned by such voters and cast in the election, and shall make such a report available to the general public.

States that complete and submit the UOCAVA section of the survey to the Election Assistance Commission within the required 90 days fulfill their UOCAVA reporting requirement under 52 U.S.C. § 20302(c).

Since 2004, the Election Assistance Commission has administered the Election Administration and Voting Survey every 2 years to the 50 states; the District of Columbia; and the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The survey asks election officials questions concerning voting and election administration. These questions request information at the state and county levels (or county equivalent) on ballots cast, voter registration, overseas and military voting, Election Day activities, and voting technology, among other things. The Election Assistance Commission issues the survey to meet its obligations under the Help America Vote Act to serve as national clearinghouse and resource for the compilation of information with respect to the administration of Federal elections. The Election Assistance

Commission releases one comprehensive Election Administration and Voting Survey report, which includes a chapter on the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 and a separate chapter on UOCAVA to fulfill the statutory reporting requirements.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The Department of State is required to work with the DoD to assist millions of military and civilian voters residing abroad who may be eligible to vote in Federal elections under UOCAVA (52 U.S.C. § 203). The presidential designee delegated responsibility to the Department of State for providing voting assistance to all private and official overseas U.S. citizens who do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Defense. Department of State Voting Assistance Officers and staff are responsible for providing nonpartisan information on how overseas U.S. citizens can participate in U.S. elections, and assisting overseas U.S. citizens with the completion and transmission of absentee voting forms and ballots. Voting Assistance Officers have responsibilities during election and non-election years alike.

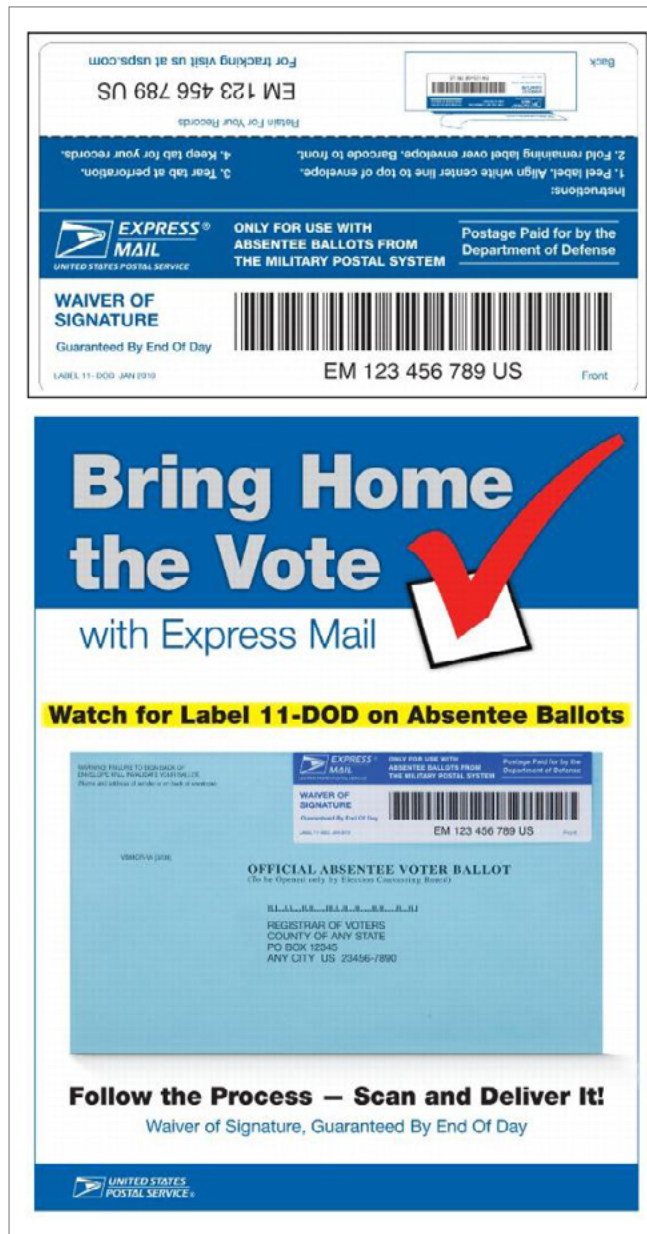
The primary resource for both private U.S. citizens who wish to vote and Department of State Voting Assistance Officers is the FVAP website. The website contains an online assistant to help private U.S. citizens complete voter registration forms, absentee ballot requests, and emergency write-in ballots. The website also contains links to state election and voter registration verification websites, as well as important dates and state-specific instructions. For Department of State Voting Assistance Officers, the website contains the required Voting Assistance Officer training, downloadable voting forms, downloadable motivational voting materials for use in voting outreach events, and contact information for all state and local election officials. The website also contains information on applicable overseas voting laws and the FVAP.

Diplomatic Pouch and Mail is the logistical conduit between the embassy or consulate and the continental United States. As such, the Department of State moves personal, official, and classified mail and material to and from post. All UOCAVA voters, and American citizens living abroad, are able to drop off their absentee ballots for mailing at any embassy, consulate, or other Department of State mission worldwide. The Military Postal Service Agency coordinates with each Department of State mission to identify a point of contact to serve as the Label 11-DOD custodian per election.³⁷ The appointed custodian disperses the Label 11-DODs for qualifying DoD voters for use of returning and tracking their individual absentee ballots.

³⁷ Military personnel in overseas locations with access to military post offices are able to return absentee ballots via Priority Mail Express Military Service using the Express Mail Label 11-DOD. This blue Express Mail label is affixed to the top of the absentee ballot return envelope or flat. The absentee ballot return envelope may be as small as a #10 business-sized envelope or as large as a flat-sized envelope. This unique label is used only for absentee ballots originating from overseas military postal locations. These Express Mail shipments arrive from International Service Centers in Express Mail sacks and remain in the Express Mail stream to the delivery unit. This is a joint initiative between the U.S. Postal Service and the Military Postal Service. The Express Mail Label 11-DOD affixed to the absentee ballot envelope or flat allows Service members to track their vote all the way to the county or parish election office.

However, when this is not accomplished or possible, the Department of State’s Diplomatic Pouch and Mail process is used, an internal tracking number is assigned to the ballot, and the ballot is sent back to the continental United States via the Unclassified Pouch. Such ballots are then turned over to the U.S. Postal Service with a signature required during the transaction. In more recent elections, the Department of State has worked with the DoD to provide the Label 11-DOD, if possible, for Uniformed Service members and their families. See Figure 4 for the U.S. Postal Service Label 11-DOD Express Mail label for military absentee voting.

Figure 4. U.S. Postal Service Label 11-DOD Express Mail Label for Military Absentee Voting



Source: U.S. Postal Service.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

According to Department of Commerce officials, in the past, the DoD has reached out to the Department of Commerce to discuss voters covered by UOCAVA. Employees of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps' Commissioned Personnel Center receive FVAP-related DoD Instructions from the FVAP Office. The Commissioned Personnel Center also has information about absentee voting, including the FVAP website link, posted on its website.

In January 2022 the Commissioned Personnel Center reestablished and confirmed its connection with the FVAP Office program manager and staff. In September 2022, the Commissioned Personnel Center participated in an FVAP.gov "Federal Agency Partners" orientation meeting. The presentation covered the requirements of Executive Order 14019 and UOCAVA, as well as resources available to support the Services.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The Department of Health and Human Services U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps has no formal mechanism or process in place to account for or provide voting assistance to Public Health Service Commissioned Corps employees covered by UOCAVA. Some officers may be aware of or receive information concerning absentee voting, the FVAP voting guide, or FVAP website from their agencies; however, the Commissioned Corps headquarters does not make information available.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The Department of Transportation does not provide absentee balloting or voter outreach to members of the Merchant Marine. The Office of Maritime Labor and Training provides some indirect support for the U.S. Census but not for elections.

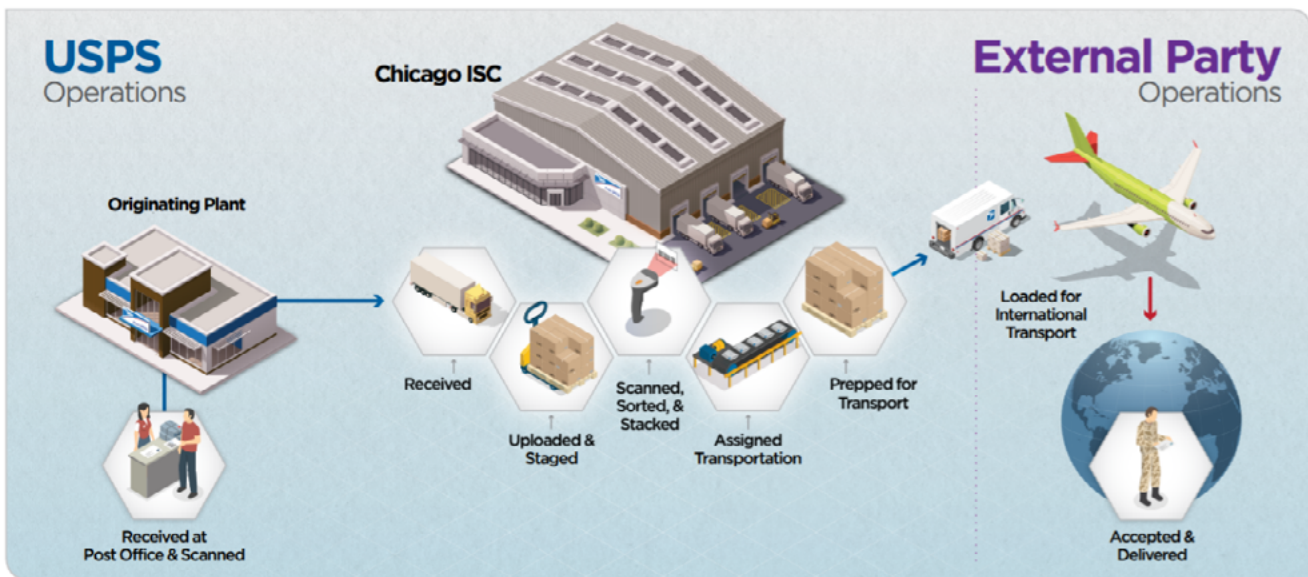
The Maritime Administration, under the Department of Transportation, owns the fleet of public vessels that are operated under contract by commercial ship management companies. During infrequent activations of the Maritime Administration Ready Reserve Force fleet or select Ready Reserve Force ships, these ships are fully crewed for DoD missions, and are under the operational control of Department of the Navy's Military Sealift Command. Upon transfer of operational control from the Maritime Administration to the Military Sealift Command, the Maritime Administration complies with DoD and Navy postal requirements for the handling and postmarking of absentee ballots, if required, as directed by the Commander of the Military Sealift Command.

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

The U.S. Postal Service partners with the DoD and the Department of State to deliver mail to their personnel and families stationed abroad. The U.S. Postal Service also partners with the DoD to deliver personal and official mail to military facilities in the United States.³⁸

The Postal Service, the DoD, and the Department of State each have responsibilities related to handling and processing mail. For example, for outbound mail, the Postal Service generally handles the acceptance, transportation to the Chicago International and Military Service Center, initial sortation and labeling, and tendering to the commercial transportation carrier (mostly air or surface). This mail is then transported to the foreign destination, where it is eventually handed over to DoD or Department of State officials, who sort and deliver it (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Typical Outbound Military and Diplomatic Mail Operations



LEGEND

ISC International Service Center

Source: U.S. Postal Service OIG.

³⁸ Most inbound and outbound international military and diplomatic mail arrives at the Chicago International and Military Service Center per a 2012 decision to consolidate operations. The Chicago International and Military Service Center processes most of the outbound mail, while inbound mail is sent to other processing facilities. Chicago International and Military Service Center staff handle and process this mail, as well as other international and domestic mail. Mail to more than 1,000 military ZIP Codes and 100 diplomatic ZIP Codes is sorted at the Chicago International and Military Service Center.

The Postal Service has policies for handling Department of State mail and an agreement with the DoD that prescribes procedures, roles, and responsibilities related to moving DoD mail.³⁹

Postal Service staff coordinates with Department of State staff and the Military Postal Service Agency on behalf of the DoD; the Joint Military Postal Activity; and various diplomatic post offices and military post offices.⁴⁰

The Postal Service has an important but limited role in the electoral process and in supporting UOCAVA voters. The Postal Service is responsible for delivering and processing mail domestically when presented by voters. The Postal Service conducts outreach with election officials to educate them on how to use the mail successfully if the mail is used as part of their election administration. As a part of that outreach, the Postal Service educates elections officials about Army Post Office, Fleet Post Office, and Diplomatic Post Office mailing procedures and the tools available to facilitate the timely delivery and return of UOCAVA ballots. The Postal Service also encourages elections officials to communicate this information to UOCAVA voters through their own outreach and education efforts.

The Postal Service provides educational information to Military and Overseas Voters through its website, located at usps.com/votinginfo. This website includes important information about Army Post Office, Fleet Post Office, and Diplomatic Post Office election mail procedures, links to the Postal Service's Election Mail Kit (Kit 600), which includes additional resources for election mail for UOCAVA voters, and the Postal Service guidelines for Army Post Office and Fleet Post Office Mailing in its "Special Procedures APO/FPO/DPO and Overseas Citizens Absentee Ballots" on Postal Explorer.

The Postal Service also maintains an election mail website, which includes helpful mailing resources and information for domestic and UOCAVA voters who choose to use the mail, including a section of the website dedicated exclusively to "Military & Overseas" voters. The Postal Service also ensures that processes and procedures are in place at International Service Centers and other facilities to promptly handle and deliver UOCAVA ballots, including those sent using Label 11-DOD.

³⁹ Publication 38, "Postal Agreement with the Department of Defense," February 1980.

⁴⁰ The Joint Military Postal Activity is the DoD's postal liaison agency that has oversight of postal operations at military locations overseas (including items scanned as delivered when the customer states the item was not received). The Joint Military Postal Activity acts on behalf of the Military Postal Service Agency with the U.S. Postal Service at the various U.S. Postal Service facilities that process military mail.

The Postal Service supports domestic scanning and visibility of outbound UOCAVA ballot mail pieces, which are automation compatible and include an Intelligent Mail barcode; Military Post, Diplomatic Post and Foreign Post Offices do not.⁴¹ If the mail piece qualifies for and has a Priority Mail Express Label 11-DOD affixed, the mail piece may be scanned overseas via Military Post Office location or Diplomatic Post Office location; this mail piece would also be scanned via normal Postal Service Priority Mail Express scanning domestically.

The Postal Service also collaborated on the 2016 Military Ballot Tracking pilot program, the interagency contingency planning throughout 2019 regarding the potential withdrawal of the United States from the Universal Postal Union, and ongoing collaborative efforts on the 2021–2022 UOCAVA ballot pilot program. This work included the Postal Service’s participation in weekly interagency meetings to plan and implement a pilot to test scanning of Intelligent Mail barcode, Intelligent Mail Package Barcode and S10 tracking numbers for UOCAVA eligible voters.⁴²

MILITARY POSTAL SERVICE AGENCY

The Military Postal Service Agency publishes the DoD Strategic Postal Voting Action plan to highlight Military Postal Service support during all Federal elections in accordance with UOCAVA, the MOVE Act, DoD Directive 5101.11E, DoD Instruction 4525.09, and the Military Postal Service Procedures Manual.⁴³ As an extension of the U.S. Postal Service, and in coordination with the FVAP Office, the Military Postal Service provides expedited processing, transportation, distribution, and tracking of absentee ballots from overseas Military Post Offices to the state election offices. The plan contains the recommended mailing dates for

⁴¹ The Intelligent Mail barcode is used to sort and track letters, cards and flats and offers greater versatility by allowing many services to be requested and embedded within one barcode. The Intelligent Mail barcode combines the data of existing barcodes, as well as other data, into a single barcode.

⁴² The Intelligent Mail package barcode provides piece-level data to enable the postal service to increase efficiency, add value to its package product line, and enhance its package tracking capabilities. The worldwide postal system is coordinated by the Universal Postal Union, a United Nations agency responsible for coordinating postal policies among member states. It currently has 192 members, including most United Nations member states (except for Andorra, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau) and Vatican City. All Universal Postal Union member states use the S10 standard to identify postal items. According to this standard, each postal item is assigned a 13-character identifier consisting of Latin characters and digits. Each country’s designated postal operator is responsible for managing the issue and use of S10 tracking numbers, and all other postal services are expected to cooperate with it.

⁴³ DoD Directive 5101.11E, “DoD Executive Agent for the Military Postal Service and Official Mail Program,” March 18, 2021, establishes policies and assigns responsibilities for the Military Postal Service and Official Mail Program, and designates the Secretary of the Army as the DoD Executive Agent for the Military Postal Service and Official Mail Program. The Directive also establishes the Military Postal Service Agency missions and functions. DoD Instruction 4525.09, “Military Postal Service (MPS),” July 10, 2018 (Incorporating Change 2, May 24, 2022), establishes policy, assigns responsibilities, and prescribes guidance governing the use of the Military Postal Service by the DoD components in accordance with DoD Directive 5101.11E. The Military Postal Service Agency “Military Postal Service Procedures Manual (MPM),” December 9, 2022, establishes procedures, assigns responsibilities, and prescribes guidance governing the operations and use of the Military Postal Service and Official Mail Program by DoD Components.

each Military Post Office ZIP Code so voters receive, complete, and return ballots prior to Election Day. It lists requirements for the Military Postal Service Agency, the Joint Military Postal Activity, and the Military Services.

Mail service within and between theaters remains under U.S. Postal Service control, even though this mail does not enter its network and transits within and between geographic combatant command areas of responsibility. During Federal elections, the Military Postal Service Agency coordinates weekly with the Military Services prior to and during voting periods to discuss any issues, identify shortfalls, and provide updates on DoD progress with absentee ballot delivery.

The Military Postal Service Agency publishes the biannual Strategic Postal Voting Action Plan, which details guidance and responsibilities for the Military Postal Service Agency, the Joint Military Postal Activity, and the Military Services for that voting season. The plan also requires the Military Services to develop and publish a Service Postal Voting Action Plan which must include guidance and listings of Military Post Office and Military Mail Terminal responsibilities that support the Military Postal Service Agency's Strategic Postal Voting Action Plan and ensure the Military Postal Activities comply with the listed DoD issuances. All of the Services complete a Voting Action Plan biannually as required, and the Plans are posted on the FVAP.gov website.

The Military Postal Service Agency provides and updates training in the Automated Military Postal System on the processing of absentee ballots, requiring successful completion and testing before being assigned access to the Automated Military Postal System Voting module for absentee ballot handling duties.⁴⁴ The Automated Military Postal System Voting module provides management and reporting tools to view and assess each location's daily performance in ballot processing. The Automated Military Postal System Label 11-DOD Report provides a digital record of the tracking of ballots, which is used to record the date and location of dispatching voted ballots. The Label 11-DOD Report illustrates a separate tracking event that is stored in the Product Tracking Report for both the Military Postal Service and the Postal Service locations. The Product Tracking Report allows patrons to track individual ballots within the Military Postal Service and Postal Service systems.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ The Automated Military Postal System is a web-enabled management system that integrates and optimizes business processes across the Military Postal Service for the DoD.

⁴⁵ Product Tracking and Reporting is the database that stores tracking scan data for all barcoded packages and extra services products. The scan events take place from acceptance all the way to delivery. The tracking information comes from business mailer's files, handheld scanners, retail equipment, mail processing equipment, and several other postal systems.

The Military Postal Service Agency also conducts two Postal Voting Leadership teleconferences each week (one for the Americas and European theater, and one for the Pacific theater) providing a forum for the Military Postal Service Agency, Military Postal Service representatives, major command Postal Service representatives, and the Joint Military Postal Activity to review performance, answer questions, report discrepancies, disseminate information and guidance, and share positive and negative events impacting the Military Postal Service voting season.

Written Agreements: The FVAP Office May Enter Into Agreements with External Stakeholder Agencies to Enhance Support to UOCAVA Voters

DoD Instruction 1000.04 states that the Director of the FVAP Office may enter into agreements with other executive agencies. As part of making the UOCAVA voting process work and in accordance with DoD Instruction 1000.04, paragraph 2.5, the Director of the Defense Support Services Center, through the FVAP Office, engages in cooperative agreements with nongovernmental organizations to conduct research on voting issues and policies with state, and local government entities. This research includes voting assistance, elections, and an impact analysis of voter registration assistance to assist in formulating recommendations, as appropriate, for improvements in Federal and state procedures, forms, and laws.

The FVAP Office may also enter into agreements with other executive agencies, including but not limited to the Department of State, the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service, under agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Commissioned Officer Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, under agreement with the Department of Commerce, in accordance with 52 U.S.C. § 20301(c).

On March 6, 2020, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness issued an interim rule, “Federal Voting Assistance Program.” In the March 6, 2020, interim rule, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness proposed amendments to:

- include the U.S. Maritime Administration under agreement with the Department of Transportation and the United States Postal Service;
- require DoD Components to establish Component-wide programs to communicate and disseminate voting information, with the goal of improving communication and clarity for the impacted population; and

- require Federal agencies to enter into memorandums of understanding with the DoD to provide accurate, nonpartisan voting information and assistance to ensure military and overseas voters understand their voting rights, how to register and apply for an absentee ballot, and how to return their absentee ballot successfully.⁴⁶

On December 13, 2021, the final rule was published in the Federal Register and the Code of Federal Regulations, with a January 12, 2022, effective date.⁴⁷ The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness did not make any changes to the interim rule. However, the definition of “Uniformed Services” in title 32 Code of Regulations section 233.3 was revised to include the Space Force, which simply recognizes the title 10 definition of “Uniformed Services” that includes the 6th independent U.S. Military Service branch, which became law December 20, 2019, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020.

Memorandums of understanding with other Federal agencies will allow the FVAP Office to strengthen its communications by expanding its outreach efforts to other Federal agencies, such as allowing agencies to link to the FVAP website and augment existing voter assistance information. These efforts seek to boost voter awareness, education, and participation in upcoming election cycles.

For example, including the Maritime Administration under agreement with the Department of Transportation will allow the FVAP to better serve Merchant Marine Uniformed Service members, because the Maritime Administration will directly coordinate FVAP guidance and instructions to better communicate with Merchant Marine members about how to vote absentee under UOCAVA. The Postal Service provides essential services to assure the distribution of balloting materials to eligible voters and voted ballots to election officials.

The FVAP Office has a September 10, 2021, agreement (memorandum of understanding) with the Election Assistance Commission to coordinate on section B (the UOCAVA portion) of the Election Administration and Voting Survey.

⁴⁶ According to Washington Headquarters Services Administrative Instruction Number 102, “Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Federal Register (FR) System,” November 6, 2006 (Incorporating Change 2, September 24, 2020), an interim final rule is a rule published in the Federal Register and Code of Federal Regulations without prior publication of a proposed rule, usually to respond to an emergency situation or in response to a legislative or executive requirement with a short suspense. The rule is usually considered a temporary rule and may request public comments. If the interim final rule becomes permanent, a final rule must be published in the Federal Register to adopt the interim final and a discussion of any comments received. The comment period ended April 6, 2020. The Instruction also defines a final rule as a concluding rule published in the Federal Register and the Code of Federal Regulations presenting the decision of the issuing agency and addressing public comments.

⁴⁷ Federal Register Volume 86, Number 236, pages 70746–70748; and title 32 Code of Federal Regulations part 233.

In 2018, the FVAP Office entered into a second cooperative agreement with the Council of State Governments, which continues the work of the Overseas Voting Initiative. The collaboration aims to improve the voting process for voters covered by UOCAVA by providing direct interaction with leading state and local election officials best positioned to share best practices and identify emerging trends. This initiative is critical for the FVAP to further engage stakeholders in state and local government to explore innovative areas in which the FVAP Office can aid election administrators and improve the connection between voters covered by UOCAVA and their election office through the sharing of best practices.

Moving forward, the FVAP Office indicates that it will integrate the data standard into longer term reporting and analysis to better isolate the impact of reforms put into place as a result of the 2009 amendments to UOCAVA. Specifically, this data standard and subsequent analysis will isolate the impacts of voters engaging early in the absentee voting process, the federally mandated 45-day blank ballot transmission requirements, and electronic modes of delivering blank ballots to voters covered by UOCAVA.

In support of the November 2022 general election, the FVAP Office held an interagency meeting with Federal government representatives in February 2022. The FVAP office briefed meeting participants on the absentee voting process, available FVAP resources, and basic agency roles and responsibilities under UOCAVA. Subsequently, the FVAP Office began the process of establishing regular meetings with the group to develop and implement agreements supporting UOCAVA voters. In response to Executive Order 14019, section 8(d), the Director of the Office of Management and Budget considered an action to issue Government-wide guidance for agencies supporting UOCAVA voting assistance. The Director of the Office of Management and Budget decided not to issue such guidance, as it found that the general requirement for cooperation is clearly stated in UOCAVA and title 32 Code of Federal Regulations part 233 (final rule effective January 12, 2022). Thus, the FVAP Office will continue to leverage interagency meetings held in conjunction with Executive Order 14019. The FVAP Office also provided leave behind slide decks with instructions for the 2022 election, and is exploring the best avenues to institutionalize UOCAVA support mechanisms consistent with and tailored to each organization's mission. The FVAP Office's goal is to have memorandums of understanding in place for the 2024 election, especially with agencies with voters covered by UOCAVA.

Developing and implementing written agreements, such as the memorandum of understanding that the DoD has with the Election Assistance Commission, the FVAP Office can ensure that the FVAP Office meets the intent of DoD Instruction 1000.04 with regard to outreach and access. The FVAP Office can

also ensure a collaborative and efficient effort to support UOCAVA voters' ability to exercise their right to vote from anywhere in the world, especially those serving in deployed, dispersed, and tenant organizations, and their eligible family members.

***Military Ballot Tracking Pilot Research Program:
The FVAP Office Continues to Coordinate Efforts to Develop
an End-to-End Ballot Tracking System***

Section 580D of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020 required the Director of the FVAP Office to study the feasibility of a pilot program providing full ballot tracking of overseas military absentee ballots through the mail stream. In addition, Executive Order 14019, section 8(c), required the establishment of procedures to enable a comprehensive end-to-end ballot tracking system for all absentee ballots cast by military and other eligible overseas voters under UOCAVA. In response, in July 2021, the FVAP Office submitted the Military Ballot Tracking Research report required by Congress. The research report summary and key points follow.

MBTP RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY

The Council of State Governments is the lead sponsor and project management source providing project management, financial, and administrative support to election officials. The FVAP Office is acting as the lead Federal facilitator for the project and overall government sponsor for the cooperative agreement with the Council of State Governments and the primary researcher for post-pilot data and findings. The U.S. Postal Service is providing key technical assets for guidance and technical support for setup and configuration of the project. The Military Postal Service Agency is also providing key technical assets for guidance with the Military Postal Service and standardized guidance to Military Postal Service personnel on scanning MBTP mail pieces. Also, local election officials are the key implementers of program specifications, preparing official ballot packages with assigned barcodes for outbound and returning ballot envelopes.

Total funding consists of postage costs for mail and packages consisting of at least four tests to 1,500 participants (for example, Voting Assistance Officers) at an estimated cost not to exceed \$300,000. This estimate is based on the conduct of approximately four full testing efforts for delivery to and return of materials from overseas personnel and associated administrative costs incurred during pilot program implementation.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Section 3406, title 39, United States Code, "Balloting Materials Under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act," January 5, 2009, states that balloting materials under UOCAVA (individually or in bulk), (1) shall be carried expeditiously and free of postage; and (2) may be mailed at a post office established outside the United States, unless such mailing is prohibited by treaty or other international agreement of the United States.

The FVAP Office conducted a series of tests to support greater implementation and ballot tracking in time for the 2022 general election with the least amount of disruption to business operations of state and local election officials, the U.S. Postal Service, the Military Postal Service Agency, and the Department of State.

The MBTP provided voters information as to the location of their blank ballot from the election office to the voter, and then the completed ballot to its delivery to the election office. Election officials would relay information upon request directly to the voter as to the ultimate disposition of the ballot.

Federal agencies, state agencies, and national election organizations are partners in carrying out their roles and responsibilities in securing election infrastructure. These stakeholders consider security when designing and implementing any direct or supporting election systems. Any military ballot tracking system would not change the overall security profile already administered by the U.S. Postal Service and the Military Postal Service Agency.

These tests and long-term implementation will be constrained by two key factors: the voluntary nature of state and local election officials to offer ballot tracking services in absence of a Federal mandate; and the limited ability to require other countries to perform scanning of international mail pieces within the structure of the Universal Postal Union.

FINDINGS FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE MBTP

As requested by Congress, the inclusion of all citizens eligible to vote under UOCAVA into the parameters of a ballot tracking program may not be possible for all overseas voters, because not all foreign postal operators offer the types of tracked services that serve the needs of mailers sending balloting materials. While substantial progress could be made in connection with major trading partners, a universal solution may not be possible at this stage. However, going forward testing will occur to determine possible tracking solutions available for completed ballots returning from embassies and consulates.

The 2016 MBTP tracked ballots during the 2016 general election and benefited from its small size and partnerships as existing software products and mailing infrastructure were repurposed because of heavy reliance on manual processes. The FVAP Office envisions a future MBTP pilot as a series of tests to educate organizations involved in the voting process and to refine possible technical solutions to support greater levels of implementation across election jurisdictions with varying levels of populations.

Under current Federal law, state and local election officials are not required to provide comprehensive ballot tracking. Jurisdictions typically use an Intelligent Mail barcode or a third-party vendor system to track ballots sent by mail. The continued expansion of the Intelligent Mail barcode across election jurisdictions points to the need for the U.S. Postal Service to integrate an Intelligent Mail Parcel Barcode for letter class mail, which would allow for a more comprehensive tracking and delivery capability without requiring adjustment to current business processes. The Intelligent Mail barcode is designed to scan data back to the mail owner or mail service provider. Some local election officials use Intelligent Mail barcode scan data to monitor ballot mail movement in the mail stream and provide methods for voters to track outbound and return ballot mail. Testing will ultimately determine the overall viability of the Intelligent Mail barcode versus the Intelligent Mail Parcel Barcode type or another type of barcode that more closely aligns with Military Postal Service processes and provides a plain text tracking code directly to voters.

The 2016 MBTP experience leveraged the existing ballot tracking gateway available on the U.S. Postal Service website, but this ballot tracking experience does not capture the final disposition and confirmation by the election official that the ballot was received and subject to final acceptance and tabulation. Scanning existing barcodes identifies only a change in custody and receipt. Future pilot efforts would identify specific scan events and identify key data points for election officials to integrate with their own internal reporting systems that voters are able to use to verify final disposition of their returned ballots.

Before the FVAP Office can offer recommendations for seamless UOCAVA ballot mail processing and tracking, the FVAP Office will need to complete any pilot program and any subsequent testing to evaluate various commercially available barcode options and envelope designs to determine the least disruptive and most effective solution. The FVAP Office further stated in the MBTP report that in recognition of some of the current business process limitations regarding ballot mail visibility, the U.S. Postal Service can work with the FVAP Office, the Military Postal Service Agency, and other organizations to provide election officials with new letter and flat size UOCAVA ballot envelope templates. Pilot participants can test the effectiveness of various envelope template designs. The pilot would also provide participants an opportunity to identify business process improvements for all stakeholders, including Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Division, the U.S. Postal Service, and the Military Postal Service Agency, as well as opportunities to identify barcodes that are compatible with current handheld scanners without requiring a change in the scanning equipment currently in use or procedures for processing mail.

The FVAP Office stated in the report that it could develop recommendations to improve its processes and services, and determine the associated costs, within 1 year. Any new technical solutions and measurements will require more evaluation.

FUTURE PILOT PROGRAM DESIGN AND STRATEGIC MILESTONES

To answer these technical challenges, the FVAP Office envisions a pilot program conducted as a series of tests to determine potential solutions across election jurisdictions. The 2016 MBTP represented an effective proof of concept in terms of its original objectives, but any future pilots should be used to conduct field testing outside of actual elections. The 2016 MBTP consisted of approximately 1,500 ballots. Any future pilot program would consist of the equivalent level of volume and at least four rounds of testing leveraging participants from Voting Assistance Officers serving at overseas military installations or various U.S. embassies and consulates. Currently, over 1,200 Voting Assistance Officers conduct voting assistance responsibilities at overseas locations, with approximately 242 embassies and consulates also supporting voting assistance activities. Through interagency partnerships, these populations would be leveraged to conduct a series of tests on the technical parameters and to identify specific answers to challenges identified during the 2016 MBTP.

The FVAP Office remains in an existing cooperative agreement with the Council of State Governments. The existing cooperative agreement established the Overseas Voting Initiative as a working group of state and local election officials to identify best practices when serving voters covered by UOCAVA. These tests will examine the following elements:

- integration of the Intelligent Mail barcode, or acceptable alternatives, for tracking setups for prograde (materials sent to voters) ballots;
- ballot envelope design changes to improve visibility, automation, and manual processing;
- identification of key scan events, provisioning scan events to mail owner or mail service providers events, and data for integration into election official databases;
- possible changes to Label 11-DOD distribution or label generation by state and local election officials; and
- qualitative user experience data collection.

At the end of these tests, the FVAP Office, the Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Division of the Department of State, the U.S. Postal Service, and the Military Postal Service Agency will determine the most effective processes.

In 2018, the FVAP Office entered into a second cooperative agreement with the Council of State Governments, which continues the work of the Overseas Voting Initiative. The collaboration aims to improve the voting process for voters covered by UOCAVA by providing direct interaction with leading state and local election officials best positioned to share best practices and identify emerging trends. This initiative is critical for the FVAP Office to further engage stakeholders in state and local government to explore innovative areas in which the FVAP Office can aid election administrators and improve the connection between voters covered by UOCAVA and their election office through the sharing of best practices.

MILITARY BALLOT TRACKING PILOT RESEARCH REPORT CONCLUSION

The FVAP Office concluded that the 2016 MBTP was the first to provide full lifecycle tracking of ballots throughout the U.S. Postal Service–Military Postal Service network. It increased customer service for voters and provided valuable research data to help identify areas for improvement on both the Federal and local levels.

In response to requirements enacted in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020, the FVAP Office engaged its Federal partners to review the potential for an expanded pilot program that addresses the following requirements:

- the scope and cost of the expanded pilot program;
- the projected cost of extending this pilot program to all eligible voters under UOCAVA;
- the organizations that provided FVAP substantial support in conducting the pilot, a description of the support, and costs associated with that support; and
- recommendations on the process and steps necessary to expand the program to all eligible overseas members and their families.

In pursuit of these requirements, the FVAP Office plans to carry out an expanded pilot program consisting of a series of procedural and technical tests that closely replicate the level of effort conducted in 2016, but conducted outside an election event.

The FVAP Office satisfied the congressional requirement to research the feasibility for the potential for an expanded end-to-end ballot tracking pilot program. The FVAP Office continues to coordinate efforts to develop an end-to-end ballot tracking system.

The FVAP Office Complied with the Requirements of DoD Instruction 1000.04

We reviewed the FVAP website, which contains survey results that the FVAP Office routinely reported to the President and Congress. The FVAP website effectively assists eligible voters and other stakeholders, while providing statistical analysis and general information on voter participation and Federal-state cooperation. The website includes educational materials that help simplify the UOCAVA voting process, identifies state websites offering online voter registration and ballot request tools, and compiles election news, state-specific voting deadlines, requirements, and contact information.

We determined that the FVAP Office complied with the requirements in DoD Instruction 1000.04. Specifically, the FVAP Office engaged with the Services and external stakeholder agencies, developed written agreements, and combined the work of election officials and voters who conducted and analyzed post-election surveys, as well as metrics from Voting Assistance Officers. The FVAP Office used the results of actions taken to report all endeavors to the President and Congress, including the MBTP Research program report. As a result, eligible voters had access to the information necessary to participate in the voting process. DoD organizations and leaders also had the necessary tools to ensure access to and comply with Federal law and DoD Instruction 1000.04.

Appendix A

Scope and Methodology

We conducted this evaluation from October 2022 through March 2023 in accordance with the “Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation,” published in December 2020 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. Those standards require that we adequately plan the evaluation to ensure that objectives are met and that we perform the evaluation to obtain sufficient, competent, and relevant evidence to support the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. We believe that the evidence obtained was sufficient, competent, and relevant to lead a reasonable person to sustain the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

The scope of this evaluation included the reporting period of January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022, in accordance with our responsibilities under 10 U.S.C. § 1566. We collected reports from the Inspectors General of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force, assessing their Services’ voter assistance program compliance during 2022. We reviewed these reports and supporting data to report on the level of compliance and effectiveness of Service voting assistance programs.

We conducted data calls and interviewed representatives from the offices of the DoD FVAP and the Service IGs to assess their implementation of requirements specified in DoD Instruction 1000.04. We reviewed the FVAP website and documentation prepared by the FVAP Office, including the MBTP Research report and its annual report to Congress on the effectiveness of activities carried out under UOCAVA. We also conducted data calls and interviewed representatives from the offices of the Council of State Governments; the Election Assistance Commission; the U.S. Postal Service; the Military Postal Service Agency; and the Departments of Commerce, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice, State, and Transportation to assess the level of outreach and collaboration between these offices and the FVAP Office to ensure that voters covered by UOCAVA have access to and the ability to vote worldwide.

We reported on voting assistance programs of the Services concerning their effectiveness and whether these programs complied with relevant DoD and Service policies. To determine compliance with DoD Instruction 1000.04, with regard to outreach efforts to voters covered by UOCAVA to ensure access to and the ability to vote worldwide, we collected and reviewed:

- DoD policies and procedures;
- annual FVAP reports to Congress and the President, studies, and statistical analysis;

- U.S. Election Assistance Commission electronic voting reports (which include FVAP UOCAVA data) to Congress and the President, studies, and statistical analysis strategies;
- UOCAVA voter registration and absentee ballot requests and submissions data maintained in the FVAP portal;
- Council of State Governments Overseas Voting Initiative documentation, cooperative agreement, and program guidelines;
- U.S. Postal Service OIG reports covering international and diplomatic mail;
- Military Postal Service Agency 2022 Strategic Postal Voting Action Plan, Absentee Ballot SITREP [situation report];
- Services' quarterly data on voters covered by UOCAVA assisted and populated in the FVAP portal; and
- FVAP and Service guidance on voter assistance and outreach.

To avoid duplication, we also reviewed relevant reports by other oversight organizations, such as the Government Accountability Office.

We reviewed relevant Federal laws, DoD and Service policies, voting action plans, and other appropriate documents, including the following policies and guidance:

Statute and Executive Policies

Section 1566, title 10, United States Code

Section 1566a, title 10, United States Code

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)

Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act

Public Law 116-92, National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020

Executive Order 12642

Executive Order 14019

Department of Defense Policy

DoD Directive 5101.11E

DoD Instruction 1000.04

DoD Instruction 4525.09

Military Postal Service Procedures Manual

Service Policies

Each Military Service has published voting assistance program policies to implement the statute and the DoD Instruction. These policies include the following:

- Army Regulation 608-20, “Army Voting Assistance Program,” November 13, 2020
- Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 1742.1C, “Navy Voting Assistance Program,” February 5, 2016
- Air Force Instruction 36-3107, “Voting Assistance Program,” July 1, 2021
- Marine Corps Order 1742.1C, “Voting Assistance Program,” June 25, 2021

Each Service supplements its voting assistance program with annual voting action plans. These voting action plans guide commanders and Voting Assistance Officers in implementing the law and DoD policy. The voting action plans also identify key dates for ordering and mailing voting material and reporting voting assistance metrics for each election year.

Use of Computer-Processed Data

We did not use computer-processed data to perform this evaluation.

Prior Coverage

During the past 5 years the DoD OIG and others have issued reports discussing support to voters covered by UOCAVA. Unrestricted DoD OIG reports can be accessed at <http://www.dodig.mil/reports.html/>.

DoD OIG

As required by 10 U.S.C. § 1566, the DoD OIG has reported on the effectiveness of DoD voting assistance programs and compliance with the voting assistance programs of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force annually since 2001.⁴⁹

These reports made appropriate recommendations to address program challenges and to improve program support for absent military personnel, their dependents, and other overseas voters. Only the reports for years 2021 and 2019 have open recommendations, as described below. Management took appropriate action on the recommendations in earlier reports.

⁴⁹ Public Law 116–283, “William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021,” section 924(b)(1)(m), added the Space Force to 10 U.S.C. § 1566.

DoD OIG Report No. DODIG-2021-066, "Evaluation of DoD Voting Assistance Programs for 2020," March 29, 2021

The evaluation found that the FVAP Office had not developed and implemented agreements, such as memorandums of understanding, with all external stakeholder agencies to enhance outreach and ensure a collaborative and efficient effort to support voters covered by UOCAVA. Entering into memorandums of understanding with other Federal agencies will allow the FVAP Office to strengthen its communications by expanding its outreach through other Federal agencies. These efforts boost voter awareness, knowledge, and participation in upcoming election cycles.

The report recommended that the Director of the FVAP Office develop and implement agreements, such as memorandums of understanding, with all external stakeholder agencies to enhance outreach efforts and ensure a collaborative and efficient effort to support voters covered by UOCAVA and their eligible family members, including those in deployed, dispersed, and tenant organizations.

The Director of the FVAP Office agreed with the recommendation, stating that entering into agreements such as memorandums of understanding with Federal Agencies will allow the FVAP to standardize its approach for meeting the requirements of UOCAVA and leverage opportunities to increase the reach of its existing information awareness efforts. The Director of the FVAP Office stated that, to the extent practicable, the FVAP Office will adopt this recommendation for the 2022 election cycle.

DoD OIG Report No. DODIG-2019-065, "Evaluation of DoD Voting Assistance Programs for 2018," March 25, 2019

The evaluation found that 2 of the 10 combatant commands (the U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Transportation Command) had a written FVAP policy as required by DoD Instruction 1000.04.⁵⁰ The remaining eight combatant commands either relied on the Service component or installation policy, or stated they were drafting a policy. Written voting policies serve to educate and provide awareness and assistance to all eligible personnel within the command who want to vote.

The report recommended that the commanders of the eight combatant commands without written voting policies develop and implement policies to support uniformed services personnel and their family members, including those in deployed, dispersed, and tenant organizations.

⁵⁰ Combatant commands are components of the DoD, each with a geographic or functional mission.

In 2019, 2020, and 2021, the Commanders of the U.S. Central Command, U.S. Cyber Command, U.S. European Command, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, and U.S. Strategic Command published written voting policies to support Service voters and their family members, including those in deployed, dispersed, and tenant organizations. The remaining combatant command, the U.S. Southern Command, did not provide the required written voting policies.

The other DoD OIG annual reports issued for the previous 5 years were:

- DoD Report No. DoDIG-2022-079, “Evaluation of Department of Defense Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2021,” March 31, 2022
- DoD Report No. DoDIG-2020-076, “Evaluation of Department of Defense Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2019,” March 31, 2020
- DoD Report No. DoDIG-2018-093, “DoD Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2017,” March 30, 2018

U.S. Postal Service OIG

United States Postal Service Report No. 22-093-R22, “Election Mail Readiness for the 2022 Mid-Term Elections,” September 26, 2022

According to the U.S. Postal Service OIG, the Postal Service was generally ready for timely processing of election mail for the 2022 mid-term election. The Postal Service established the Election and Government Mail Services Organization, prioritized the timely processing and delivery of Election Mail during 2022 primary elections, implemented prior audit recommendations, and made progress in implementing election mail policies. The Postal Service processed nearly 10 million more election mail pieces from April 1 through June 30, 2022, than during the same period for the 2020 primaries. Even with the significant increase, the Postal Service delivered 97.6 percent of identifiable election mail on time, an increase of 1 percentage point from the same period in 2020.

However, the OIG found examples where the Postal Service was not in compliance with election mail policies; specifically, three of six Processing and Distribution Centers and one of 10 delivery units did not complete required checklists, certifications, and postmarking in accordance with policy. The OIG found that the Postal Service was able to measure service performance for 83.3 percent of identifiable ballots. While the Postal Service has made progress reducing the number of ballots excluded from service measurement, it is important that it continues to identify root causes of ballots excluded from measurement.

U.S. Postal Service Report No. 21-007-R21, “International Election Mail Observations for the 2020 General and 2021 Georgia Senate Runoff Elections,” April 29, 2021

According to the U.S. Postal Service OIG, the U.S. Postal Service successfully processed international election mail for the 2020 general election and 2021 Georgia runoff elections, including international military and diplomatic election ballots. The OIG did not observe any materially significant election mail delays and determined that the U.S. Postal Service took timely corrective actions related to short-term operational readiness and staffing availability at the Chicago International and Military Service Center as recommended in its September 2020 report. With regard to military and diplomatic ballots of international origin that qualify for tracking capabilities, the U.S. Postal Service data reported a delivery scan for over 98 percent of deliverable ballots for the general election and nearly 97 percent for the Georgia runoffs for Senate. Mail officials from the Departments of State and Defense stated they were generally satisfied with the U.S. Postal Service’s international election mail processing. The U.S. Postal Service also implemented a variety of monitoring and oversight mechanisms for international election mail across all ISCs. These controls and tools included dedicated election teams and daily self-audits, clearance checklists, and logs to ensure compliance to their election and political mail readiness procedures.

U.S. Postal Service Report No. 20-271-R20, “Military, Diplomatic, and Other International Election Mail,” September 30, 2020

According to the U.S. Postal Service OIG, the U.S. Postal Service’s preparedness for processing international election mail, including military and diplomatic mail, is at risk based on mail processing delays at the Chicago International and Military Service Center. Operations at the Chicago International and Military Service Center were significantly affected beginning in late March 2020 primarily due to the coronavirus disease–2019 pandemic, and delays remained into mid-August, the time of the OIG’s most recent observations at the facility. These delays threaten the facility’s overall ability to timely process military, diplomatic, and other international election mail. The OIG’s analysis of U.S. Postal Service data for all international mail showed over 137,000 delayed pieces—both inbound to and outbound from—the Chicago International and Military Service Center in mid-August 2020. These delays stemmed primarily from staffing shortages, outbound mail restrictions, presentation and screening delays, and transportation-related delays resulting from the pandemic.

The U.S. Postal Service OIG also determined that, as of mid-August, the U.S. Postal Service did not have an active system for tracking and reporting on eligible military, diplomatic, and other international election ballots. U.S. Postal Service officials stated that they plan to leverage existing tracking and reporting capabilities in the Product Tracking and Reporting system via the Intelligent Mail barcodes. System modification testing to specifically track and report on election ballots, however, had not yet been completed. Testing was planned for early September 2020 at each ISC and other U.S. Postal Service facilities that could accept inbound ballots. Accurately tracking and reporting on eligible international election ballots would provide the U.S. Postal Service with key visibility into the number of international election ballots it receives. These data would also provide insight on the respective flows and timing of each piece—information that would be valuable for visibility into ballot processing and handling.

While finalizing the report for publication, the U.S. Postal Service OIG observed operations at the Chicago International and Military Service Center on September 29, 2020, as part of another ongoing project. International mail operations appeared significantly improved from the OIG's August 2020 observations. Specifically, the workroom floor was visibly clearer of inbound and outbound mail, as was the holding area for mail going into and out of Customs and Border Protection.

U.S. Postal Service Report No. MS-AR-19-003, "Military and Diplomatic Mail Service," July 31, 2019

According to the U.S. Postal Service OIG, the Military and diplomatic outbound mail was delayed in 2018 and 2019, both going to and being processed at the Chicago International and Military Service Center. These delayed mail issues were collectively caused by ineffective oversight of operations at the facility level and exacerbated by limited performance measurement (particularly at the Chicago International and Military Service Center). Specifically, while the U.S. Postal Service measures timeliness from the point of origin at the retail unit to acceptance at the Chicago International and Military Service Center, it does not measure the operational time between acceptance at the Chicago International and Military Service Center and assignment to outbound transportation for its destination. The U.S. Postal Service is unable to measure these activities because it does not scan individual pieces to larger containers—a practice known as nesting. As a result of

the lack of scanning and measurement for these key processing activities, the U.S. Postal Service does not entirely know how long it takes to process this mail and to what extent these operations contribute to delays. These issues have negatively affected mail service received by military and diplomatic mail customers and have pushed related financial and customer service burdens onto the U.S. Postal Service, the DoD, and the Department of State.

Appendix B

Federal Voting Assistance Program Overview

The FVAP Office provides voting assistance to military personnel, their eligible family members, and other overseas U.S. citizens through a Federal mandate. The FVAP Office works to ensure that each of these groups is aware of the right to vote and has the tools and resources to do so from anywhere in the world.

Section 20301, title 52, United States Code requires the President to delegate the head of an Executive department to have primary responsibility for the functions related to the registration and voting by absent Uniformed Services voters and overseas voters in elections for Federal office. Specifically, the presidential designee must:

- consult state and local election officials in carrying out this chapter, and ensure that such officials are aware of the requirements of this Act;
- prescribe an official postcard form, containing both an absentee voter registration application and an absentee-ballot application, for use by the states, as required under 52 U.S.C. § 20302(a)(4);
- carry out 52 U.S.C. § 20303 provisions with respect to the Federal write-in absentee ballot for absent Uniformed Services voters and overseas voters in general elections for Federal office;
- prescribe a suggested design for absentee-ballot mailing envelopes;
- compile and distribute:
 - descriptive material on state absentee registration and voting procedures, and
 - to the extent practicable, facts relating to specific elections, including dates, offices involved, and the text of ballot questions;
- not later than the end of each year after a presidential election year, transmit to the President and the Congress a report on the effectiveness of assistance under this chapter, including a statistical analysis of Uniformed Services voter participation, a separate statistical analysis of overseas nonmilitary participation, and a description of state-Federal cooperation;
- prescribe a standard oath for use with any document under this chapter affirming that a material misstatement of fact in the completion of such a document may constitute grounds for a conviction for perjury;
- carry out 52 U.S.C. § 20304 with respect to the collection and delivery of marked absentee ballots of absent overseas Uniformed Services voters in elections for Federal office;

- to the greatest extent practicable, take such actions as may be necessary:
 - to ensure that absent Uniformed Services voters who cast absentee ballots at locations or facilities under the jurisdiction of the presidential designee are able to do so in a private and independent manner; and
 - to protect the privacy of the contents of absentee ballots cast by absentee Uniformed Services voters and overseas voters while such ballots are in the possession or control of the presidential designee;
- carry out 52 U.S.C. § 20305 with respect to Federal Voting Assistance Program Improvements; and
- working with the Election Assistance Commission and the chief state election official of each state, develop standards for:
 - states to report data on the number of absentee ballots transmitted and received under 52 U.S.C. § 20302(c) of this title and such other data as the presidential designee determines appropriate; and
 - the presidential designee to store the data reported.

Executive Order 12642 identified the Secretary of Defense as the presidential designee. The Secretary of Defense delegated this authority and the reporting requirement to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. DoD Instruction 1000.04 states that, under the authority, direction, and control of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) provides policy guidance, direction, and oversight of FVAP. The Director of the Defense Support Services Center is assigned policy support and operational responsibilities.

The Office of the FVAP Director is under the Director of the Defense Support Services Center. To carry out these duties, the FVAP Office coordinates with the Election Assistance Commission, and the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Health and Human Services, Justice, State, Homeland Security, and Transportation. DoD Instruction 1000.04 also assigns responsibilities to the DoD Components to develop written voting-related policies to support all eligible Uniformed Services personnel and their family members, including those in deployed, dispersed, and tenant organizations.

The FVAP Office is required to report the information specified within UOCAVA to the President and Congress not later than March 31 of each year. Its report is required to include descriptions of Military Department voter registration assistance programs and their use, absentee ballot collection and delivery, cooperation between states and the Federal Government, as well as assessments of absent Uniformed Services and overseas voter registration and participation.

The FVAP Office, in accordance with 52 U.S.C. § 20305, provides an online portal to inform absent Uniformed Service members, their families, and overseas citizens about voter registration and absentee ballot procedures. Military Service officials, election officials, and other stakeholders use data from the portal for dissemination, analysis, and program improvements.

Appendix C

FVAP Voting Assistance Metrics



DEFENSE HUMAN RESOURCES ACTIVITY
FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
4800 MARK CENTER DRIVE, SUITE 03J25-02
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22350-4000

OCT 15 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR SERVICE VOTING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
MILITARY DEPARTMENTS

SUBJECT: Voting Assistance Program Metrics

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) coordinated with each Service on the voting assistance program performance metrics and reporting requirements, as required by the Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1000.04. The attached Measures of Effect and Performance reflect the adjustments to FVAP's current measures of effectiveness based on research provided by the RAND Institute combined with the ongoing assessment FVAP applies to voting assistance.

FVAP prescribes the collection of the following data elements to commence January 1, 2015, via the FVAP portal, with quarterly entries to be provided no later than 15 days after the end of each quarter within CY 15. This guidance supersedes the FVAP memo dated 18 May 2011.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Matt Bohmer", is positioned above the printed name and title.

Matt Bohmer
Director, FVAP

Attachments:
As stated

FVAP Voting Assistance Metrics (cont'd)

Measures of Effect & Performance

Installation Voter Assistance Office

Metrics	Justification
Number of Personnel Assisted: Categorize into the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Military ▪ Spouses/Dependents ▪ Other Civilians 	To provide an accurate representation of the utilization of this resource for voting assistance.
Of the Total Number of Personnel Assisted, how many did you directly assist with completing the following forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) ▪ Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) ▪ National Voter Registration Form (NVRF) 	To provide an accurate representation on the level and type of assistance provided to qualified voters through each Installation Voter Assistance Office. "Directly assisting" refers to the assistance that instructs on the completion on one of the forms listed and/or responding to questions related to the completion of the form.
Of the total Number of Personnel Assisted, how many did you provide general information:	To provide a distinguishing characteristic for the levels of assistance that is provided and provide context for the type of assistance sought through this resource.
Total Number of FPCAs distributed:	To measure the extent of utilization for the use of the FPCA and potential penetration of the FPCA at an installation.
Of the total number of FPCAs distributed, describe the method of distribution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hard Copy forms ▪ Electronic (e.g., e-mail, online) ▪ Referred voter to FVAP.gov 	To provide clarifying characteristics for the preferred method of distributing the FPCA.
Total Number of FWABs distributed:	To measure the extent of utilization for the use of the FWAB and potential penetration of the FWAB at an installation.
Of the total number of FWABs distributed, describe the method of distribution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hard Copy forms ▪ Electronic (e.g., e-mail, online) ▪ Referred voter to FVAP.gov 	To provide clarifying characteristics for the preferred method of distributing the FWAB.
Total Number of NVRFs distributed:	To measure the extent of utilization for the use of the NVRF and potential penetration of the NVRF at an installation.
Of the total number of NVRFs distributed, describe the method of distribution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hard Copy forms ▪ Electronic (e.g., e-mail, online) ▪ Referred voter to FVAP.gov 	To provide clarifying characteristics for the preferred method of distributing the FWAB.
Total Number of NVRFs mailed on behalf of the voter	To measure the extent and volume of NVRFs transmitted from an IVA Office

FVAP Voting Assistance Metrics (cont'd)

Reporting Requirements and usage of the FVAP Portal located at FVAP.gov:

1. Date of appointment
2. Date and method of most recent training
3. Continuity Book created and available for inspection

FVAP Voting Assistance Metrics (cont'd)

Unit Voting Assistance Officers

Metrics	Justification
Number of Personnel Assisted: Categorize into the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Military ▪ Spouses/Dependents ▪ Other Civilians 	To provide an accurate representation of the utilization of this resource for voting assistance.
Total Number of Personnel Assisted, how many did you directly assist with completing the following forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) ▪ Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) 	To provide an accurate representation on the level and type of assistance provided to qualified voters through each Installation Voter Assistance Office. "Directly assisting" refers to the assistance that instructs on the completion on one of the forms listed and/or responding to questions related to the completion of the form.
Total Number of Personnel Assisted, how many did you provide general information:	To provide a distinguishing characteristic for the levels of assistance that is provided and provide context for the type of assistance sought through this resource.
Total Number of FPCAs distributed:	To measure the extent of utilization for the use of the FPCA and potential penetration of the FPCA at an installation.
Of the total number of FPCAs distributed, describe the method of distribution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hard Copy forms ▪ Electronic (e.g., e-mail, online) ▪ Referred voter to FVAP.gov 	To provide clarifying characteristics for the preferred method of distributing the FPCA.
Total Number of FWABs distributed:	To measure the extent of utilization for the use of the FWAB and potential penetration of the FWAB at an installation.
Of the total number of FWABs distributed, describe the method of distribution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hard Copy forms ▪ Electronic (e.g., e-mail, online) ▪ Referred voter to FVAP.gov 	To provide clarifying characteristics for the preferred method of distributing the FWAB.

Reporting Requirements and usage of the FVAP Portal located at FVAP.gov:

4. Date of appointment
5. Date and method of most recent training
6. Continuity Book created and available for inspection

FVAP Voting Assistance Metrics (cont'd)

Recruiting Offices

<u>Metrics</u>	<u>Justification</u>
Number of Personnel Assisted for Recruiting Services (Total Number of Persons Entering the Recruiting Office)	To provide an accurate representation of the utilization of this resource for voting assistance.
Number of DD Form 2645 (Yes/No) Completed (Must be Citizen and 18 Years Old by Date of Election to Complete Form)	To provide an accurate representation of the utilization of this resource for voting assistance.
Number of Voter Registration Applications Submitted by Recruiting Offices, By State	To provide an accurate representation of the utilization of this resource for voting assistance.
Number of Voter Registration Applications Taken by Citizens, but Not Submitted by Recruiting Offices	To provide an accurate representation of the utilization of this resource for voting assistance.
Total Mailing Costs to Submit Voter Registration Application to States	To provide an accurate representation of the cost of this resource for voting assistance.

Appendix D

FVAP Website Outreach Material

Outreach Materials

fvap.gov/eo/overview/materials/forms | fvap.gov/info/outreach

- Request outreach materials by emailing vote@fvap.gov
- Request FPCA/FWAB forms through GSA.gov
- Outreach Materials include:
 - Voting Assistance Guides
 - Wallet cards
 - Brochures
 - Posters
 - Resource Booklets with Fact Sheets
 - Calendar alerts ([Online](#) to sync with mobile & desktop)
 - Postage-Paid Envelope Templates, Toolkits with graphics, and more! ([Online](#))



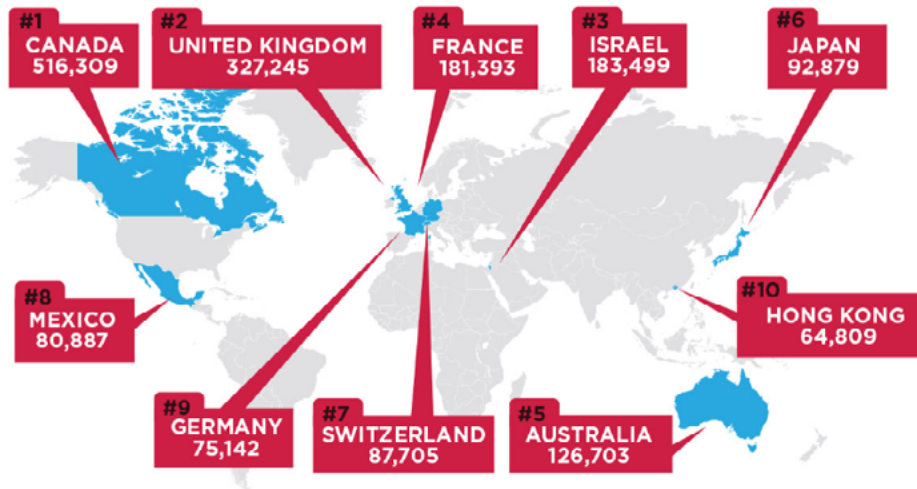
Appendix E

FVAP Estimated Number of Locations Outside the U.S. with the Largest Numbers of Adult U.S. Citizens

The Overseas Voter in 2020: 35 Years of UOCAVA

Since there is no list of all U.S. citizens living abroad, FVAP compiles foreign and domestic data to estimate the number of voting-age U.S. citizens living in nearly 200 countries around the world.

LOCATIONS WITH THE LARGEST NUMBERS OF ADULT U.S. CITIZENS



North America (excluding the United States) and Europe contain the most voting-age U.S. citizens, although countries from other regions of the world also rank among the top 10.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

FVAP	Federal Voting Assistance Program
IG	Inspector General
ISC	International Service Center
MBTP	Military Ballot Tracking Pilot
MOVE	Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act
MPO	Military Post Office
OIG	Office of Inspector General
UOCAVA	Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act

Glossary

Eligible Voter. An eligible voter is any of the following:

- Absent member of a Uniformed Service voter.
 - A member of the Uniformed Services on active duty who, by reason of such active duty, is absent from the place of residence where the member is otherwise qualified to vote.
 - A member of the Merchant Marine who, by reason of service in the Merchant Marine, is absent from the place of residence where the member is otherwise qualified to vote.
- Eligible family member
 - A spouse or dependent of an absent member of a Uniformed Service voter who, by reason of the active duty or service of the member, is absent from the place of residence where the eligible family member is otherwise qualified to vote.
- Overseas voter.
 - An absent member of a Uniformed Service voter who, by reason of active duty or service, is absent from the United States on the date of the election involved;
 - A person who resides outside of the United States and is qualified to vote in the last place in which the person was domiciled before leaving the United States; or
 - A person who resides outside of the United States and (but for such residence) would be qualified to vote in the last place in which the person was domiciled before leaving the United States.

Federal Post Card Application. A form for Service members, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens to both register to vote and request absentee ballots.

Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot. A backup ballot for voters who do not receive their requested state absentee ballot in time to vote and return it.

Geographically Separated Units. Mission elements that are dispersed from a regular-type military installation and do not normally have the same level of support associated with a host-base configuration. Geographically separated units typically rely on additional administrative and operational support from a designated main installation and command component.

Installation Voting Assistance Office. The office designated by the installation commander to provide voter assistance to members of a Uniformed Service, voting-age military dependents, Government employees, contractors, and other civilian U.S. citizens with access to the installation. Installation Voting Assistance Offices also serve as voter registration agencies under Chapter 205 of Title 52, U.S.C.

Installation Voting Assistance Officer. A civilian or Uniformed Service member responsible for voting assistance coordination at the installation level.

Metrics. A systematic means of measuring essential management information for reporting, control, and process improvement.

Nesting and Product Tracking and Reporting. Nesting is the association of individual piece barcodes to a receptacle barcode. This association allows individual pieces to be tracked throughout the transportation network as different entities scan the receptacles. When items are nested to a receptacle, barcode scans update the U.S. Postal Service Product Tracking and Reporting system.

Online Portals of Information. A customized website designated by the FVAP Office that immerses information from a wide array of sources in a consistent and uniformed manner.

Service Voting Action Officer. Individual designated for his or her respective component responsible for the implementation of voting assistance operations.

Uniformed and Overseas Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) Citizens. Uniformed and Overseas Absentee Voting Act citizens are U.S. citizens who are active members of the Uniformed Services, the Merchant Marine, and the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, their eligible family members, and U.S. citizens residing outside the United States.

Uniformed Services. The Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, Coast Guard, Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service, and the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, as defined in 52 U.S.C. § 20310(7).

Voting Assistance Officer. A member of a Uniformed Service or civilian appointed to support unit level voting assistance activities and support the broader execution of voting assistance responsibilities at an installation level.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

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