

# Chapter 3

## Guide for Voting Assistance Officers

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### Your Responsibilities

As a Voting Assistance Officer (VAO), you are part of a worldwide network of military members, US government employees, and volunteers who aid in ensuring that citizens covered under the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* understand their voting rights and know how to vote absentee. These citizens include: active duty members of the Uniformed Services or merchant marine, their family members, and citizens residing outside the U.S. Voting Assistance Officers provide these citizens with accurate and nonpartisan voting information and assistance. You should:

- Become familiar with [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov), your organization or service voting website, the FVAP biennial Voting Action Plan, the forms and absentee voting process.
- Take advantage of FVAP training opportunities. Workshops are offered in the Washington, D.C. area twice a month and at military installations and Department of State locations worldwide. Contact the FVAP or your Service Voting Action Officer for a workshop schedule. Training may be also completed online at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov) by downloading the workshop slides.
- Keep current by signing up to receive press releases and the monthly *Voting Information News*, both available online. To subscribe, email [vote@fvap.ncr.gov](mailto:vote@fvap.ncr.gov) and provide your email address or your full name and mailing address in the body of the message.
- Ensure delivery of FPCAs to unit members by January 15 of each year if you are a military VAO. If you are a civilian VAO, ensure delivery of FPCAs to overseas citizens by August 15 of each year.
- Assist citizens in filling out the FPCA according to their State's specific requirements. Remind them to include an email address, phone and/or fax number so that it is easier for local election offices to contact them.
- Ensure that there is an adequate supply of FPCAs on hand for year-round registration, absentee ballot requests, and change of address requests for citizens moving or changing assignment location.
- Ensure that citizens are informed of current registration and voting procedures.
- Serve as coordinator for FVAP on-site workshops.
- Conduct non-partisan voter registration drives. Armed Forces Voters Week, Overseas Citizens Voters Week, and Absentee Voting Week are excellent times to get the word out. During Absentee Voting Week, you should announce through various media that voters should return their voted ballot immediately. If citizens have not received their requested State ballot by this week (or earlier based on location), you should encourage them to use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB).
- Ensure that there is an adequate supply of FWABs on hand year-round for citizens to use in case they do not receive their official State absentee ballot.
- Post notices on bulletin boards and in high-traffic areas encouraging citizens to register and vote.
- Create or continue a Continuity Folder.
- Provide your installation directory with contact information for referrals if you are a military VAO.

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### How You Can Assist Voters

#### Determining Voting Residency

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

If you are assisting a member of the Uniformed Services or family member, their legal voting residence is usually defined as where they have, or have had, physical presence and where they intend to remain or return.

If you are assisting overseas citizens, their legal voting residence is usually the State or territory in which they resided immediately prior to leaving the U.S. This is true even if many years have elapsed since they lived in the U.S., and they no longer maintain a residence in that State or territory, or if their intent to return is uncertain.

If a citizen is uncertain about their current legal voting residence, advise them to examine their connection to the State or territory in question and consult with legal counsel.

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

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

### Assisting Citizens to Complete the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)

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

If you are sending FPCAs for several citizens by fax or email, please use a separate Electronic Transmission Sheet for each form and send separately to ensure that each form is received by the proper election official. Fax numbers and email addresses can be found on the State's election website, available in the State's pages in Chapter 2 or at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

#### Check that FPCAs Include:

- Signature and date
- Complete voting residence address (no P.O. Box addresses)
- Legible handwriting
- All information required by the State
- Party preference if the citizen wants to vote in primary elections (if required by State)
- Notarization or witness signature (if required by State). Military Voting Assistance Officers may act as a notary for voting purposes for military personnel.

Also, be sure that the citizen mails the FPCA to their local election official in time to be received by the State registration and/or absentee ballot request deadline.

### Assisting Citizens to Complete the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)

The FWAB is available to military and overseas citizens who have requested but have not received their State absentee ballot in time to vote and return it before the deadline. To use the FWAB, citizens must have applied for a State ballot early enough so that their local election office received the request at least 30 days before the election or before the State's ballot request deadline, whichever is later.

In most cases the FWAB is only used to vote for Federal offices (President/Vice President, U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, Delegate or Resident Commissioner) in general elections, but some States accept the FWAB for primary, run-off, and special elections and/or for offices other than Federal offices. Some States also allow the FWAB to be used for voter registration.

If you are sending FWABs for several citizens by fax or email, please use a separate Electronic Transmission Sheet for each ballot and send separately to ensure that each ballot is received by the proper election official. Fax numbers and email addresses can be found on the State's election website, available in the State's pages in Chapter 2 or at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

#### Tips for Using the FWAB:

- Overseas citizens who have not received a requested State ballot 25 days before the election should complete and submit the FWAB to their local election office.
- Stateside Uniformed Service members and their families who have not received a requested State ballot 10 days before the election should complete and submit the FWAB to their local election office.
- The FWAB must be received by the local election office no later than the ballot return deadline.
- The transmittal envelope must be signed and dated, and the witness or notary signatures must be included (if required by State).
- If citizens receive their State absentee ballot after submitting the FWAB, they should vote and return the ballot immediately. If the State absentee ballot arrives by the ballot return deadline, the State will count the State absentee ballot instead of the FWAB.

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### Legal Guidelines

VAOs may not provide partisan voting information from candidates, political parties, or partisan organizations. Military VAOs may receive questions from voters regarding whether they can distribute and/or display partisan materials at the military installations. VAOs

should consult their Commanding Officer for their interpretation of DoD Directive 1344.10 *Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces on Active Duty*, available at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

VAOs should report any irregularities in the voting process to their department or agency headquarters VAO. Federally employed VAOs should refer to the Hatch Act, Title 5 U.S.C. Sec. 7321, link available at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

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

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## Continuity Folder

VAOs should create and maintain a continuity folder for reference and for passing on to subsequent VAOs.

It should provide basic details on absentee voting procedures and contain anything that may help your backup or successor. Your folder should also provide a quick orientation of VAO voting responsibilities. It can be in the form of a notebook, file folder, or an online community folder. Make sure it is readily available to other VAOs and assistants.

### Your Continuity Folder Should Contain:

- Your VAO Designation Letter (only Military VAOs)
- FPCAs and FWABs
- Reporting Requirement Materials
- Your complete contact information. (Stateside VAOs should also include local county election office contact information.)
- Current *Voting Assistance Guide*
- Recent *Voting Information News* and news releases
- Election Dates Calendars
- Current State Department or Service guidance (directive, instruction, order, etc.).
- DoD Instruction 1000.04. (Federal Voting Assistance Program) and 1344.10 (Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces in Active Duty). Copy of the Hatch Act, Title 5 U.S.C. Sec. 7321 (for Federal Employees overseas) and the Voting Action Plan, available at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).
- Training materials from workshops
- Recent email messages from Service Voting Action Officer and Installation VAO

Many of these materials are available through your normal service supply chain, the Installation Voting Assistance Officer, Service Voting Action Officer or at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

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## Ordering Voting Materials

Maintaining an adequate supply of voting materials is an essential function of every VAO. To order more materials, follow the instructions below.

### Army:

You may order voting materials from the Army Publishing Directorates (APD) website at [www.apd.army.mil](http://www.apd.army.mil) or the US Army Europe (USAREUR) publications warehouse at <https://aepubs.army.mil/>. You must have a publications account to place an order. You may order the following voting supplies:

SF Form 76, FPCA

SF Form 186, FWAB

Voting Assistance Guide (360-02)

Motivational Poster (DOD114)

Election Dates Poster (360-05)

For assistance, contact the APD at: 314-592-0910 or DSN 892-0910 or the USAREUR publications warehouse at DSN 314-384-6881/6882/6883/6884.

### Navy:

You may order the following voting materials through Navy Logistics Library:

SF 76, FPCA (Stock #: 0506-LP-108-1623)

SF 186, FWAB (Stock #: 0506-LP-175-2400)

Voting Assistance Guide (Stock #: 0500-LP-107-1558)

Motivational Poster (Stock # 0500-LP-107-1951)

You may also order FPCAs and FWABs from General Services Administration:

SF 76, FPCA (NSN: 7540-00-634-5053)

SF 186, FWAB (NSN: 7540-01-218-4384)

For a VAO Tool Box CD containing digitized posters, self-administered training, forms, media resources, references and templates, contact the Navy Voting Action Officer. For assistance, contact your Installation, Region, or Service Voting Assistance Officer.

## Air Force:

You may order supplies online at <https://www.my.af.mil> by going to the “Library” drop-down menu, clicking on “Publications,” and then clicking on “Air Force e-Publishing.”

Login or create a new account. Apply for the General Account. No AF Form 1846 is required.

If you don't have accounts set up yet, click on “Ordering Accounts” under “On-Line Ordering.” Set up a request for user account and wait to be approved before moving on. Then, click on “Order Products” under “On-Line Ordering.”

To order the Voting Assistance Guide, type VAG in all capital letters in the “Search for a Product” text entry box. For other voting materials, click on “Order Products” and use the “Search for a product” text entry box.

Place a check in the “Order” box, click “Add to cart,” and type the quantity in the “Quantity” box. Follow on-screen instructions to complete order.

To check on your order, use the “Track Orders/Order History” link. For assistance, contact Air Force ePublishing at DSN 754-2438 or COMM 1-800-848-9577 or by email at [e-publishing@pentagon.af.mil](mailto:e-publishing@pentagon.af.mil).

## Marine Corps:

You may order the following voting materials through Direct Support Stock Control Outlets, General Services Administration, or through your units supply officers via SABRS:

SF76, FPCA (NSN: 7540-00-634-5053)

SF186, FWAB (NSN: 7540-01-218-4384)

You may order the following voting materials through your unit's S-1 office via Marine Corps Publication Distribution System:

Voting Assistance Guide (PCN: 100006628000)

Motivational Poster (PCN: 50100651000)

Election Dates Poster (PCN: 50100650000)

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

## Coast Guard:

You may order FPCAs and FWABs from General Services Administration (GSA) using the following data:

SF 76, FPCA (NSN: 7540-00-634-5053)

SF 186, FWAB (NSN 7540-01-218-4384)

You should receive a Voting Assistance Guide through the DOT warehouse whenever a new edition is issued. If you do not receive a Guide, contact your Service Voting Action Officer.

## State Department:

You may order FPCAs and FWABs through the normal General Services Administration (GSA) supply channel. For expedited service, send a request to GSA, Attn.: Pat Bright, via email at [burlington.cscorder@gsa.gov](mailto:burlington.cscorder@gsa.gov), by fax: 215-446-5123, or by telephone at 215-446-5088. GSA requires the funding information, the stock number, and the quantity:

SF 76, FPCA (Stock Number: 7540-00-634-5053)

SF 186, FWAB (Stock Number: 7540-01-218-4384)

You may order Motivational Posters, Election Dates Posters, and Voting Assistance Guides by sending an email request to [votinginfo@State.gov](mailto:votinginfo@State.gov). Posters and Voting Assistance Guides are provided free of charge while supplies last and are shipped by diplomatic pouch.

For assistance, contact the Department of State Voting Action Officer.

## Overseas Citizens Organizations:

You may order Forms, Motivational Posters, Election Dates Posters, and Voting Assistance Guides by sending an email request to [vote@fvap.ncr.gov](mailto:vote@fvap.ncr.gov) or calling (703) 588-1584 or 1 (800) 438 VOTE (8683). International toll-free numbers can be found on the inside back cover or at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

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## Additional Assistance

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

- Installation Commanding Officer (CO)- The Installation CO conducts orientation briefings with VAOs prior to the start of primary elections, as well as informative briefings for citizens who would like to vote absentee. COs also make opening statements at FVAP workshops and make transportation available for VAOs to attend workshops at surrounding installations.
- Installation Voting Assistance Officer (IVAO)—The IVAO acts as a focal point on military installations in coordinating voting assistance support. IVAOs maintain a roster of all unit VAOs on the installation, establish communications with VAOs, and provide necessary materials and support. IVAOs coordinate FVAP workshops with organizations from their installation and surrounding installations.

- Legal Assistance Officer — This officer can be contacted with legal questions, such as determining voter residency.
- Public Affairs/Information Officer — This officer can be contacted to ensure that voting information is included in installation or unit publications.
- Inspector General (IG) — The IG is required by Federal law to periodically review voting assistance programs to ensure compliance with DoD and Service directives and regulations.
- Personnel/Human Resources Officer — This officer ensures that all newly reporting personnel and naturalized U.S. citizens are provided FPCAs and voting assistance.
- Chaplain — The Chaplain can assist in disseminating reminders and information to members of the community.
- Publications, Supply, or Distribution Officer — This officer ensures that VAOs receive FPCAs, FWABs, and other voting materials.
- Officers-in-Charge — Officers in Charge of exchanges, commissaries, special services activities, medical and dental facilities, education centers, family centers, etc. can coordinate the display of voting materials for Armed Forces Voters Week and Absentee Voters Week.

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

- Veterans and Service Organizations, such as: Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Non-commissioned Officers Association and the League of Women Voters

- Civic Groups, American Chambers of Commerce, colleges and universities, and support organizations for overseas US citizens
- Spouses' Club, Boy/Girl Scouts, and Other Youth Groups

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## Share Your Good Ideas

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

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

Your good ideas may come from a variety of sources:

- Personal experiences
- Assessments, audits, and appraisals
- Training evaluations
- Operational Readiness Reviews
- Critiques, analyses, and investigations
- Process improvement initiatives
- VAO training
- Voting activities, such as registration drives

Have a good idea? Submit it to your Service Voting Action Officer. (Contact information is on the inside front cover.) Overseas citizen organization VAOs may submit their ideas directly to the FVAP via email, [vote@fvap.ncr.gov](mailto:vote@fvap.ncr.gov). Be sure to include a clear statement of your idea and your complete contact information.

**On the following pages, you will find these four handouts which you can copy and distribute to assist voters: Frequently Asked Questions for Uniformed Service Members, Frequently Asked Questions for Overseas Citizens, 2010 Primary Election Dates, and U.S. Embassy and Consulate Email Addresses.**

You can also find these handouts at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

