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Contact: 800-438-VOTE

Email: Vote@FVAP.gov

FVAP Research Indicates Active Duty Service Members More Likely to Register and Vote than Civilians

Alexandria, Va. — New research recently released by the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) indicates active duty Service members are more likely to register and vote than civilians with similar characteristics. The analysis is provided in a research note that is supplemental to FVAP's 2012 Post-Election Report to Congress.

The research note details a new methodological approach for comparing active duty military (ADM) and citizen voting age population (CVAP) registration and participation rates, and for estimating the potential factors in the differences of the rates among the two disparate groups. The analysis helps clarify why the differences exist, highlighting the role demographic characteristics play in explaining voting behavior.

In previous reports to Congress, FVAP used industry standard statistical methods to normalize the military population to be demographically similar to the civilian population by adjusting ADM survey data to CVAP estimates of age and gender. However, as FVAP noted in its 2012 report, this approach is insufficient as research shows the two populations are significantly dissimilar regarding two additional characteristics, education and mobility.

The new methodology outlined in the research note leveraged statistical modeling, which accounts for the primary factors influencing registration and participation rates, and examines how the rates of the ADM compare with that part of the CVAP that most closely resembles the ADM.

After adjustments are made to the CVAP data based on age, gender, education, employment, mobility, marital status, race, region of the U.S. and family status, ADM members are nearly 7.92 percentage points more likely to be registered to vote and 2.39 percentage points more likely to vote than their CVAP counterparts.

The gaps arise most notably from differences in the effect of mobility; CVAP members who changed residences within 12 months preceding the 2012 General Election were significantly less likely to register. By contrast for the ADM population, changing duty station within the same timeframe had almost no association with registering to vote. A potential explanation for the difference in the relationship between mobility and voter behavior is that mobile military members have access to FVAP.gov and other Department of Defense voting assistance resources.

The research note details other potential influencing factors and discusses the limitations of the new statistical technique used and resulting analysis. You can find it at www.fvap.gov/info/reports-surveys/search-reports-surveys (search using the keywords "research note").

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If you experience any issues or have questions, FVAP's call center is available at 1-800-438-VOTE (8683), DSN 425-1584, or at vote@fvap.gov. Toll-free phone numbers from 67 countries are listed at FVAP.gov. Find us on Facebook at /DoDFVAP and follow @FVAP on Twitter.