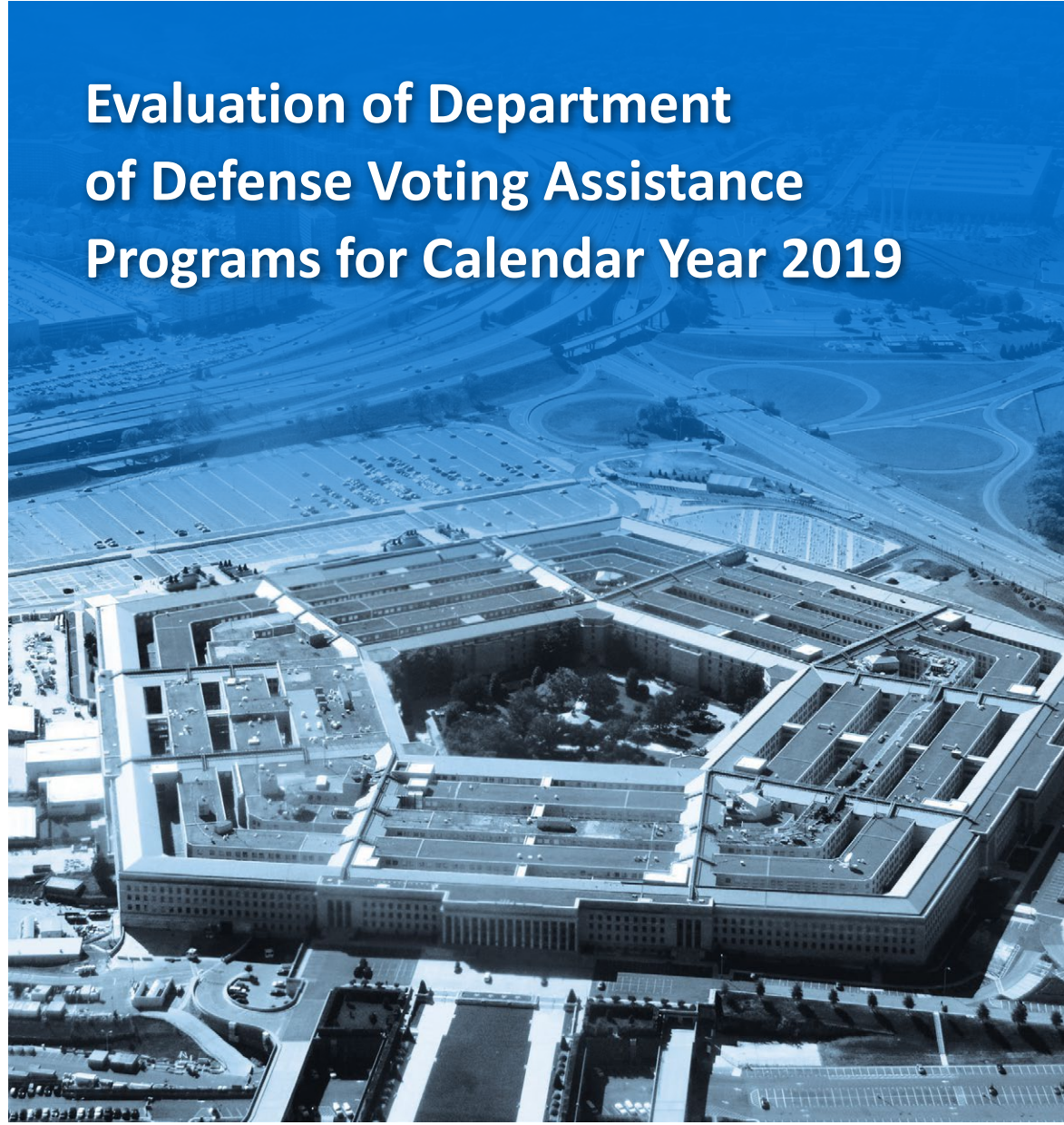




INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Defense

MARCH 31, 2020



Evaluation of Department of Defense Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2019

INTEGRITY ★ INDEPENDENCE ★ EXCELLENCE





Results in Brief

Evaluation of Department of Defense Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2019

March 31, 2020

Objective

In accordance with the requirements of section 1566, title 10, United States Code (10 U.S.C § 1566 [2014]), as amended, the objective of our evaluation was to report on:

- the effectiveness of voting assistance programs during the preceding calendar year; and
- the level of compliance with the voting assistance programs of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps during the preceding calendar year.

Additionally, we determined whether the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff complied with the requirements of DoD Instruction 1000.04, "Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)."¹

Background

Public Law 99-410, "The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act" (UOCAVA), as modified by the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act and other provisions, states that the right to vote is important to Service members, their eligible family members, and other eligible overseas voters. The law establishes voting assistance programs intended to help these absentee voters register, vote, and have their vote counted.

¹ DoD Instruction 1000.04, "Federal Voting Assistance Program," September 13, 2012, (Incorporating Change 1, December 1, 2017). The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness updated DoD Instruction 1000.04 on November 12, 2019. The updated Instruction retained the requirements relevant to the objectives of this evaluation and did not affect our conclusions or recommendations.

Background (cont'd)

Another law, 10 U.S.C. § 1566 requires the DoD Office of Inspector General (OIG) to complete an annual report by March 31st, and the Inspectors General of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, to annually:

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

Service Voting Assistance Program Report Summaries

We report on the annual assessments of the Military Services voting assistance programs for 2019 submitted by the Inspectors General of the Services. We found that each of the Service IGs applied the measures of performance and effect, illustrated Service coordination with the FVAP office, and described distribution of voting materials and contact with eligible voters. In addition, the Service IGs applied a standardized checklist for their 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.

Each Service IG found their Service's voting assistance program to be compliant with the requirements of UOCAVA and DoD Instruction 1000.04 and generally effective.

- The Army Inspector General reported that the Army voting assistance program was effective. The report stated that 26 of 30 (87 percent) commands inspected developed redundant systems to either hand-deliver or electronically deliver the "Voter Registration and Absentee Ballot Request: Federal Post Card Application" to eligible voters. In addition, the Army Inspector General reported that 26 of the 30 voting assistance offices and 193 of 205 units (94 percent) voting assistance programs were compliant with DoD Instruction 1000.04 and Army Regulation 608-20, "Army Voting Assistance Program," regarding delivery of absentee ballot requests.



Results in Brief

Evaluation of Department of Defense Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2019

Summaries (cont'd)

- The Naval Inspector General concluded that the Navy voting assistance program was effective. The report stated that 26 of 32 (81 percent) major commands overseeing all Navy units were compliant with DoD Instruction 1000.04 and OPNAVINST 1742.1C; 5 of 32 (16 percent) commands were partially compliant; and 1 of 32 (3 percent) commands were ineffective. The one noncompliant command is a small command, comprised of three units Navy-wide, and the report stated that the command was standing up a voting assistance program.
- The Air Force Inspector General reported that the Air Force voting assistance program was effective. The Air Force Inspector General reported inspecting 100 percent of reportable units (156 organizations), and 15 deficiencies were reported in only 9 of the 156 organizations inspected. The Inspector General concluded that the Air Force voting assistance program complied with Federal statute and Service guidance.
- The Marine Corps Inspector General reported that the Marine Corps voting assistance program was effective. The Marine Corps Inspector General based its conclusion on the results of 152 inspections, quarterly voting reports, and measurement of performance metrics. The report states that inspectors made on-the-spot corrections with immediate corrective training for identified minor deficiencies. Inspected commands developed and reported corrective actions to address all moderate deficiencies. The report concluded that the voting assistance program complied with Federal statute and DoD policy.

Findings

While each Service IG found their Service's voting assistance program to be compliant and generally effective, we also reviewed compliance with DoD Instruction 1000.04 by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Office of the Secretary of Defense receives voting assistance support from the FVAP office, whose processes and procedures generally provided eligible voters and their family members access to voting information. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is responsible for voting support throughout the Office of the Secretary of Defense through the FVAP office. The FVAP office coordinates with the Services, election officials, eligible voters, and Congress, to ensure that Service members, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully exercise that right. The FVAP office takes several actions to comply with DoD Instruction 1000.04.

- **Service engagement** – Coordination with voting assistance officers and the FVAP office, and the availability of the website, ensure that voting tools and resources, such as absentee voting forms, materials, training, and guidance, are available for eligible voters.
- **Election official engagement** – Engagement with state and local election officials raise awareness of their responsibilities under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), and provide them with the information and tools needed to assist voters covered by the UOCAVA.



Results in Brief

Evaluation of Department of Defense Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2019

Findings (cont'd)

- **Direct voter assistance to eligible voters** – Voting assistance officers, the FVAP.gov website, a voter call center, and a comprehensive voter assistance guide are all direct voter assistance.
- **Research and evaluation** – Analysis of post-election surveys and voting assistance officer metrics identify trends and any obstacles to voting.
- **Congressional reporting** – Annual reports summarize post-election survey results on the effectiveness, oversight, and compliance of FVAP efforts, and the corresponding assistance provided to eligible voters.

As a result of actions by the FVAP office, eligible voters have the information necessary to participate in the voting process. DoD organizations and leaders also have the necessary tools to ensure access to and comply with Federal law and DoD Instruction 1000.04.

However, the Joint Staff did not have a written voting policy, as required by DoD Instruction 1000.04. The absence of a written policy occurred because responsible officials on the Joint Staff believed that personnel assigned to the Joint Staff received voting assistance support from their respective Service voting assistance officers. However, we found that the voting assistance support provided by their respective Service voting assistance officers only occurs when Service members initially arrive and are

on-boarded. In addition, the Joint Staff voting assistance portfolio manager did not know who the Service voting representatives were and was unable to confirm that Service members assigned to the Joint Staff and their eligible family members had access to Federal voting information and assistance. As a result, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff cannot ensure the Joint Staff meets the intent of DoD Instruction 1000.04.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Director of the Joint Staff develop and implement a written voting assistance policy to support Service personnel assigned to the Joint Staff and their family members, including those in deployed, dispersed, and tenant organizations.

Management Comments and Our Response

We did not receive comments on the draft of this report, and we needed to issue the final report in accord with a statutory deadline. Therefore, the recommendation is open and unresolved. We request that the Director of the Joint Staff provide comments in response to the final report by April 30, 2020.

Please see the Recommendations Table on the next page for the status of the recommendation.

Recommendations Table

Management	Recommendations Unresolved	Recommendations Resolved	Recommendations Closed
Joint Staff Director	Yes		

Note: The following categories are used to describe agency management’s comments to individual recommendations.

- **Unresolved** – Management has not agreed to implement the recommendation or has not proposed actions that will address the recommendation.
- **Resolved** – Management agreed to implement the recommendation or has proposed actions that will address the underlying finding that generated the recommendation.
- **Closed** – OIG verified that the agreed upon corrective actions were implemented.



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

March 31, 2020

**MEMORANDUM FOR DIRECTOR OF THE JOINT STAFF
FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT: Evaluation of Department of Defense Voting Assistance Programs for
Calendar Year 2019 (Report No. DODIG-2020-076)**

This final report provides the results of the DoD Office of Inspector General's evaluation. We previously provided copies of the draft report and requested written comments on the recommendations. We did not receive comments in time for inclusion in this report. Therefore, the recommendation remains open and unresolved. We request that the Director of the Joint Staff provide signed comments in response to the final report by April 30, 2020.

DoD Instruction 7650.03 requires that all recommendations be resolved promptly. We conducted this evaluation in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation.

If you have any questions or would like to meet to discuss the evaluation, please contact me at [REDACTED]. We appreciate the cooperation and assistance received during the evaluation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn R. Hantz".

Carolyn R. Hantz
Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations
Programs, Combatant Commands, and
Overseas Contingency Operations

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Introduction

Objective

In accordance with the requirements of section 1566, title 10, United States Code (10 U.S.C § 1566 [2014]), as amended, the objective of our evaluation was to report on:

- the effectiveness of voting assistance programs during the preceding calendar year; and
- the level of compliance with the voting assistance programs of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps during the preceding calendar year.

Additionally, we determined whether the Office of the Secretary of Defense and Joint Chiefs of Staff complied with the requirements of DoD Instruction 1000.04.²

Background

Public Law 99-410, “The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act” (UOCAVA), as modified by the “Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act,” and other provisions, states that the right to vote is important to Service members, their eligible family members, and other eligible overseas voters.³ UOCAVA, as amended, establishes various voting assistance programs intended to help voters who are unable to vote in person, register, vote, and have their vote counted through the absentee voting process. UOCAVA applies to U.S. citizens who are active members of the Uniformed Services, the Merchant Marines, 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 who are absent from the place of residence where they are otherwise qualified to vote.

Federal Responsibilities of the Secretary of Defense 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.⁴ President Reagan issued Executive Order 12642 in 1988, naming the Secretary of Defense as the

² DoD Instruction 1000.04, “Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP),” September 13, 2012, (Incorporating Change 1, December 1, 2017).

³ 52 U.S.C § 20301; defined as “absent uniformed services voter” and “overseas voter” in 52 U.S.C § 20310.

⁴ 52 U.S.C. § 20301.

“Presidential designee” and authorizing the Secretary to delegate UOCAVA responsibilities within the DoD. As the Presidential designee, the Secretary of Defense is tasked with 11 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 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 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 Services overseas voters and a program to notify these voters 90, 60, and 30 days prior to each election for Federal office.⁵

Secretary of Defense Delegated Presidential Designee Authority in DoD Instruction 1000.04

The Secretary of Defense delegated responsibilities under UOCAVA to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. Until November 12, 2019, DoD Instruction 1000.04 further delegated UOCAVA responsibilities to the Director, DoD Human Resources Activity, and directly assigned responsibility for FVAP procedures to the Director of FVAP, a subordinate Director within the DoD Human Resources Activity.⁶ When this evaluation commenced, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness assigned the FVAP Director as our point of contact through the end of the evaluation.

⁵ 52 U.S.C. §§ 20301 and 20305.

⁶ DoD Instruction 1000.04, “Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP),” September 13, 2012, (Incorporating Change 1, December 1, 2017), enclosure 3, “FVAP Procedures.”

In November 2019, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness updated DoD Instruction 1000.04, realigning the delegation of responsibilities under UOCAVA to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (for policy guidance, direction, and oversight), and the Director of the Defense Personnel and Family Support Center (for policy support and operational responsibilities).⁷ The FVAP Director said that while the updated Instruction shifted his office under the Director of the Defense Personnel and Family Support Center, and the DoD Instruction no longer explicitly mentions the FVAP Director or FVAP office, the responsibilities assigned to his office had not changed. According to the FVAP Director, when exercising these duties, the DoD FVAP office coordinates with the Departments of Defense, Justice, State, Commerce, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services. 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 Secretary of Defense Carries Out Presidential Designee Responsibilities Through the FVAP Office

As the Presidential Designee for the FVAP, the Secretary of Defense carries out his responsibility through the FVAP office. The FVAP office works to ensure that military personnel, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens are aware of the right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so from anywhere in the world. The FVAP office developed and maintains an online portal to inform these groups about voter registration and absentee ballot procedures.⁸

Senior officials in the DoD FVAP office determined that two metrics provide the clearest indicators of Service voting assistance program activity and implementation: the number of Federal post card applications distributed and the number of personnel who sought assistance from their voting assistance officer. The DoD FVAP defined these indicators in September 2017.

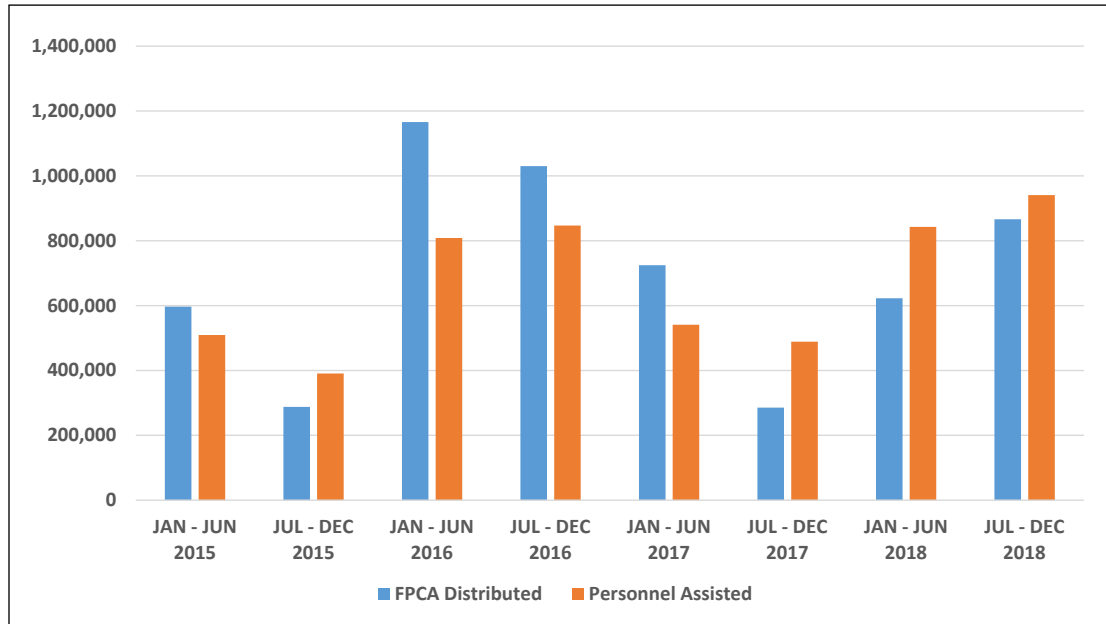
- **Number of federal post card applications distributed.** “Distribution of forms: any verifiable method to provide a form, whether it be hard copy, via email, or referral to FVAP.gov.”
- **Number of personnel who sought assistance.** “Personnel assisted: actively assisting a voter with the Federal Post Card Application, Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot, National Mail Voter Registration Form, or general voting information through in-person, telephonic, or electronic assistance.”

⁷ DoD Instruction 1000.04, “Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP),” November 12, 2019, section 2, “Responsibilities.”

⁸ 52 U.S.C. § 20305.

The Services began collecting and reporting data on these two metrics in 2015. As shown in Figure 1, voting assistance program activity increased during the 2016 Presidential election and the 2018 Senate and House election cycles.

Figure 1. Combined Service Performance Measures Show Higher Utilization During Election Cycles



Source: Data from DoD FVAP office.

The UOCAVA requires the FVAP office to report information specified in the law to the President and Congress not later than March 31st of each year. The report includes descriptions of Military Department voter registration assistance programs and their use, absentee ballot collection and delivery, cooperation between states and the U.S. Government, and assessments of absent Uniformed Services and overseas voter registration and participation.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff Advise the National Command Authority as a Component of the DoD

The Joint Chiefs of Staff consist of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau. The Chairman (or the Vice Chairman in the Chairman's absence) heads the collective body of the Joint Staff, sets the agenda, and presides over meetings of the service chiefs.

Military Service Inspector General Reports

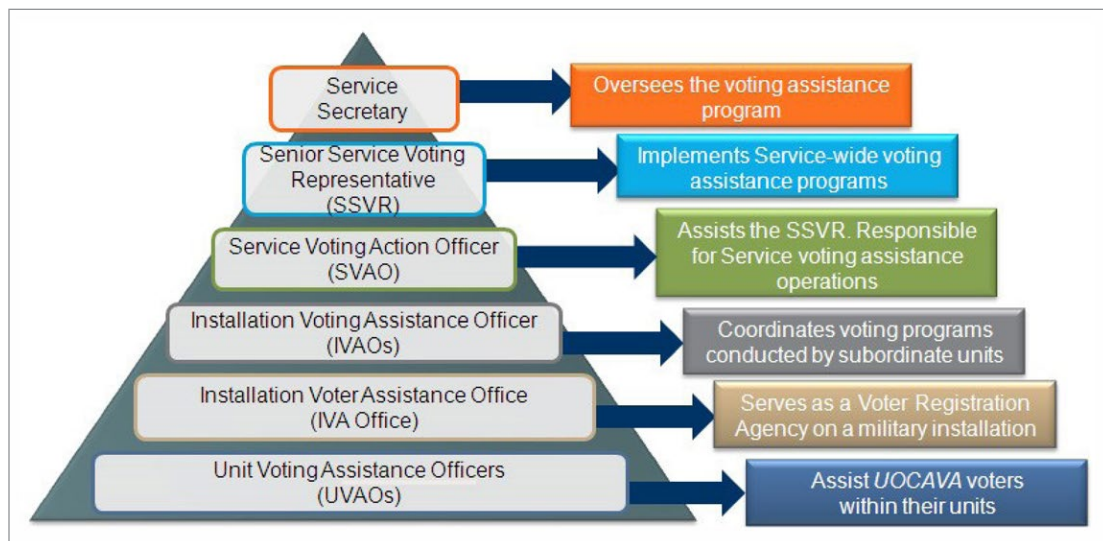
Section 1566, title 10, United States Code (2014), defines voting assistance programs as the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) carried out under the UOCAVA and any similar program, on behalf of the Secretary of Defense as the Presidential designee. This section of the statute also requires the Inspector General (IG) of the DoD to complete an annual report on the effectiveness of voting assistance programs during the preceding calendar year by March 31st, and the IGs of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, to annually:

- review the compliance and effectiveness of their Service’s voting assistance program, and
- report the results to the DoD Office of Inspector General (OIG) in time to be reflected in the DoD OIG’s March 31st report to Congress.

DoD Instruction 1000.04 requires the IGs of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps to submit their reports assessing voting assistance program efforts to the DoD OIG each year by January 31st.⁹

DoD Instruction 1000.04 also requires the designation, in writing, of personnel at all levels to manage the respective Service 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.

Figure 2. Service Voting Assistance Program Key Members



Source: FVAP 2018 Report to Congress.

⁹ As a result of this compressed timeframe, our ability to review, test, or examine the Service IG reports was limited. While we reviewed the Service IG’s 2019 Voting Assistance Program reports for consistency and reasonableness, we did not validate their data and conclusions.

Military Service Voting Assistance Programs Were Compliant and Generally Effective

We reviewed the annual assessments of the Military Services voting assistance programs for 2019 submitted by the IGs of the Services. Each Service IG found the voting assistance program to be compliant with the requirements of UOCAVA and DoDI 1000.04 and generally effective. Each of the Service IGs:

- applied the measures of performance and effect developed by the FVAP office (see Appendix B);
- illustrated Service coordination with the FVAP office, including routine input of voting data to the FVAP.gov website;
- described, with data, distribution of voting materials and contact with eligible voters; and
- applied a standardized checklist for their 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.

A summary of the reports by the Service IGs follows.

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. The criteria used by the Army IG for its compliance testing included 10 U.S.C. § 1566, DoD Instruction 1000.04, and Army Regulation 608-20.¹⁰ The Army IG report compiled inspection results from eight senior-level commands responsible for 18 installations, including 205 units, 30 installation voting assistance offices, and 1,271 unit voting assistance officers. The report also includes information about the voting program at the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, which supports enlistees.¹¹ The Army IG report highlighted the following Army accomplishments.

- The Army IG rated 26 of 30 (87 percent) of the installation voting assistance offices, and 193 of 205 units (94 percent), compliant with the applicable regulations cited above. Compliant commands developed redundant systems to either hand-deliver or electronically deliver voter registration and absentee ballot requests, and federal post card applications to eligible voters.

¹⁰ Army Regulation 608-20, "Army Voting Assistance Program," February 5, 2019.

¹¹ Department of the Army Office of the Inspector General report, "Calendar Year 2019 Annual Report of the U.S. Army Compliance with Department of Defense Federal Voting Assistance Program Requirements," January 9, 2020.

- Most command voting assistance officers continued to increase awareness of the Army voting assistance program through distribution of voting material and communication. Specifically, using face-to-face service and by electronic and social media (such as installation and Army websites, email, electronic newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest).
- Command voting assistance officers updated the DoD FVAP office monthly using the FVAP database. The Army voting assistance office tracked voting assistance officer updates and notified them if they are 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/dependents) and the type of information provided (ballots, absentee ballots, and general information).
- The Army used a voting assistance officer 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 accessed voting information through local installation websites.
- The Army Recruiting Command reported that recruitment offices and Headquarters personnel were aware of the policies and received voter registration training in order to carry out voter registration assistance. Additionally, the Recruiting Center Commanders course included a mandatory training module focused on voter registration. The Recruiting Center Commanders Course trained Army recruiters to ask potential enlistees if they were registered to vote as a part of their interview technique training. The Army Recruiting Command reported quarterly to the Army voting assistance office on the voting-related support provided.

The Army IG reported that 26 of 30 (87 percent) commands developed redundant systems to either hand-deliver or electronically deliver Voter Registration and Absentee Ballot Request: Federal Post Card Applications (Form SF-76) to eligible voters.¹² In addition, the Army IG rated 26 of 30 (87 percent) of the installation voting assistance offices, and 193 of 205 units (94 percent), compliant with the applicable regulations cited above.

¹² Standard Form 76 - Voter Registration and Absentee Ballot Request: Federal Post Card Application.

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

The Naval IG concluded that the Navy voting assistance program was compliant and effective.¹³ The criteria used by the Naval IG for compliance testing included 10 U.S.C. § 1566, DoD Instruction 1000.04, and OPNAVINST 1742.1C.¹⁴ The Naval IG evaluated the 32 major commands overseeing all Navy units. The Naval IG report highlighted the following Navy accomplishments.

- OPNAVINST 1742.1C and the Navy's Voting Action Plan clearly laid out the requirements and deadlines for distributing the Federal Post Card Application. All unit and installation voting assistance officers were reminded of the Federal Post Card Application distribution requirement by the Service voting assistance officer in monthly newsletters and by individual contact. Voting assistance officers logged distribution metrics on the FVAP.gov website.
- Recruiters provided each prospective enlistee with access to the national mail voter registration.¹⁵ Recruiters tracked the number of individuals assisted on a local tracking form and maintained voter registration information for two years.
- Installation voting assistance offices maintained hard copies and have access to electronic copies of voting assistance materials to support all elections. Voting assistance officers ensured enough forms were on-hand year-round to register voters, request absentee ballots, and complete changes-of-address to support deployments and permanent change of station moves. Commands input voting information to the FVAP.gov website quarterly and higher headquarters and Navy voting program managers monitored the input for accountability.
- The Service voting assistance office participated in monthly teleconferences with the FVAP office, verifying quarterly input of metrics by installation and unit voting assistance officers to the FVAP.gov website. The Navy voting assistance office also coordinated website inputs with the FVAP office, ensured that all Navy documents on FVAP.gov were up-to-date, and maintained contact information for the 71 installation voting assistance offices.
- Unit voting assistance officers participated in sailor in-processing at all commands. Voting assistance officers also sent installation-wide e-mails identifying unit voting points-of-contact and providing required forms. The service voting assistance officer sent voting assistance officers

¹³ Department of the Navy Office of the Naval Inspector General report, "2019 Navy Voting Assistance Program Assessment," January 30, 2020.

¹⁴ OPNAVINST 1742.1C, "Navy Voting Assistance Program," February 5, 2016.

¹⁵ DD Form 2645, "Voter Registration Information," November 2008.

monthly voting newsletters and guidance. Service members had access to the e-mail address of their local voting assistance officers on the FVAP.gov website.

Overall, the Naval IG reported that:

- 26 of 32 commands (81 percent) were found to be compliant and effective, while some discrepancies were noted.
- 5 of 32 commands (16 percent) were found to be partially compliant. Of those, the Naval IG reported one command as ineffective while the remaining four commands were at least partially effective. However, voting assistance materials were available to individuals assigned to these commands online through the Federal FVAP website (FVAP.gov), other informational applications, and access to installation voting assistance offices.
- 1 command (3 percent) was non-compliant and ineffective. However, the command—Navy Reserve Forces Command—was standing up a voting assistance program, which includes assigning a voting assistance officer. The Navy Reserve Forces Command is a small command consisting of only three units Navy-wide.

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 is effective in assisting eligible voters and complied with 10 U.S.C. § 1566, DoD Instruction 1000.04, and Marine Corps Order 1742.1B.¹⁶ The Marine Corps IG based this conclusion on the results of 152 inspections conducted at various levels of command during 2019, including a re-inspection of a command previously assessed as ineffective.¹⁷ The Marine Corps analyzed submitted metrics and provided a complete analysis of the voting assistance from data associated with each Marine Corps installation and individual commands. The Marine Corps IG report identified the following accomplishments.

- 83,727 personnel received training by either the on-line voting assistance officer training courses on FVAP.gov, annual unit voter awareness training, unit safety stand-downs, or unit deployment training at the Service academies, Marine Corps recruit training depots, Marine Corps officer candidate school, or Marine units.

¹⁶ Marine Corps Order 1742.1B, "Voting Assistance Program," April 1, 2013.

¹⁷ Department of the Navy Deputy Naval Inspector General for the Marine Corps Matters/Inspector General of the Marine Corps report, "Annual Assessment of the Marine Corps Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) for Calendar Year (CY) 2019," January 24, 2020.

- The Marine Corps officer candidate school, the basic school, Service academies, and the Marine Corps recruit training depots included the requirement to emphasize and advertise the Marine Corps voting assistance program in their training curriculum. All students received voting assistance during their training cycle.
- Deploying units conducted pre-deployment briefs prior to deployment. All deploying Marines, their families, and or other personnel received voting information and assistance on completing the federal post card application prior to embarkation. Marine Corps units also assigned voting assistance officers throughout the deployment to provide voting assistance when required.
- Marine Corps recruiting command and all Marine Corps recruiters received FVAP voting assistance training. Recruiters assisted each contacted eligible citizen, whether a prospective enlistee or not.
- Voting assistance officers maintained an adequate supply of forms, posters, banners, and other voting materials to support all elections. The Marine Corps encouraged units to use the FVAP online assistant when completing forms, and saw a 15 percent increase in the use of electronic forms in 2019. The Marine Corps publications distribution system and the FVAP.gov website made Voting outreach materials available to all units.
- The Marine Corps voting assistance officer network used email, voice-mail, and unit social media websites. Voters could take advantage of any of these methods to communicate with voting assistance officers and obtain current voting information or voter materials. FVAP.gov and state election office websites were other sources available to potential voters.
- The Marine Corps voting assistance program required supervisors to annotate performance as the voting assistance officers in the individual's performance appraisals. The Marine Corps IG verified awareness and compliance of this requirement through inspections.

According to the Marine Corps IG report, during visits to units inspectors made on-the-spot corrections and gave immediate corrective training for identified minor discrepancies. Following site visits, inspected commands developed and reported corrective action plans to the IG addressing all moderate discrepancies (findings).

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

On January 31, 2020, the Air Force IG issued “Air Force Federal Voting Assistance Program Inspection Report - FY19.”¹⁸ The Air Force IG reported that the Air Force voting assistance program was effective and complied with 10 U.S.C. § 1566, DoD Instruction 1000.04, and Air Force Regulation 36-3107.¹⁹ The Air Force IG report highlighted the following Air Force accomplishments.

- Air Force installation voting assistance offices, in coordination with personnel readiness offices, included absentee voting information into mandatory pre- and post-deployment briefings. Installation voting assistance offices reminded voters to update their address on the federal post card application and provide Service and DoD voting contact information, allowing access to continued support throughout deployment.
- The Air Force program manager coordinated operational guidance to and training for recruitment personnel with the Headquarters Air Force Recruiting service. Routine communication via email, telephone conferences, and in-person meetings kept new recruiting personnel updated on policies and responsibilities in spite of frequent turnover. Recruiters gave each prospective enlistee the Federal Post Card Application, tracked all assisted individuals on a local tracking form, and maintained voter registration information for two years.
- Installation voting assistance offices maintained hard copy, and access to electronic copies, of voting assistance materials to support all elections. Voting assistance officers maintained forms year-round to register voters, request absentee ballots, and complete changes-of-address to support deployments and permanent change of station moves.
- All 73 installation voting assistance offices reported location, phone number and email address to the Air Force program manager. The Air Force program manager published installation voting assistance offices contact information on the FVAP.gov website.
- Program manager used the Air Force MyPers messaging system to generate a consistent Air Force-wide message for the special elections in 2019 and voting issues leading up to 2020 state and federal election cycle. Additionally, the installation voting assistance offices identified points of contact for voting assistance in base-wide emails, flyers, posters, signs, and on the FVAP.gov website, installation voting webpage, and social media sites.

¹⁸ Department of the Air Force Office of the Air Force Inspector General report, “Air Force Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) Inspection Report-FY 19,” January 30, 2020.

¹⁹ Air Force Instruction 36-3107, “Voting Assistance Program,” May 1, 2019.

- The Air Force voting action plan outlined an “armed forces voters week” and “absentee voters week” that the Air Force conducted in accordance with the FVAP election cycle voting action plan. The voting action plan also included instructions on how to register and order materials on the Air Force publishing website.
- The Air Force IG reported inspecting 100 percent of reportable units (156 organizations). The report highlighted a 135-percent increase in the number of personnel assisted in 2018 compared to 2016, and a 12-percent increase in the number of forms distributed, such as the Federal Post Card Application, Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot, and National Voter Registration. The IG concluded that the Air Force voting assistance program complied with Federal statute and Service guidance.

Finding

The Office of the Secretary of Defense Generally Provided Voting Information to Eligible Voters and Their Family Members; However, the Joint Staff Lacked a Written Voting Assistance Policy

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) receives voting assistance support from the FVAP office, whose processes and procedures generally provided eligible voters and their family members access to voting information. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is responsible for voting support throughout the OSD and executes the responsibility through the DoD FVAP office. Specifically, the FVAP office complied with DoD Instruction 1000.04 by carrying out:

- Service engagement, through voting assistance officers and the FVAP.gov website;
- election official engagement to raise awareness on compliance with Federal law;
- direct voter assistance of eligible voters;
- research and evaluation, through analysis of post-election surveys and voting assistance officer metrics; and
- congressional reporting of post-election survey results on the effectiveness of the assistance provided to eligible voters.

As a result of actions by the FVAP office, eligible voters have the information necessary to participate in the voting process. DoD organizations and leaders also have the necessary tools to ensure access to and compliance with Federal law and both versions of DoD Instruction 1000.04.

However, the Joint Staff did not have a written voting policy, as required by DoD Instruction 1000.04. The absence of a written policy occurred because the Joint Staff voting assistance representative believed that personnel assigned to the Joint Staff received support from Service voting representatives. However, we found that Service support only occurs during in-processing. In addition, the Joint Staff voting assistance portfolio manager did not know who the Service voting representatives were and was unable to confirm that Service members assigned to the Joint Staff and eligible family members had access to Federal voting information and assistance. As a result, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff cannot ensure the Joint Staff meets the intent of DoD Instruction 1000.04 to develop and maintain written voting-related policies.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense Generally Provided Access to Voting Information to Eligible Voters and Their Family Members

OSD processes and procedures generally provided eligible voters and their family members access to voting information. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is responsible for voting support throughout the OSD staff and executes the responsibility through the DoD FVAP office.

FVAP Office Processes and Procedures Complied With DoD Instruction 1000.04

The FVAP office coordinates with the Services to ensure that Service members, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully exercise that right. The FVAP office established policies and procedures that comply with DoD Instruction 1000.04.

Service Engagement – The FVAP Office Coordinates With Service Voting Assistance Representatives

The FVAP office continually monitors and enhances support to voting assistance officers to train and educate them on their responsibilities to voters. In 2013, the FVAP commissioned a study to better align its strategy and operations to reflect its core mission of assisting military voters, their families, and overseas citizens.²⁰ The key findings of the study included:

- FVAP relies heavily on intermediaries, such as voting assistance officers, to reach UOCAVA voters;
- FVAP needs to: 1) create a clearer, shared understanding of its mission; 2) build trust and strengthen its relationships with its stakeholders; and 3) embrace a culture and principles of effectiveness; and
- FVAP has taken substantial steps to become more comprehensive with its voter assistance support, improve its relationship with stakeholders, and embrace effectiveness. For example, FVAP reoriented its mission, reorganized its operations, and began providing more hands-on voting assistance.

In response, on October 15, 2014, FVAP developed voting assistance program metrics. The FVAP office coordinated with each Service on VAP performance metrics and reporting requirements, as required by DoD Instruction 1000.04. According to the FVAP Director, the current FVAP measures of effectiveness and performance reflect adjustments to the 2014 metrics based on research

²⁰ Rand Corporation study and report, "The FVAP and the Road Ahead," 2015.

provided by the study, combined with ongoing assessment of voting assistance by the FVAP office. Since January 1, 2015, FVAP prescribed the quarterly collection of data elements via the FVAP.gov website. (See Appendix B for Service voting assistance program performance metrics and reporting requirements.) Service voting assistance officers are required to input data, such as metrics at the unit and installation levels, concerning the number of voters assisted with voter registration, absentee ballots, and the associated materials distributed to assist with voter registration and absentee ballots, to the portal no later than 15 days after the end of each quarter.

We received a demonstration and corresponding statistics reflecting that Service voting assistance officers are providing performance metrics as required by DoD Instruction 1000.04. The information showed comparisons of what voting assistance officers reported, the number of voting assistance officers that were and should be assigned to each unit, how many voters were assisted, and the quantity of voting assistance materials distributed. In those instances where command assigned too few voting assistance officers or distributed an insufficient amount of voting material, the FVAP office reports the deficiency to the Senior Service voting assistance officer to correct the deficiencies.

In its 2017 report to Congress, FVAP reported that it made improvements to many of its resources, workshops, and research efforts in preparation for the 2018 election cycle. Obstacles to UOCAVA voter success varied depending on the voter's location, access to resources, training opportunities, and the availability of voter assistance. To reduce these obstacles, FVAP reported progress in the following key areas:

- **Key absentee voting forms** – FVAP modified the registration and ballot request form and absentee backup ballot using a combination of form development best practices, focus groups, and public comment.
- **Voting assistance guide** – FVAP realigned guide language to reflect changes to absentee voting forms, absentee voting instructions, and state and local election official contact information.
- **FVAP.gov website** – FVAP enhanced site usability based on web analytics data and key site achievement metrics such as site visits and the number of form downloads.
- **Training for voting assistance officers** – FVAP changed training content to better align all training modules and platforms.
- **Installation voting assistance officer workshops** – FVAP instituted this new training to guide voting assistance officers with the establishment of voting assistance offices that are compliant with UOCAVA and Service instructions.

- **Customer service metrics** – FVAP analyzed metrics to determine trends among voters, election officials, and Service members submitting inquiries to the FVAP call center.

FVAP's efforts in 2017 effectively set the foundation for execution of the voting assistance program across DoD for 2018 and beyond.

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. 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 the 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 alerts that FVAP 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 FVAP is sending to voters to that UOCAVA voters are receiving the data they need and to provide any needed updates to FVAP.
- **Training** – The FVAP office created an online training module, accessible from anywhere, for election officials interested in learning more about the UOCAVA absentee voting process. The online training module includes an introduction to UOCAVA and responses to frequently asked questions about the UOCAVA absentee voting process.
- **Grant programs** – FVAP 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 UOCAVA voters. The grant program allows FVAP to test a wide 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 improving services provided to military and overseas voters.²¹ The resulting data from the grant program helped identify improvements to the voting experience for military and overseas voters.

²¹ 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.

- **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, designed specifically for election officials, including infographics, fact sheets, and videos that election officials are encouraged to republish.²²
- **Policy briefs** – The FVAP office tracks and researches policy developments that may have implications for military and overseas voters. Two recent policy briefs address voters who have never resided in the United States and automatic voter registration.²³ The FVAP office shares the potential impacts on UOCAVA voters with state election officials and legislators.

These resources provide state and local election officials with some of the information and tools needed to assist voters covered by UOCAVA and are all located on the FVAP.gov website. We reviewed the data, including 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 the UOCAVA. 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.gov Website

The FVAP office provides direct voter assistance through the FVAP.gov website, a voter call center, and a comprehensive voter assistance guide. The FVAP.gov website contains information for all personnel involved in the voting process, from voters to voting assistance officials. The FVAP.gov website has a more than one in five “conversion” rate, meaning visitors to the site perform a desired action, such as steps toward registering and requesting a ballot or using the backup ballot if necessary.

²² 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 email.

²³ FVAP refers to U.S. citizens who are 18 years or older and were born abroad, but have never resided in the U.S., 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 for the selective service. FVAP estimates that in 2016 approximately 11,500 registered voters had never resided in the United States. As of 2019, 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 within 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.

The FVAP office prepares a Federal VAP guide, with the assistance of the Secretaries of State (State voting officials), Directors of Elections and their staff, the Uniformed Service branches, 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 2020-2021 guide, the FVAP office reported working closely with state election officials through several rounds of coordination. For the 2020 election year, the guide reflects FVAP's continued focus on federal election eligibility and consistent efforts to streamline content to better support voting assistance officers. As part of this effort, FVAP changed the Federal Post Card Application and the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot. Activated National Guard members on State orders were removed from both forms, as this group is not eligible to use FVAP resources under federal law. The update of both forms fixed an element of non-compliance and confusion.

The guide also serves as a catalog of the state-specific processes and regulations that military and overseas voters should follow to register to vote and cast an absentee ballot. The FVAP published the 2020-2021 voting assistance guide in October 2019 and posted it on the FVAP.gov portal (website).

Our review of the FVAP office's direct voter assistance efforts determined that these efforts assist voter's understanding of their right to vote and that they had access to the required information to vote, especially through access to the FVAP.gov website. For example, voters can get their voting questions answered through local voting assistance officers or a voter 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.gov website, satisfying the requirements of DoD Instruction 1000.04.

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

Research and evaluation, such as post-election surveys and voting assistance officer metrics, 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 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.gov website no later than 15 days after the end of each quarter. (See Appendix B for an example of voting assistance program performance metrics and reporting requirements).

The FVAP also conducts post-Election Voting Surveys of the active duty military, 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, which are both required by DoD Instruction 1000.04, and determined that research and evaluation efforts improved the voting process, based on the FVAP office analysis of post-election surveys, voting assistance officer metrics, and VAO quarterly input, along with Service and DoD OIG reporting to improve the process. The FVAP office reports on improvements and changes to enhance program effectiveness annually to the President and Congress.²⁴ All of the information, including reports to Congress, surveys, and general research reports, is available on the FVAP.gov website.

For example, in the 2016 post-election report, the FVAP office completed a statistical analysis of active duty military voter registration and participation rates. The process adjusted the demographic profile of the citizen voting age to be similar to the military population, enabling greater insight into how the registration and participation rates compare. The analysis showed a decrease in voting registration and participation rates for active duty military from 2012 to 2016. The study attributed this to interest in the election and demographic shifts, and called out the need for further research. However, the analysis also showed that the rate of active duty military absentee voting were similar to previous years, and rate of those who received requested ballots increased.

Congressional Reporting – The FVAP Office Submits Annual Reports to Congress

The UOCAVA requires the FVAP office to submit a report to Congress following each Presidential election on the effectiveness, oversight, and compliance of FVAP efforts.²⁵ The report includes findings from FVAP’s post-election surveys and provides an assessment of activities supporting annual elections for Federal offices.

²⁴ 52 U.S.C. § 20308(b) requires the Presidential designee to submit an annual report on the effectiveness of activities and use of certain procedures to the President and Congress not later than March 31st of each year.

²⁵ 52 U.S.C. § 20308.

Examples from the report completed post-2018 election demonstrate the impact of FVAP efforts, by allowing FVAP to identify trends over time to Congress and President. The following are examples of what the FVAP office included in its 2018 report to Congress.

- Voter registration rate for all active duty military was 61 percent and the participation rate for voting was 26 percent.
- In 2018, three quarters of all active duty personnel who voted used absentee ballot, which is a 7-percent increase in active duty military using absentee methods, compared to 2014.
- Active duty military 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 if they did not receive assistance. According to FVAP reporting to Congress, this finding has been consistent across the last four General Elections (2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018) and speaks to the importance and effectiveness of efforts by FVAP and the Services to raise awareness of available resources and provide direct assistance.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense Complied with the Requirements of DoD Instruction 1000.04

We reviewed the FVAP.gov website, which contains survey results that the FVAP office routinely reported to the President and Congress. The FVAP.gov 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.

As a result of actions by the FVAP office, including engaging with the Services, election officials, and voters; conducting and analyzing post-election surveys and voting assistance officer metrics; and reporting those efforts to the President and Congress, eligible voters have the information necessary to participate in the voting process. DoD organizations and leaders also have the necessary tools to ensure access to and comply with Federal law and DoD Instruction 1000.04.

The Joint Staff Lacked a Written Voting Assistance Policy Required by DoD Instruction 1000.04

The Joint Staff did not have a written voting assistance policy as required by DoD Instruction 1000.04. The absence of a written policy occurred because the Joint Staff J1 voting assistance representative believed that Service voting representatives provided the required voting-related support to personnel assigned to the Joint Staff.²⁶

DoD Instruction 1000.04 Requires DoD Components to Develop Written Voting-Related Policies

DoD Instruction 1000.04 requires 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 instruction also requires DoD component heads to disseminate voting information and assist eligible voters, as required, in their respective organization, and to ensure command support at all levels for the FVAP. Interviews with the Service OIGs and the Joint Staff J1 voting assistance portfolio manager indicated that, while personnel assigned to the Joint Staff should have received voting-related support from their respective Service voting representatives on an ongoing basis, voting support provided by the respective Service voting representatives only occurs during onboarding. In addition, the Joint Staff voting assistance portfolio manager did not know who the Service voting representatives were and could not confirm if Service members and eligible family members had access to Federal voting information and assistance.

In addition, because there was no written voting-related policy, there was no dissemination of voting information by the Joint Staff voting assistance representative to assist the approximately 2,400 eligible voters assigned to the Joint Staff, as required. A written voting policy would assist Joint Staff Service members gain a better understanding of FVAP and voting-related information concerning Service voting assistance officers and provide a source where they can find voting information for national and local elections and the absentee voting process (both inside and outside of the United States). A written and implemented voting-related policy will also show command support for the FVAP on the Joint Staff. Therefore, the Joint Staff should develop and implement a written voting-related policy to support Service personnel assigned to the Joint Staff and their family members, including those in deployed, dispersed, and tenant organizations.

²⁶ The Joint Staff (J1) has one voting assistance portfolio manager who informed us that providing voting assistance was one of his duties. He informed us that the Joint Staff did not have a voting-related policy, but understood the benefit of a written policy to provide as much informed support as possible to voters assigned to the Joint Staff after onboarding.

As a result, without a written voting policy, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff cannot ensure that his office meets the intent of DoD Instruction 1000.04, that active duty Service members assigned to the Joint Staff, including those serving in deployed, dispersed, and tenant organizations, and their eligible family members, receive voting-related support.

Recommendation, Management Comments, and Our Response

Recommendation

We recommend that the Director of the Joint Staff develop and implement a written voting-assistance policy to support Service personnel assigned to the Joint Staff and their family members, including those in deployed, dispersed, and tenant organizations.

Director of the Joint Staff Comments

We did not receive comments in time for inclusion in this report.

Our Response

We request that the Director of the Joint Staff provide comments in response to the final report by April 30, 2020. This recommendation is open and unresolved.

Appendix A

Scope and Methodology

We conducted this evaluation from October 2019 through March 2020 in accordance with the “Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation,” published in January 2012, by the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. Those standards require that we adequately plan the evaluation to ensure that we meet objectives 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, 2019, to December 31, 2019, in accordance with our responsibilities under 10 U.S.C. § 1566. We collected reports from the Inspectors General of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, assessing their Service’s voter program compliance during 2019. We reviewed these reports and supporting data to report on the level of compliance and effectiveness of Service VAPs.

We conducted data calls and interviewed representatives from the offices of the DoD FVAP, the Service IGs, and the Joint Staff to assess their implementation of requirements specified in DoD Instruction 1000.04. We received an overview from FVAP office officials, reviewed the FVAP performance management dashboard (portal) and the FVAP.gov website. We also reviewed documentation prepared by the FVAP office, including its annual report to Congress on the effectiveness of activities carried out under the UOCAVA.

We reported on voting assistance programs of the Services, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and OSD concerning their effectiveness and whether these programs complied with relevant DoD and Service policies. To determine whether the Joint Chiefs of Staff and OSD, as heads of DoD components, were in compliance with DoD Instruction 1000.04, we reviewed enclosure 2, “Responsibilities,” Paragraph 5, and Enclosure 4, “DoD Component and Uniformed Services Procedures,” Paragraphs 1a and 1b, found that the requirements for heads of DoD components are:

- to disseminate voting information and assist eligible voters, as required, in their respective organization;
- develop written voting-related policies to support all eligible uniformed Services personnel and their family members, including those in deployed, dispersed, and tenant organizations; and
- ensure command support at all levels for the FVAP.

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

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 Policy

“The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act,” (UOCAVA) (Public Law 99-410), August 28, 1986

“Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act,” (Public Law 111-84, Title V, Subtitle H), October 28, 2009

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

Section 1566, title 10, United States Code (2014), “Voting assistance: compliance assessments; assistance,” (Public Law 107-107), December 28, 2001

Department of Defense Guidance

DoD Instruction 1000.04 “Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP),” September 13, 2012, (Incorporating change 1, December 1, 2017). On November 12, 2019, during this review, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness updated the Instruction. We performed this evaluation in accordance with the version of the Instruction in force for the predominance of the reporting period.

Services

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,” April 22, 2014
- Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 1742.1C, “Navy Voting Assistance Program,” February 5, 2016
- Air Force Instruction 36-3107, “Voting Assistance Program,” February 27, 2014
- Marine Corps Order 1742.1B, “Voting Assistance Program,” April 1, 2013

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 GAO, the DoD OIG, and others have issued reports discussing support to UOCAVA voters. Unrestricted DoD OIG reports can be accessed at <http://www.dodig.mil/reports.html/>. Unrestricted GAO reports can be accessed at <http://www.gao.gov>.

GAO

GAO Report No. GAO-16-378, “DOD Needs More Comprehensive Planning to Address Military and Overseas Absentee Voting Challenges,” April 20, 2016

According to the GAO, the DoD estimated the number of UOCAVA voters at more than six million U.S. citizens. The GAO reported that local election offices rejected UOCAVA voter ballots at about a 6-percent rate, while at the same time rejecting 1 percent of the non-UOCAVA voter ballots. The report explained that the discrepancy primarily resulted from local election offices receiving overseas ballots after established receipt deadlines. While the GAO found that the DoD had taken steps to improve military and overseas absentee voting assistance, it concluded that two longstanding issues remained. First, UOCAVA voters were not fully aware of FVAP resources intended to help them register, vote, and have their vote counted. Second, mail delivery from overseas locations was unpredictable. The GAO recommended that the DoD establish time frames to address challenges, fully implement the selected leading practices of Federal strategic planning into its day-to-day operations, and develop a strategic plan that fully exhibits the six selected leading practices of federal strategic planning.

DoD OIG

DoD OIG Report No. DODIG-2015-135, "Assessment of Electronic Absentee System for Electronics (EASE) Grants," June 30, 2015

The DoD OIG determined whether recipients of Electronic Absentee System for Elections 2.0 grants inappropriately used grant funds to develop systems for the electronic return of a marked ballot. The report concluded that the DoD FVAP office properly accounted for about \$85 million in research, development, test, and evaluation grant funds received between 2010 and 2013. The FVAP office used these funds to execute the Electronic Absentee System for Elections 2.0 grant programs and about 10 other projects to support FVAP's mission of providing support to military and overseas voters.

DoD OIG Annual Reports on the DoD FVAP

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, and Marine Corps annually since 2001.

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 report for the year 2019 has open recommendations, as described below. Management took appropriate action on the recommendations in earlier reports.

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

The report found that 2 of the 10 Combatant Commands (U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Transportation Command) had a written FVAP policy as required by DoD Instruction 1000.04.²⁷ 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.²⁸

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.

²⁷ Combatant Commands are components of the DoD, each with a geographic or functional mission.

²⁸ The eight Combatant Commands without voting policies were: U.S. Central Command, U.S. Cyber Command, U.S. European Command, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Southern Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, and U.S. Strategic Command.

In 2019, commanders of U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, U.S. Indo-Pacific 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 U.S. Combatant Commands 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-2018-093, “DoD Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2017,” March 30, 2018
- DoD Report No. DoDIG-2017-071, “Assessment of DoD Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2016,” March 31, 2017
- DoD Report No. DoDIG-2016-071, “Assessment of DoD Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2015,” March 31, 2016
- DoD Report No. DoDIG-2015-098, “Assessment of DoD Voting Assistance Programs for Calendar Year 2014,” March 31, 2015

Appendix B

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 Boehmer", is positioned above the typed name and title.

Matt Boehmer
Director, FVAP

Attachments:
As stated

FVAP Voting Assistance Metrics (cont'd)

<u>Measures of Effect & Performance</u>	
<u>Installation Voter Assistance Office</u>	
<u>Metrics</u>	<u>Justification</u>
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

Metrics	Justification
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.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

- FVAP** Federal Voting Assistance Program
- GAO** Government Accountability Office
- IG** Inspector General
- OIG** Office of the Inspector General
- OSD** Office of the Secretary of Defense
- UOCAVA** The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act



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