



Voting Information News

July 2003 ☞ Vol. 13, No. 7

*A roundup of voting news from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)
For voters, potential voters and those who assist voters.*

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Voting Assistance Officers

"To Do" This Month:

- July 11 is the deadline for submitting slogans in the 2003 Voting Slogan Contest. Encourage participation by all U.S. citizens. Participants can enter as many times as they wish (see March 2003 *Voting Information News (VIN)* issue).
- Be sure to establish and maintain a continuity folder that can be passed on to your successor upon your departure. This will help to ensure your successor receives a quick orientation of his or her voting responsibilities and will be most helpful in meeting your organization's absentee voting needs for the upcoming 2004 Elections. (See VAO training article in July 2002 VIN)
- E-mail the FVAP to request a Voting Training Workshop in your area. The schedule is now being planned. Training is to begin this Fall.

Russian Picks Up Voting Assistance Guide At VAO's Registration Drive

The interest of Russian officials in the overseas voting program of the United States demonstrates that the efforts of FVAP along with Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) around the world have not gone unnoticed in the international community.

It was 1996. The US-Russian operations in the Implementation Force's (IFOR's) Task Force (TF) *Eagle* located in Bosnia provided the perfect common ground for the exchange of ideas between the two nations. This partnership, composed of the US-led TF *Eagle* and the separate Russian Airborne Brigade, allowed for the two former opposing nations to work together as a result of their strict professionalism and common strategic objectives.

In that summer, TF *Eagle* began its voting assistance effort to ensure that soldiers living overseas had the opportunity to register to vote in the November elections. The VAO set up a voter registration drive. Motivational posters were displayed in the TF Headquarters in order to make soldiers aware of their opportunity to vote. At the booth, soldiers were given the opportunity to complete the Federal Post Card Application to register and request their absentee ballot.

A Russian Liaison Officer (LNO), a lieutenant colonel and former Communist Party member, visited the booth and began to show a great deal of interest in the voting effort. The LNO showed particular interest in the *Voting Assistance Guides*. When asked jokingly by the VAO if the reading was

interesting, the officer, in all seriousness replied, "yes". He emphasized that all Russian officers should study this guide as well, and follow the American example so that they too can learn how to support their own voting program.

The interests of the official did not end there. In 1998 FVAP briefed election delegates from the Republic of Georgia and the Republic of Kazakhstan. FVAP provided information to the delegates pertaining to the Department of Defense's absentee voting process as well as their voting program for military and overseas citizens. Georgia showed a special interest in the FVAP model for registration and voting for the military.

Clearly the efforts of one voting assistance officer had a positive impact not only on the American soldiers they were serving, but also managed to introduce to a developing democracy the benefits of the implementation of an overseas absentee voting program as well.

**"Democracy Is In Your
Hands. Vote."**

By Timothy B. Hodges, USN,
Washington, DC 1990

**"To Do" This Month
(continued):**

- Inventory election materials to ensure that you have sufficient quantities of absentee voting materials on-hand to allow for participation in '04 elections.
- Be sure to stay informed of possible special elections or run-off elections that may occur. Visit the FVAP Web site at www.fvap.gov often for up-to-date information and materials. In addition, on-line versions of the VIN and news releases are posted on the site. Citizens may subscribe on-line to the VIN and the FVAP news releases.
- Make the VIN available to all citizens you assist. If you receive the VIN by e-mail, it is recommended that you forward it to all of the people in your command.
- Check with communications and distribution centers or the voting officer at the next higher organizational level to insure you are receiving voting information in a timely manner.
- Encourage others to visit the FVAP website at www.fvap.gov and to stay in touch with their elected representatives at home using the links provided on the website or by calling the Voting Information Center (VIC) also available through the toll free numbers listed on the FVAP website.
- Review the on-line Training Workshop presentation for VAOs at the FVAP Web site (see also May 2003 VIN).

FROM THE DESK OF THE NAVY SENIOR SERVICE VOTING REPRESENTATIVE

Though November '04 may still seem distant, as Navy Voting Assistance Representatives you should already be formulating plans for ensuring Sailors and their families will be ready to vote in the 2004 elections. As VAOs, the Navy is counting on you to set conditions that will motivate and empower every eligible Sailor and family member within your command to vote, and we will need your personal commitment and initiative to meet this goal.

The principal tools at your disposal are the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and the *Voting Assistance Guide*. The standard FPCA form, accepted by all states and territories, can simultaneously request both registration and an absentee ballot, and is always available on-line at the FVAP Website at www.fvap.gov.

In past years, we have not always been as successful as we would like in proactively engaging 100 percent of our eligible personnel. Some of our folks, particularly our junior enlisted, have missed an opportunity to vote due to lack of information or adequate assistance. To alleviate this problem in the future, individual VAOs must personally ensure the delivery of the FPCA (SF-76) to all eligible command members, including sufficient forms to supply their eligible dependants.

Now is the time to start planning ahead. Be proactive. Engage your tenant commands with training and voting materials in advance of scheduled detachments and deployments, and in sufficient time to ensure proper voter registration and timely receipt of absentee ballots. Plan conservatively; allow for mailing delays and for the time required to get absentee ballots back home to state voting offices prior to voting deadlines. Encourage VAOs to make voter education and registration a formal part of the command check-in or indoctrination process.



RDML (Sel) Marc Purcell
Assistant Commander
Navy Personnel Command

There is no need to wait until the eve of an election to begin advocating for your program. Make voter registration an ongoing effort. See if you can utilize public affairs resources such as print ads or local stories in your command newspaper, family grams, and closed-circuit television programs to systematically build awareness. Be creative in getting the word out; launch voting registration drives and target specific audiences with historically low voting participation rates, such as first term Sailors.

Let your shipmates know who you are and how to contact you for guidance. Document your lessons learned, and we will share them with other VAOs. Be accurate and timely in meeting feedback and reporting requirements so that we can effectively document our efforts and ensure accountability, both internally and to Congress. (Continued on next page)

FROM THE DESK OF THE NAVY SSVR (continued)

Further information and support for your efforts are available at www.persnet.navy.mil/nvap or you can contact my Navy Voting Assistance Program Action Officer, LT Brian Campbell at 1-800-368-5056 (Central Time) or e-mail: MILL_NavyVote@navy.mil. We will make sure you have the tools and support you need to be successful.

The right to vote is a cherished freedom of all citizens. Exercising that right represents one of the cornerstones of responsible citizenship. Those of us serving our country are continually reminded more than most, of the value of this freedom. We should also be among the most zealous in exercising that right. Let's make certain that our sailors and their families know how to make their voices heard.

RDML (Sel) Marc Purcell

Archive poster designed by Debbie Sayen
Graphic Communication Dept., College of Art and Design
Center for Creative Studies, Detroit MI.

Slogan by John A. Smith

**Voting Action Officers****Department of State: Office of American Citizen Services**

Chief VAO: Mr. Jack Markey, **tel:** (202) 736-4937, **fax:** (202) 647-6201, **E-mail:** markeyjd@state.gov
Deputy VAO: Mr. Stuart Denyer, **tel:** (202) 647-3495, **fax:** (202) 647-6201, **E-mail:** denyersr@state.gov

Service Voting Action Officers

Dept. of the Army: Mr. James Davis **tel:** (703) 325-4530 **DSN:** 221-4530; **fax:** (703) 325-4532
DSN fax: 221-4532; **E-mail:** davisj@hoffman.army.mil,
<https://www.perscomonline.army.mil/tagd/pssd/psb/voting/votingindex.htm>

Dept. of the Navy: LT Brian Campbell **tel:** 1-800-368-5056; **fax:** (901) 874-2689, **DSN fax:** 882-2689;
E-mail: MILL_navyvote@navy.mil, <https://www.persnet.navy.mil/nvap>

Dept. of the Air Force: Lt. Col. Lee Shick **tel:** (210) 565-3514, **toll free:** 1-800-558-1404, **DSN:** 665-3514 or 2572;
fax: (210) 565-2543, **DSN fax:** 665-2543; **E-mail:** Lee.Shick@randolph.af.mil
<http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/votefund/>

Marine Corps: GySgt Kenneth B. Warford **tel:** (703) 784-9511, **DSN:** 278-9511;
fax: (703) 784-9828, **DSN fax:** 278-9828; **E-mail:** warfordkb@manpower.usmc.mil
https://lnweb1.manpower.usmc.mil/manpower/mi/mra_ofct.nsf/mrp/Voting+Home

U.S. Coast Guard: Ensign Steve Rodanhisler **tel:** (202)-267-2005, **fax:** (202) 267-4823, **attn:** Lt. Luna;
E-mail: srodanhisler@comdt.uscg.mil

All of the above can also be reached through the DoD Voting Information Center and the FVAP Website.

Federal Voting Assistance Program

Department of Defense
Washington
Headquarters Services
1155 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC
20301-1155

PHONE:
(703) 588-1584
DSN 425-1584

FAX:
(703) 588-0108
DSN 425-0108

VOTING INFORMATION
CENTER:
(703) 588-1343
DSN 425-1343

TOLL FREE:
1-800-438-VOTE (8683)

E-MAIL:
vote@fvap.ncr.gov

Website:
www.fvap.gov

Vote!

Celebrate Independence By Highlighting Our Most Cherished Right

What better time than the Fourth of July to bring voting to the forefront. The easiest way to do this is to post information about the Voting Assistance Program and materials and resources available to create awareness of the voting process.

Motivational Posters are a great way to remind people about their right to vote.

Many do not understand how to vote absentee or where to find help. If you are a VAO, let people know how to contact you for voting assistance and set aside

time to assist them. You should also advise the installation / organization telephone operator of your voting program phone number so that you can be reached if a call comes in requesting voting information.

Now is a good time to get people acquainted with the FVAP website at www.fvap.gov. Promote the site by letting them know they can find their state's absentee voting procedures, link to their state website, learn their county of voting residence, and much more.

Don't forget, FVAP is here to help you if you cannot find the help you need locally.

Have a Happy and Safe 4th of July

About Our Organization...

Voting Information News provides information for citizens and Voting Assistance Officers and is published monthly by the FVAP.

Director:	Polli Brunelli	SERVE Technical Director:	James Cunningham
Deputy Director:	J. Scott Wiedmann	Info. Systems & Services:	Terrence Williams
Program Analyst:	Betty Collins	IT Specialist:	Maurice Howe
Program Analyst/Co VIN Editor:	John Godley	IT Specialist:	Susan Leader
Program Analyst:	Brian Griffiths	Presidential Intern:	Jennifer Cole
Program Analyst/Co VIN Editor:	Paul Mendez	Faculty Fellow:	Dr. Ambrous Jacobs
Program Analyst:	Elaine Perna Tucker	Summer Intern:	Bobby Flanders
Program Analyst:	Terry Wade	Stay-In-School:	Meghan Gordon
SERVE Program Manager:	Carol Paquette		

Federal Voting Assistance Program
Department of Defense
Washington Headquarters Services
1155 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1155



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