Best Practices for Serving Military Voters

Who Are Military Voters?

Under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), the following groups are considered military members:

- Members of the Uniformed Services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Corps)
- Members of the Merchant Marines
- Eligible family members of the above
- Guard and Reserve members who are federally activated

Why it Matters:

Military voters and their families face unique challenges, including international mail delays, frequent relocations, and limited access to voting resources. Election officials can help overcome these barriers with clear communication, partnerships, and proactive outreach to ensure military voters can successfully participate in elections, no matter where they serve.

Tips

Stay in Touch with Military Voters Throughout the Process

- Use multiple communication channels:
  - Reach voters via email, websites, social media, and postal mail.
  - Encourage use of the [Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)](). Accepted in all states and territories.
  - Build and maintain an email contact list for all UOCAVA voters. Encourage military voters to provide both personal and military email addresses.
- Send timely reminders about:
  - Registration/FPCA renewal deadlines.
  - Ballot request and ballot return deadlines. Stress early action.
  - Voting procedures and voting options available.
- Absentee ballot tracking updates: sent, received, counted, or rejected (including instructions on how to cure a challenged ballot, if allowed by state law).
- Track and Improve
  - Maintain records of the number of military ballots transmitted, received, and rejected.
  - Use this data to improve outreach, delivery, and voter education.

Ensure Efficient Ballot Delivery & Simplify Ballot Return
- **Ballot Delivery Requirements and Best Practices**
  - Provide requested blank ballots via at least one electronic method per federal law (email, online portal, or fax, as allowed by state law).
  - Send ballots early, at least 45 days before federal elections, per federal law.
  - Send a separate email to voters (with no attachment) when their ballot has been sent.
  - Track ballot requests and deliveries to ensure compliance and quickly address delivery issues.
- **Ballot Return Best Practices**
  - Provide clear, step-by-step instructions for accessing, marking, and returning ballots (by mail, and where available, fax and electronic).
  - Highlight deadlines and requirements for each return method.
  - Inform voters about backup or emergency options like the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) or delivery options at the U.S. embassy, if applicable.
  - Encourage prompt ballot return for timely international mail delivery.

Build Partnerships and Conduct Targeted Outreach
- Collaborate with Voting Assistance Officers (VAO) at local military bases or installations, Merchant Marine unions, or service and maritime academies.
- Provide registration materials to voters with a local legal residence.
- Share regular updates on election procedures.
- Offer voter assistance via workshops, help desks, hotlines, or email support.

Provide a Dedicated Military and Overseas Voter Webpage
- Maintain an easy-to-find and regularly updated section for UOCAVA voters on your election website. Include:
  - State-specific forms, FPCA, FWAB, and a link to the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) website.
- Recommend voters submit a new FPCA every election year, and when they move.
  - Guides and FAQs specific to UOCAVA voters, covering eligibility, state-specific rules, and any special provisions.
  - Step-by-step instructions for accessing, returning, and tracking ballots.
  - Contact information for voter questions.
  - Consider a special section for Merchant Marines addressing their unique needs.

Utilize Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) Resources
- Complete FVAP's online training for election officials.
- Use FVAP resources for processing the FPCA and FWAB.
- Follow FVAP recommendations for voter list maintenance, including the UOCAVA Address Maintenance for Local Election Officials.
- Use FVAP tools such as their address update service, FVAP's resources, and FVAP's Voting Assistance Guide.

Additional EAC Resources
- Clearinghouse Resources on Military and Overseas Voting
- EAC Voter Education Design Toolkit