



2006 Post Midterm Local Election Official Survey Report

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Executive Summary

Overseas Vote Foundation (OVF) conducted a survey of local election officials (LEOs) after the 2006 election in order to determine how the Uniformed and Overseas Citizen Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voting process works in their jurisdictions. This survey is the first of its kind for OVF and provides a baseline for understanding where many local election jurisdictions stand with the administration of UOCAVA voting as we enter the 2008 presidential election. The key findings are:

1. Most local election jurisdictions are relatively small (less than 25,000 registered voters) and, not surprisingly, have a relatively small number of UOCAVA overseas civilian citizen or military voters. However, there are a relatively large number of UOCAVA voters in many larger electoral jurisdictions.
2. UOCAVA voting is increasing. Half of the participating LEOs indicated increased UOCAVA voting in the 2006 midterms, with more than 6.5% reporting an increase that exceeded 10%.
3. Most LEOs (68.8%) reported that the majority of UOCAVA voters register to vote or request an absentee ballot using the federally-provided voter registration and ballot request form (FPCA). However, in smaller jurisdictions a sizable percentage of voters contact the LEO before leaving to address their UOCAVA voting needs.
4. LEOs find that young overseas voters (18-29) are much more likely to have problems with the UOCAVA voting process than other voters.
5. Ballots and FPCAs are rejected for a variety of reasons. The two most common reasons are: (1) the FPCAs or ballots arrive after the deadline, too late for inclusion in the voting process; and (2) the FPCAs or ballots are incorrect, illegible, or incomplete.
6. A majority of LEOs (58.9%) thought that their overall process for managing UOCAVA voting worked well.
7. LEOs reported that their biggest problem is maintaining current and accurate mailing addresses for UOCAVA voters, especially over two federal election cycles.
8. LEOs generally feel reasonably well-trained for their administrative duties regarding UOCAVA voting, but said they would appreciate additional training through email or through organizational meetings.
9. Outreach to voters is considered very important by all LEOs, but larger jurisdictions tend to be able to do more outreach than smaller ones.. Larger local election jurisdictions typically communicate with voters over the Internet, but smaller local election jurisdictions tend to use traditional mail communication.

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I. Introduction

Local election officials (LEOs) are the key managers of elections in the United States. Our goal in this survey is to examine the various issues that LEOs encounter in serving the military personnel, their dependents, and overseas civilians who are covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Civilian Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) and its recent amendments. By gathering information on the current problems that are encountered by LEOs, OVF hopes to be able to raise awareness of these problems and suggest ways in which such problems can be ameliorated.

This survey was developed by OVF based on our experience serving the UOCAVA voting population. Through the survey, we can:

1. Understand the key issues that hamper the UOCAVA process in election offices;
2. Identify specific recommendations about how to improve UOCAVA voting from the experiences of those who work with the program on a regular basis; and
3. Publish constructive and realistic recommendations in a timely manner.

This survey is an initial foray into determining what is working well at the local election jurisdiction level in the administration of the UOCAVA program and what can be improved. After the 2008 election, we will conduct a similar survey in which we will identify best practices and make further recommendations for how to improve the UOCAVA voting process.

II. Survey Response

The survey was sent to 3,814 **local** election officials in jurisdictions around the US for whom OVF has email addresses on file. State-level election officials did not receive survey invitations, only Local Election Officials (LEOs). A total of 49 states were included in the survey distribution and the survey was open for 75 days, between Dec 19, 2006 and Mar 2, 2007. The survey was issued through an online survey program that provided a unique one-time use URL link to each participant in the survey. No hardcopy surveys were issued or received.

At the end of this period, 690 fully completed surveys were received resulting in an 18% response rate. (Partially completed surveys were not included in the results analysis.) The survey was voluntary and, given the ongoing concerns that many LEOs have responding to surveys in this highly contentious environment, this response rate is within the expected range. However, there could be selection bias in the survey in that election officials without email addresses were not contacted. Hence, the survey may be considered by some audiences unscientific in terms of its sample.

Almost all of the surveys were completed by one participant in the local election jurisdiction (99%): 89% of those stated they were personally in charge of the administration of overseas and

military absentee voting in their jurisdiction and 10% said they were employed in the department dealing with UOCAVA voting (10%).

Relative Size of Responding Jurisdictions

The survey first established the size of the local election jurisdictions in terms of numbers of registered voters they were managing. When examining all registered voters, 70.9% of LEOs estimated having between 0 - 24,999 registered voters in their jurisdiction; 18.7% have between 25,000 and 99,999 registered voters; and the remaining 10.4% have over 100,000 registered voters in their jurisdiction.

Total Registered Voters				
Total Overseas Voters	1 to 24,999	25,000 to 99,999	More than 100,000	Total
Under 100	97.58	65.83	29.23	84.69
100-999	1.54	34.17	56.92	13.28
Over 1,000	0.88	0.00	13.85	2.03
Total Registered Voters				
Total Military Voters	1 to 24,999	25,000 to 99,999	More than 100,000	Total
Under 100	96.91	51.24	16.92	80.13
100-999	2.87	47.93	50.77	16.28
Over 1,000	0.22	0.83	32.31	3.60

UOCAVA Civilian Voters

Most LEOs, 84.6%, indicated that they have between zero (0) and 99 UOCAVA overseas civilian citizen voters; 13.4% have between 100 and 999; and the remaining 2% have more than 1,000.

2006 Military Participation

Most respondents, 80.2%, indicated that they have between 0-99 military voters who participated in the 2006 election. Another 16.2% indicated that they had between 100-999 military voters and the remaining 3.5% had more than 1,000.

Participation Trends

A total of 49.9% of the participating LEOs indicated an increase in overseas civilian voter participation in the 2006 midterms with 6.5% reporting an increase that exceeded 10%. Of the

remaining 50.1%, only 12% indicated a decrease and 38% indicated no noticeable change compared to the number of registrations and ballot requests received in 2002. Similarly, 50.6% of the participating LEOs reported having an increase in military voter registrations and ballot requests, with 8.3% reporting an increase that exceeded 10%. Of the remaining LEOs, 14.6% noted a decrease and 34.8% indicated that there was no noticeable change in military participation.

There may be many reasons for these trends, including more individuals being covered by the UOCAVA process (e.g., increased number of military personnel and contractors in Iraq). In addition, there may be a heightened level of interest by voters in the electoral process. Political organization and interest groups may be accelerating their outreach and leveraging new media – especially the Internet – to mobilize these voters. In general, these trends may indicate that the 2008 elections will be one in which local election jurisdictions may face new record numbers of UOCAVA voters.

III. Processes and Problems

We asked several questions regarding the UOCAVA voting process in order to determine how well the various aspects of this system work for both voters and LEOs.

Sending Ballots

When asked if their jurisdiction automatically send ballots to overseas and military voters who registered in 2004, 58.4% of LEOs responded positively that overseas and military voters who registered in 2004 were sent and received ballots in 2006 without filing a new form.

Approximately 82% of jurisdictions with 25,000 or more registered voters automatically sent out ballots in 2006 to their UOCAVA who were registered in 2004. By contrast, only 48.7% of jurisdictions with less than 25,000 registered voters sent out ballots without voters filing a new form.

Using the FPCA

Most LEOs (68.8%) reported that the majority of UOCAVA voters register to vote or request an absentee ballot using the federally-provided voter registration and ballot request form (FPCA). However, again we see differences between those LEOs with more than 25,000 registered voters and those with less than 25,000. The LEOs with more than 25,000 registered voters reported that more than 80% of voters used the FPCA to register to vote and request an absentee ballot. By contrast, the LEOs with fewer registered voters reported only 62.5% of voters used the FPCA process; instead, voters in these jurisdictions with fewer registered voters were slightly more likely to request absentee ballots before leaving the jurisdiction. Few jurisdictions (2.2%) request information beyond that asked on the FPCA.

Reasons UOCAVA Ballots Are Rejected

When asked about problems associated with the UOCAVA voting process, LEOs gave the following reasons why some UOCAVA voters had their ballots rejected.

Problems by Age of Voter

Although most LEOs found no differences among the ability of potential UOCAVA voters to navigate this process based on their age, those LEOs who did see such problems observed problems arising mostly among younger voters aged 18-29. If we only examine the responses of LEOs who observed differences, just over 80% of the problem voters were in the 18-29 age range.

Late Forms

47.4% of LEOs reported that forms arriving late and missing the deadline for inclusion in the voting process was a major problem. This problem was more prominent in LEOs with between 25,000 and 100,000 registered voters in 2006.

Incomplete or Invalid Forms

Problems with forms constitute a serious issue that has many components. For example:

- One-third of LEOs reported that receiving incomplete forms from voters was a major problem. This problem is more pronounced in LEOs with more than 25,000 registered voters.
- 10.2% of LEOs reported receiving invalid information on the form.
- 14.1% reported that the forms were not properly signed or dated.
- 12.4% reported that the forms contained illegible entries. This is a larger problem for LEOs with more than 25,000 registered voters.

Together, these problems constitute a major issue with the UOCAVA voting process because most of these problems have to be resolved through the mail, which is already a serious hurdle to overcome in the UOCAVA voting process because of frequent postal delivery delays. The problem of resolving such problems is exacerbated by the fact that 17% of LEOs reported that they were unable to easily reach voters when they encountered such problems with their FPCA or other registration or ballot materials.

Residency Issues

The survey responses pointed out problems related to the ‘voting residence’ of a UOCAVA voter. A total of 6.6% of the LEOs reported that they encountered cases where the voter’s previous residence could not be verified in order to allow the voters to be sent an absentee ballot. There were 7% of LEOs who reported problems with voter eligibility to vote in the jurisdiction in which their ballot request was filed. Finally, 4.5% of LEOs reported receiving ballot requests from voters who had never lived in the United States or in the jurisdiction where they were registering to vote.

[A LEO’s suggestion: Provide] “More clarification on the FPCA as to whether or not the legal residence (#3) is a current or a prior address, possibly by using check boxes.”

Hurdles to UOCAVA Voter Participation

In addition to being concerned about why ballots are rejected, we also wanted to discern the barriers that LEOs perceive are keeping UOCAVA voters from registering and voting. We asked LEOs “What are the top three (3) greatest causes of overseas and military voters’ inability to register and vote in your jurisdiction?” The three greatest causes of LEO concerns are as follows:

- 41.7% saw voters moving, which means that they will not receive their ballot when sent to the address on their filed FPCA, as being the largest barrier;
- 34.5% view registration and ballot request deadlines as being a barrier; and
- 29.8% likewise noted that voters returning to the USA but still having an active FPCA as being problematic.

In addition, 12.8% of LEOs viewed signature and dating requirements as being a barrier and 17% of LEOs viewed registration and ballot request requirements (such as deadlines for filing) as being a significant barrier to participation. As one LEO stated:

“Problem: Rarely are any of these people in the same place for two general elections. Most of them do not know they are receiving ballots for two election cycles when they apply. Confirmation mailers prior to primary elections is partially successful. Mailers need to be done more often for efficient tracking. Time does not allow for this in most offices.”

IV. Managing the UOCAVA Voting Process

A total of 66.5% of LEOs reported that they were either satisfied (40.6%) or very satisfied (25.9%) with the way in which UOCAVA voting is managed in their jurisdiction. The larger local election jurisdictions—those with 25,000 or more registered voters—were more satisfied generally than were jurisdictions with fewer than 25,000 registered voters. More than 75% of jurisdictions had one or more individuals dedicated to the management of the UOCAVA voting process.

What Works Well

In order to understand the strengths jurisdictions feel that they have with the UOCAVA voting process, we asked all LEOs “What works well in your jurisdiction's processes for managing overseas and military absentee voting?” They responded as follows: 58.9% of LEOs thought that their overall process for managing UOCAVA voting worked well. This was especially true for jurisdictions with more than 25,000 registered voters (~72% said it worked well) compared to those with fewer than 25,000 registered voters (53.4% said it worked well).

- 48.1% of LEOs thought that they had good staff to address UOCAVA voting. Again, this was more true of the jurisdictions with more than 25,000 registered voters (~67%) compared to those with fewer than 25,000 registered voters (39.7%).
- 25% of LEOs thought that their ability to track UOCAVA ballots worked well. This was especially true for the jurisdictions with more than 100,000 registered voters (49.3%) compared to jurisdictions with fewer than 100,000 registered voters (~23%).
- The ability to answer voter questions (25.8%) and the ability to deal proactively with registration problems (22.4%) were also key things that LEOs thought worked well. For both of these items, we see a monotonic increase in the percent of LEOs saying these items worked well in their jurisdiction based on the percent of registered ballots cast in their jurisdiction. Jurisdictions with more than 100,000 registered voters were more proactive and more likely to think that answering voter questions was a strength compared to jurisdictions with 25,000 to 100,000 registered voters. Jurisdictions with 25,000-100,000 registered voter were in turn more likely to view questions and proactive activities as a strength compared to smaller jurisdictions.

As one LEO noted in their written comments:

“Organization is key: Keeping a list of these individuals expedites the process. Unfortunately, we sometimes need to wait for our supplies. If supplies are in early, process the ballots early and hold until required date to mail them.”

What Does Not Work Well

In addition to asking the LEOs what worked well, we also asked, “What does NOT work well in your jurisdiction’s processes for managing overseas and military voting?”

Here, we find that ballot addresses is a tremendous barrier to the voting process. Specifically:

- 39.7% of LEOs reported that out of date addresses were a large problem in their jurisdiction.
- 38% reported that too many ballots were returned as “undeliverable.” This problem is especially acute in jurisdictions with more than 25,000 registered voters, where more than 65% of LEOs reported this to be a major problem.

LEOs were offered the opportunity to provide written comments on the survey and the issue of addresses and undeliverable ballots was a topic that drew numerous and extensive comments. The following examples—directly taken from the survey—illustrate how well meant revisions to the FPCA process under HAVA may have introduced new pitfalls.

“It is rare that a military address from 2004 will still be the same in 2006 and someone needs to advise the military voter to update their election jurisdiction when they get a new address. Otherwise we are sending ballots and wasting our time as well as the postal service and the military mail system to send ballots to an address that is 2 years old. We have received ballots back undeliverable that were in the system from February (for the March Primary) and we finally received them back in December marked addressee unknown.”

“In 2004 it was passed that overseas FPCA voters could vote in 2 major elections. This needs to be reconsidered [as] they do not stay at one location for long periods of time. In the year of 2006 we made an attempt to contact the requestor by mailing letters to see if they would need absentee ballots for that year. Only a few responded, therefore we had no choice but to mail them absentee ballots only to find that they went to the polls on election day, and that created a problem because they had a ballot in the mail somewhere. It was not there fault. They did not know it was for 2 major elections. Please reconsider the way it was at one time: the FPCA card was for 1 year only. It made it a lot easier for the citizens and the absentee clerks as well.”

“Go back to yearly registrations.”

Process Changes

In order to determine what changes LEOs were considering to their processes, we asked all LEOs if there were plans for changes in their system/processes for managing overseas and military voting over 2007-08 in a set of categories. We found that most LEOs were not planning to change their processes. Specifically, we found that 10.5% of LEOs reported plans to make change, with the most common change planned changes being in the areas of training (3.7%) and information technology systems (3.2%).

When we asked what changes they would make if they could, we found a greater amount of pent up demand for change. Specifically, we found that:

- 19.3% were planning to find ways to streamline their registration process;
- 15.1% were planning to improve staff training;
- 11.3% were hoping that their primary elections would be earlier in the year;
- 6.3% were planning to increase staffing (with 13.4% of local election jurisdictions with more than 100,00 registered voters planning to do so); and
- 4.6% were planning to improve their information technology systems.

Several LEOs were concerned about the duration of FPCAs. As one LEO suggests:

“I would have a section on the Form 76 [FPCA registration form] that would ask the voter to state, not their last date of residency but, their intended return date (if they have one.) I have found many of the military voters only need the program for one or two years...not through 2 federal elections.”

Training Regarding UOCAVA Voting

Given the increased attention to UOCAVA voting over the past several years, training is a key need for UOCAVA voters. We find that most LEOs (73.7%) report receiving updates or training for UOCAVA voting. When we consider from where the LEOs receive most of their information about UOCAVA voting, we find that they receive training from a variety of sources, as noted in the table below.

Question 25: Who provides you with updates/information and/or training regarding overseas and military voting?		
State Board of Elections	244	37.7%
Secretary of State	234	36.2%
State UOCAVA Voting Liaison	71	11.0%
Local Official in Charge of UOCAVA Voting	29	4.5%
Federal Voting Assistance Program	158	24.4%
Election Center	63	9.7%
IACREOT	22	3.4%
Does Own Research	58	9.0%
Question 26: Please identify the type of information and/or training you receive.		
Memorandums	315	48.7%
Newsletters	258	39.9%
Online training	46	7.1%
Email Communication	307	47.4%
Hands on training	100	15.5%
Meetings or Classes	331	51.2%

The current training also is generally thought to be sufficient by LEOs. Only 10.5% of LEOs felt insufficiently trained, but LEOs who worked at local election offices with fewer than 25,000 registered voters were the most likely to feel ill-trained.

However, when pressed further on this training topic, 40% of LEOs were in favor of receiving more information and/or training regarding overseas and military registered voting. Only 31.7% did not want more training; the remaining LEOs were unsure.

When asked in what form they would prefer more training, a broad range of choices appeared to be desirable: Meetings or classes and email communications topped the list.

Question 29. If you could have MORE training/information, in what form would you prefer to receive it? (Check all that apply.)		
Memorandums	144	23.3%
Newsletters	191	29.5%
Online training	165	25.5%
Video training	95	14.7%
Email Communication	223	34.5%
Hands on training	137	21.2%
Meetings or Classes	227	35.1%

UOCAVA Voter Outreach

More than half of LEOs report having specific voter outreach programs that they have developed for UOCAVA voters. Jurisdictions with more than 25,000 registered voters were much more likely to have an outreach program (~75%) compared to those jurisdictions with fewer than 25,000 registered voters (~41%). When we consider the type of outreach that is most common, we find that the Internet is the most common conduit for such communications, through email or website postings. Larger jurisdictions with more than 25,000 registered voters are the most likely to engage in voter outreach to UOCAVA voters.

Question 31. What does your jurisdiction do to specially assist overseas civilian and military voters in the registration and voting process? (Check all that apply.)		
Special postal mailings	176	27.2%
Information provided on our website	122	18.9%
Email Communications	159	24.6%

Given the importance of email in communicating with voters, several LEOs commented on the need to collect such information on the FPCA. For example:

“Strongly encourage the voter on the FPCA form to provide an alternate method of communicating with them (e.g. email, phone, etc.) to allow for us to service them better should issues arise”.

Communication Methods

As the table below shows, the way in which LEOs communicate with voters varies based on the size of the local election jurisdictions. For the jurisdictions with fewer than 25,000 registered voters, the traditional written form of communication is most common but for jurisdictions with more than 100,000 registered voters, email is the most common form of communication. Fax is only used by a very small percentage of jurisdictions (3.4%). In their written responses, many LEOs observed that:

E-mail is definitely the best way to communicate [with UOCAVA voters]. Unfortunately very few voters provide us with their e-mail addresses.

Question 33: What is the form of most of your communication with overseas and military voters?				
	Total Registered Voters			Total
	Under 25,000	25,000 to 99,999	More than 100,000	
Written Communication by Mail	69.85	57.26	35.38	63.45
Fax	2.76	3.42	4.62	3.10
Email	22.86	34.19	55.38	28.79

There is a similarly large difference among large and small local election jurisdictions regarding their likelihood of having a website. Only 42.5% of those jurisdictions with fewer than 25,000 registered voters have a website, but 73.6% of mid-sized jurisdictions and 86.6% of the largest jurisdictions have their own website.

However, having a website is no panacea for a potential UOCAVA voter if there is not UOCAVA voting information on the website. The smaller responding jurisdictions were not very likely to have such information on their website (16.8% reported having such information) but 63% of the responding largest jurisdictions did. Approximately one-third of small

jurisdictions with websites do link to other websites with information about UOCAVA voting, as do three-fourths of the largest jurisdictions.

Roughly half of the jurisdictions collect and maintain email lists of UOCAVA voters, with larger jurisdictions being slightly more likely to do so. Almost 70% of all LEOs offer UOCAVA voters the option of contacting them for information via email. In addition, 40% of LEOs indicated an increase in email traffic from voters since 2004. Larger local election offices were much more likely to report more email traffic than were small local election jurisdictions.

Several LEOs noted the benefits of using email to facilitate voting:

“We have been very successful e-mailing ballots to overseas and military voters. This is a great timesaver in helping to ensure they receive the ballot and have time to send it back to us.”

“Use of e-mail communications has solved most ballot delay problems with military and overseas voters.”

“We found e-mailing ballots and copies of the return envelope especially helpful for some military voters in out of the way places. Of course they still had to return the ballot, signed, dated, and witnessed, by mail or courier by the deadline.”

V. OVF Awareness

Overseas Vote Foundation (OVF) was created to facilitate voting by UOCAVA voters, with an explicit goal of using the Internet and standard web technology to provide voter services. When we examine LEO awareness of OVF, we find that 50.6% of LEOs were aware of OVF prior to receiving the survey, with larger jurisdictions being more likely to be aware of OVF than smaller ones.

This question provides a baseline for evaluating the outreach efforts of OVF through the 2008 electoral season. OVF will continue to work with LEOs to build upon their existing success in helping America’s important UOCAVA population.

VI. About Overseas Vote Foundation

Overseas Vote Foundation (OVF) is the only nongovernmental, nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) nonprofit public charity organization to embrace the Internet and standard web technology to provide voter services to UOCAVA voters. The essence of the Foundation's work is to increase UOCAVA voter enfranchisement through the development and provision of secure, Internet-based software services which address the complications of the UOCAVA program in a constructive manner.

Background

OVF is expanding our research program to complement our technology and marketing solutions development dedicated to the cause of UOCAVA voter enfranchisement. A key asset that OVF brings into play when doing research is our ongoing contact and access to overseas and military voters and election officials. This contact has come about as a fruit of our other programs and lends itself to doing surveys for voter participants and administrators of the UOCAVA program.

Other OVF surveys

In 2005, OVF executed the first online overseas voter research study, the OVF 2004 Post Election Survey. Approximately 65,000 invitations were issued online and the survey obtained a 17% response rate. In June 2005 we launched a new OVF site along with the published research results.

On November 8, 2006, OVF launched a second post election voter survey to approximately 46,000 voters and achieved a 10% response rate. This survey illuminated the fact that 20% (one out of five) of the UOCAVA voter respondents were unable to successfully vote in the 2006 election. The results are published and available on the OVF website <http://www.overseasvotefoundation.org>.

OVF's vision includes outreach to both UOCAVA voters and election officials. The success of our OVF Election Official Directory has already given us an indication that our services are well received by election officials. In order to begin to develop additional online tools and services for election officials, the survey functions as a means to ask them about their experiences in the last election, the trends they were experiencing, the problems that they encounter with the UOCAVA program implementation and UOCAVA voters, and what their ideas and suggestions are.

This Report

This report was prepared by Susan Dzieduszycka-Suinat, OVF's President and CEO, with assistance from Thad Hall, assistant professor of political science and research fellow at the Institute of Public and International Affairs at the University of Utah.

Appendix 1: Responses to Open Questions

The survey finished with three open questions where the election officials could write in comments of any length. The comments tend to fall into a few consistent categories. We have included many of these comments as they provide insight and value to other LEOs, researchers, and legislators: A selection of comments has been organized into 6 categories, as follows:

1. Successes
2. Suggestions
3. Addressing
4. 2-Election Cycle Legislation
5. Military Absentee
6. Problems

1. Successes

- E-mail is definitely the best way to communicate. Unfortunately very few voters provide us with their e-mail addresses.
- I think that every county in the state should use the same tracking system for UOCAVA voters. I'm not sure who would be the one to produce it, (the state or those who monitor it)?
- Having the information on our website and voters being able to contact us by email does help.
- Offering the overseas civilians and military voters the option to submit their request online through our site has enabled us to expedite what was previously a slow process (mail) and sometimes resulted in requests being received too late.
- We found e-mailing ballots and copies of the return envelope especially helpful for some military voters in out of the way places. Of course they still had to return the ballot, signed, dated, and witnessed, by mail or courier by the deadline.
- We have been very successful e-mailing ballots to overseas and military voters. This is a great timesaver in helping to ensure they receive the ballot and have time to send it back to us.

- I prepared my own instructions to clarify the process - it would be nice if something was pre-printed and readily available to enclose with ballots
- Trying to contact someone before ballots are sent worked extremely well. Also sent letters if ballot returned, to home address. Received a reply from the majority of letters, e-mails & phone calls I made.
- Overall we have a very successful procedure for FPCA voters. It has to be readjusted due to the fact that we have to keep and FPCA on file longer.
- Successful in using e-mail, and the ability to send ballot via e-mail. Saves time and I know that the person receives it.
- Use of e-mail communications has solved most ballot delay problems with military and overseas voters.

2. Suggestions

- Organization is key: Keeping a list of these individuals expedites the process. Unfortunately, we sometimes need to wait for our supplies. If supplies are in early, process the ballots early and hold until required date to mail them.
- Just keeping a copy of the FPCA in a separate notebook.
- No, but we are always on the lookout for better ways to serve them. Email is working very well!
- Communication with overseas voters as well as family in our jurisdiction proves to be a great tool.
- Checking our email constantly so questions from overseas voters are answered immediately.
- Tracking and documentation need improved development at State IT level
- Daily Record Keeping (of Ballot Usage & # of Ballots Issued) and verification that figures always agree (per Ballot Style)

- Planning ahead for the UOCAVA ballots and providing as much information as possible is key.
- I think this process should be uniform for civilian and military voters. Too many choices and hard to track while keeping up with daily duties with no additional staff.
- More clarification on the FPCA as to whether or not the legal residence (#3) is a current or a prior address, possibly by using check boxes.
- Conduct a mailing in between elections to verify current military address for those FVAP on file.
 1. A Military/Overseas specialist is very much appreciated.
 2. A separate fax line (with international capability) is extremely useful for general elections.
- Would like all FPCA's to include an e-mail for quick and direct contact and would appreciate there penmanship to be more legible.
- When people come to our office to get passports and we know that they are going to be out of the country for several years we encourage them to fill out an absentee ballot request form so that if they choose to vote while out of the country we will already have their request with signature.
- Internet voting for overseas military and civilians.
- Strongly encourage the voter on the FPCA form to provide an alternate method of communicating with them (e.g. email, phone, etc.) to allow for us to service them better should issues arise.
- Simplify the process and we also need updated information which they many times don't provide.
- More time per election code to have between candidate filing, preparation of the ballot and the date of the election to better prepare materials for Overseas and Military Voters.

- I believe every voter should be allowed to vote and that there should be a way to keep the counties updated with how to get in touch with UOCACA voters. We must have current addresses, email addresses, phone numbers or anything else to assist us in this process.
- Have them apply each election to ensure that we have a current address to mail the ballot.
- One process that works for everyone.
- Require updates of addresses yearly.
- Take it out of the hands of local officials and centralize it at the state level. State can email overseas/military election results to locals to add to regular voter totals
- I would have a section on the Form 76 [FPCA reg form] the would ask the voter to state, not their last date of residency but, their intended return date. (If they have one.) I have found many of the military voters only need the program from one or two years...not through 2 federal elections. We had approx 10 UOCAVA voters actually vote in person and they had to vote by provisional ballot. They did not know that they needed to notify us when they returned. If this section were added to the form it would help eliminate this issue.
- I would like the ability to update voter registration files using the FPCA form to match both records.
- Require voter to request a ballot at each election
- Pre-paid envelopes to get the ballots to the overseas voters.
- I would like for there to be a mandatory email address listed for each voter so that we can confirm a mailing address before each election.
- Better communication by embassies, consulates and military VAO's to people in their territory.
- Write in ballots are confusing. It would be better to email regular ballots when they are available.

- Would like to have a place on the application for voter to give specific length of time application is to be honored.
- Be able to contact the military for correct addresses.
- That they would all be home and vote here.
- Have the votes let us know annually if they do or do not want a ballot so we don't waste time and money on the process.
- Should be the state to be able to collect the ballots with each county having their own identifiable envelopes?
- Provide the ability to securely fax or email returns from overseas locations. At present, emailing returns to Florida is not permitted.
- Would like more training on this subject.
- If the addresses were typed...
- Get voters to return their ballots once we send to them.
- More clarity on FPCA form. Last revision helped. Need more changes.
- Have the people concerned directly contact me.
- All states follow the same guidelines. Guidelines for different states confuses overseas and military voters.
- Better USPS service.
- Faster handling of the mail. The absentee ballots are all specially marked but seem to stay in the system too long.

- Additional improvements by DOD expediting the delivery and return of ballots to USPS
- I would like to be able to accept applications on-line or by fax before each election in which the electors wants to vote (no hold-overs). Perhaps using a password or ID number instead of a signature.

3. Addressing

- The common problem is in keeping a correct mailing address for them.
- Need better means to have current overseas addresses for voters using the post card so ballots are sent to a correct address.
- Can not track Overseas Voters as they move from location to location.
- Most of the addresses on the FPCA's become obsolete within 1 to 1-1/2 years time and they result in MANY UNDELIVERABLE BALLOTS BEING SENT OUT
- Current addresses are wrong and the ballots are returned therefore those that wanted to vote were unable
- The biggest problem is getting a good address.
- Unable to contact Military voters due to the lack of updated information.
- I keep all the addresses to the military electors from each election and then mail them out absentees but I get a lot of them back because of them moving and not letting me know. This causes a lot of time and spent on mailing out the information and tax payers money on stamps. I would like to see that when they are transferred or come back home they have to fill out a change of address form.
- It doesn't make sense just to send a ballot out to an old address. We never receive a completed ballot back and sometimes not even returned as undeliverable.
- It is very discouraging to prepare and mail out the military ballots only to have them returned as undeliverable because the voter did not notify the county of his/her new address.

- I wish that all overseas civilian and military personnel would be instructed more thoroughly on the fact that they have to keep our office better informed on their current location so that their ballots will arrive to them correctly the first time they are mailed. Additional mailings waste precious time.
-It is very discouraging to go to all the work of mailing out the ballots only to have them returned as undeliverable because the person has been assigned to another post and not taken the time to notify the election authority of the address change. Why can't those who are interested in voting let us know each election???
- I feel we get the ballots out in plenty of time, but they rarely get the ballot back to vote

4. “Two-Election Cycle” Legislation

- Something needs to be improved about the application process which allows the use of the applications for two general elections. This came about in the HAVA Act. Our work is in vain because the majority of our mail from older applications is being returned unopened which is very unfortunate for the voter.
- We have many with outdated addresses. The two federal elections rule is too long.
- Problem: Rarely are any of these people in the same place for two general elections. Most of them do not know they are receiving ballots for two election cycles when they apply. Confirmation mailers prior to primary elections is partially successful. Mailers need to be done more often for efficient tracking. Time does not allow for this in most offices.
- Have it only for one election cycle too many ballots returned because they have moved. It is costly to for supplies and time to process when many will be returned because they are no longer in the service or overseas and the only election they are interested in is the main fall election not the township and school district elections which require us to send even though they have no interest.
- I think the automatically sending of a ballot for 2 Federal elections after receipt of a FPCA is confusing. It is hard for the voter to know what year they originally contacted us so they either think a ballot is automatically coming and if it doesn't are too late to vote OR they send us an updated application with a new address and we have already sent a

ballot to the old address. We had so many ballots that were sent overseas automatically that I am fairly sure ended up in a dead letter file.

- In 2004 it was passed that overseas FPCA voters could vote in 2 major elections. This needs to be reconsidered they do not stay at one location for long periods of time. In the year of 2006 we made an attempt to contact the requestor by mailing letters to see if they would need absentee ballots for that year. Only a few responded therefore we had no choice but to mail them absentee ballots to find that they went to the polls on election day and that created a problem because they had a ballot in the mail somewhere. It was not their fault. They did not know it was for 2 major elections. Please reconsider the way it was at one time the FPCA card was for 1 year only. It made it a lot easier for the citizens and the absentee clerks as well.
- Sending ballots to overseas voters because they applied for one in the previous election. Over a two year period of time most of them move.
- We also got many phone calls from FPCA voters in the United States upset that we send them a ballot without them requesting one for 2006. We then had to explain that because of the new 3-yr requirement, that they automatically received a ballot for 2006 without specifically requesting it. Some of these voters were either out of the military by now or had registered in another voting jurisdiction and felt uncomfortable that ballots addressed to them were floating around out there. Again, I can't emphasize enough that we should go back to the one year expiration date and not hold these applications for three years when you know that the odds of them being delivered are slim to none because of the military personnel numerous address changes during their tour of duty.
- Have registrations good for only one year. So many of our addresses become obsolete and causes a lot of unnecessary work.
- The voters need to be better informed that they need to keep their mailing addresses updated. Of the ballots we sent out for the Nov. 2006 election, only 24% were returned. Close to 30% were returned by the Post Office as undeliverable (and we are still receiving returns 3 months later). The rest may or may not have reached the voter.
- Federal Voting Assistance Program to stop requiring that we send absentee ballots to military voters whose addresses are insufficient because they have been transferred, gotten out of the military, etc... This costs the taxpayers a lot of money (postage, forms, etc...) and my staff has precious little time during absentee voting seasons. When we get a ballot back undelivered for insufficient address, we should not have to send a ballot to the same address the next election. I contacted an FVAP rep about this and they told me to mail them to the bad address anyway.

5. Military Absentee

- I am the first one to stand up for everyone's right to vote and if military personnel want to vote they have the FPCA available to use from their commanding officers or whoever is in charge of having the forms available. It's not a secret when the elections are held and we are willing to receive and hold the applications until the ballots are ready to mail as long as the address are current. It is very discouraging to go to all the work of mailing out the ballots only to have them returned as undeliverable because the person has been assigned to another post and not taken the time to notify the election authority of the address change. why can't those who are interested in voting let us know each election???
- I keep all military voters in a separate file. Each election I copy the voters that apply to that election. They are also in the computer at a fixed date range which they will be deleted after two federal elections and must re-apply.
- Military electors must update their address with the local official. When we contact FVAP, most of the addresses are not releasable.
- Since we have to keep our military applications for so many years, we get most of those ballots back because of bad addresses.
- The each military unit's Voting Assistance Officer received training every year; frequently we hear from voters that the VAO in their unit is not helpful. Also that the voters would alert us when their mailing address changes!
- Get the military persons to send change of address.
- A military voter in the Sept primary requested a ballot and that request was sent in July but we did not receive it until September. It went to three differenet places before it ended up with our jurisdiction. It was too late for him to receive a ballot.
- Let the military handle the overseas voters if the voter only wants a pres. ballot.
- I think the military should have there own system. Military people move around so much that we have gotten ballots sent back because they have changed locations.
- Go back to yearly registrations.

- The military should apply each and every election due to re-assignments. For military who are already registered they should be able to email a request for a ballot, we should accept that email to get the ballot mailed quickly. We should then request that they follow up with printing off the email and having an original signature on the email and mail that to the office for follow up. **WE MUST HAVE A SIGNED ORIGINAL REQUEST FOR THE BALLOT TO BE COUNTED.**
- Updated Addresses on Military!
- We understand we need to make it easy for the military to vote in our elections. There has to be an easier way. Maybe allowing the military to print their ballot on line from the Secretary of State web site and then provide a special address with the Board of Elections to return the completed ballot. There is a lot of paperwork for mail ballot applications, etc. and when someone is out of the country it is difficult to get the information to them in a timely manner.
- Military people move frequently and can use any number of addresses to request ballots and any number of ballots. I would like to have a expiration date from last known address.
- Have our military send in requests for absentee ballots long before the primaries and general elections so that they may receive their ballot in time to vote it and get it back to us
- It would be nice if someone in the military would inform the military voters about the upcoming elections and give them the information necessary so that they could contact their county election office to request an absentee ballot.
- Timing of the essence...advance planning and posting of literature to voting officers in charge of providing to personnel
- If the military and overseas voters could call or email us for each election, we could get them the ballots much faster and relieve a lot of the time and money wasted on the mailing of ballots that end up coming back to us undeliverable.

6. Problems

- The fact that a faxed return is viewable, however brief, by election officials seems to discourage the otherwise easy process.
- No training.
- It seems that there is not much information or recommendation on how best to handle overseas civilians and Military voters.
- Main problem is data issue. Not enough space in address fields for complete overseas addresses.
- The extreme high cost of sending the ballot to overseas civilians, i.e. a ballot to Kenya cost approximately \$160.00.
- We had over 8,000 FPCAs in the 2006 General Election, at this time over 2,000 still have not been returned by the voter, **over 4,000 were returned by the post office for a bad address**, and so far 88 were returned late by the voter. That leaves a little over 2,000 that were counted out of 8,000. In my opinion that is a BIG problem. The military and overseas civilians need to have better training. **One of our main issues was that the soldiers were not getting correct advice from their voting officers.** Many voters who use the FPCA form believe that it actually registers them as a voter when actually it simply entitles them to a ballot, I am in Texas and this could be different for other states, but if **the title of the FPCA could be changed to take off "Registration" from the title.** I believe this could help with the misunderstandings....
- I feel we get the ballots out in plenty of time, but they rarely get the ballot back to vote.

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to voice our concerns and we hope that we will be able to share some of the other ideas that will be presented by other survey participants. ~Anonymous