



COMDTINST 1742.3L  
6 Jun 2017

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 1742.3L

Subj: COAST GUARD VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Ref: (a) Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act  
(UOCAVA), Public Law 99-410  
(b) Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), DoD Instruction 1000.04

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction:

- a. Applies for the use of all active duty Coast Guard members and their family members. It encourages personnel to actively participate in the federal, state, and local electoral processes of their home states.
- b. Promulgates information about the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) and implements the Coast Guard Voting Assistance Program (VAP) in accordance with Reference (a), Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), Public Law 99-410.
- c. Establishes policy and assigns responsibilities for the development and implementation of the Voting Assistance Office (VAO) and procedures for persons to apply to register to vote at recruiting offices, VAOs, and accession points.

2. ACTION. All Coast Guard unit commanders, commanding officers, officers-in-charge, deputy/assistant commandants, and chiefs of headquarters staff elements shall comply with the provisions of this Instruction. Internet release is authorized.

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3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED.

- a. Coast Guard Voting Assistance Program, COMDTINST 1742.3K is cancelled.
- b. Military Civil and Dependant Affairs, COMDTINST M1700.1, Section 1.B. has been moved to this instruction.

4. BACKGROUND.

- a. Reference (a) is a federal law that protects the right of absentee service members and overseas citizens to vote in U.S. elections by absentee ballot. The FVAP is a continuing federal effort to provide information about registration, as well as voting procedures and materials pertaining to scheduled elections, including dates, offices, constitutional amendments, and other ballot proposals. Additionally, FVAP educates voters on registering and voting by absentee process and in person in their home state's primary, general, special, and run-off elections.
- b. Reference (b) establishes general policies and assigns responsibility for administering this program within the Coast Guard.
- c. Responsibility for the policy regarding the Coast Guard VAP is vested in Commandant (CG-1) and the coordination and execution of the FVAP is managed by Commander, Personnel Service Center (CG PSC).

5. DISCLAIMER. This guidance is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is intended to provide operational guidance for Coast Guard personnel and is not intended to nor does it impose legally-binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard.

6. MAJOR CHANGES. This Instruction identifies Coast Guard VAOs. This Instruction also now consolidates voting policy which was removed from Military Civil and Dependant Affairs, COMDTINST M1700.1, Section 1.B.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS.

- a. The development of this Instruction and the general policies contained within it have been thoroughly reviewed by the originating office in conjunction with the Office of Environmental Management, and are categorically excluded (CE) under current USCG CE #33 from further environmental analysis, in accordance with Section 2.B.2 and Figure 2-1 of the National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures and Policy for Considering Environmental Impacts, COMDTINST M16475.1 (series).
- b. This directive will not have any of the following: significant cumulative impacts on the human environment; substantial controversy or substantial change to existing environmental conditions; or inconsistencies with any Federal, State, or local laws or administrative determinations relating to the environment. All future specific actions

resulting from the general policies in this Instruction must be individually evaluated for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Policy NEPA regulations at 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508, DHS and Coast Guard NEPA policy, and compliance with all other environmental mandates.

7. DISTRIBUTION. No paper distribution will be made of this Instruction. An electronic version will be located on the following Commandant (CG-612) web sites. Internet: <http://www.uscg.mil/directives/> , and CGPortal: <https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/library/directives/SitePages/Home.aspx>.
8. RECORDS MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS. This Instruction has been evaluated for potential records management impacts. The development of this Instruction has been thoroughly reviewed during the directives clearance process, and it has been determined there are no further records scheduling requirements, in accordance with Federal Records Act, 44 U.S.C. 3101 et seq., National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) requirements, and the Information and Life Cycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series). This policy does not have any significant or substantial change to existing records management requirements.
9. POLICY.
  - a. The Coast Guard is provided information from FVAP, <http://www.fvap.gov/>, to share with eligible voters regarding registration and voting procedures and materials pertaining to scheduled elections, including dates, offices, constitutional amendments, and other ballot proposals.
  - b. The right of U.S. citizens to vote is a fundamental right that is afforded protection by the U.S. Constitution. Every eligible voter shall:
    - (1) Be given an opportunity to register and vote in any election for which he or she is eligible.
    - (2) Be able to vote in person or by absentee.
  - c. All persons assisting in the voting process shall take all necessary steps to prevent discrimination, fraud, intimidation or coercion, and unfair registration and voting assistance procedures. This includes, but is not limited to, preventing actions such as:
    - (1) Using military authority to influence the vote of any other member of the uniformed services or to require any member to march to any polling place or place of voting. This Instruction does not, in any way, prohibit free discussion about political issues or candidates for public office.
    - (2) Polling any member of the uniformed services before or after he or she votes.

- d. CG personnel involved in assisting in the voter registration or absentee voting process shall use the names of persons applying or declining to register to vote only for voter registration purposes and shall not release such information for any other purpose.
- e. Commanding Officers of units may permit non-partisan voter registration activities by state and county officials, or groups, subject to all applicable VAO rules and regulations governing such activities.
- f. For the purpose of establishing VAOs, every Coast Guard Base, the Training Center Cape May (TRACEN Cape May), and the Coast Guard Academy (CGA) must have a VAO.

10. RESPONSIBILITIES.

- a. Assistant Commandant for Human Resources (CG-1) will:
  - (1) Ensure all personnel assigned to transition/relocation program offices are informed of the policies in this Instruction and are trained to provide materials educating transitioning personnel on their voting rights and responsibilities.  
Transition/relocation program offices shall work with a VAO to provide pre-printed notices that transitioning personnel may use to inform their election offices to update voter registration and that they are no longer covered by Reference (a).
  - (2) Establish policy and assign responsibilities for the development and implementation of the VAP and VAOs.
- b. Commander, Personnel Service Center (CG-PSC) will:
  - (1) Provide a liaison to the Department of Defense (DoD), specifically the Director of the FVAP.
  - (2) Chief, Personnel Services Division (CG PSC-PSD), is designated as the Senior Service Voting Representative (SSVR). The SSVR is responsible for Service-wide execution of the VAP. The SSVR will appoint a Service Voting Action Officer (SVAO) who, preferably, should be a civilian employee GS-12 or higher, to administer the voting program.
  - (3) Ensure continuing command support at all levels for the Coast Guard VAP.
  - (4) Ensure clear channels of communication are maintained to expedite all voting information down to the unit level.
  - (5) Establish and maintain a voting homepage on the PSC website. This voting homepage will provide specific information regarding the procedures to order voting materials, as well as links to other government voting websites, including a link to the FVAP website. The voting homepage can be accessed at <http://www.uscg.mil/vote>.

- (6) Coordinate the distribution of voting assistance materials to the VAOs.
  - (7) Ensure Coast Guard Recruiting Offices are offering the Voter Registration Information, DD Form 2645.
  - (8) Comply with reporting requirements in Reference (b).
- c. Superintendent, CGA; Commanding Officer, TRACEN Cape May; and Commanding Officer, Coast Guard Recruiting Command, will:
- (1) Offer the Voter Registration Information, Form DD-2645, to all new accessions and to anyone receiving services or assistance at the recruiting offices.
  - (2) Submit to the SVAO a monthly metric report regarding the summary report of Voter Registration Information, DD Form 2645.
  - (3) Ensure members departing from recruit training or the CGA, complete and forward a change of mailing address, Voter Registration and Absentee Ballot Request, Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), Standard Form 76, to their local election officials.
- d. A Unit Voter Assistance Officer (UVAO) is an individual responsible for voting assistance at the unit level. The UVAO will provide voter assistance to military personnel, their eligible dependents, civilian Federal employees, and all qualified voters who have access to such installation offices. VAOs will be governed by the guidance in the IVA Handbook (available at: <https://www.fvap.gov/vao/training/office-training>) and shall also serve as voter registration agencies. UVAOs shall:
- (1) Generally be located in a well-advertised, fixed location, consistent throughout the Coast Guard, and should be physically co-located with an existing office that receives extensive visits by service personnel, family members, and federal civilian employees. The VAO shall be staffed during the hours the installation office is open with trained personnel to provide direct assistance in registration and voting procedures.
  - (2) Be overseen by an VAO who will:
    - (a) Complete Federal Post Card Application (FVAP) training prior to assuming the duties of the UVAO.
    - (b) Supervise all personnel assigned to the VAO.
    - (c) Register in FVAP Administrative Portal, <https://www.fvap.gov/portal/login/welcome.html>
    - (d) Maintain communications with SVAO.
    - (e) Submit voting program metrics monthly to the VAO through FVAP Administrative portal.

- (3) Publish the location, address, hours of operation, phone number, and email address of the respective VAO.
  - (4) Provide written information on voter registration and absentee ballot procedures by providing the applicant with the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), Standard Form 76, and/or Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB), Standard Form 186, (if applicable), or the Voter Registration Information, Form DD-2645, the attached instructions for those forms, and the State-specific instructions from the FVAP website.
  - (5) Provide direct assistance to individuals in completing the forms necessary to register to vote, update their voter registration information, and request absentee ballots.
  - (6) Provide training and voting assistance for units preparing for deployment where voting materials and accessibility to register may be limited due to at-sea or remote area deployment.
- e. Commanding Officers (COs) and Officers-In-Charge (OICs) are responsible for the administration of the Coast Guard VAP within their command. It is the duty of each CO/OIC to:
- (1) Designate a Unit Voting Assistance Officer (UVAO).
  - (2) Ensure that Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots (FWABs), Standard Form 186 are provided to units located overseas and to cutters anticipating deployment immediately prior to or during the scheduled election. These ballots supplement the FPCA as they provide a means of voting for Federal officials if the member's home State absentee ballot does not arrive in time for the election.
  - (3) Ensure UVAOs attend an FVAP workshop during years with elections for federal offices. If the unit is not scheduled to receive an FVAP workshop, the UVAO should attend training at a nearby VAO, when possible. UVAOs at remote locations can access the FVAP website for training.
  - (4) Provide for suitable observance of the Armed Forces Voter Day and Week established for each federal election.
  - (5) Arrange for administering and attesting the oath on the FPCA and with the State ballot, where required. While any commissioned or petty officer may administer and attest such oath, it is recommended that a commissioned officer do so because some States do not honor the oath unless a commissioned officer attests to it.
  - (6) Take all reasonable measures to facilitate transmission, delivery, and return of FPCAs, ballots, envelopes, and instructions identifiable as balloting material to and from command personnel. All such mail originating from overseas should be returned by air mail.

- (a) Ensure compliance with the Department of Defense Postal Manual, DoD 4525.6, which requires proper postmarking and expeditious processing of absentee balloting material.
  - (b) Ensure compliance with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002, Public Law 107-107, which requires that vessels at sea conduct periodic surveys and report if any voting materials are awaiting shipment during the four months leading up to a general federal election. The Office of Information Management, Commandant (CG-61) will provide survey reporting procedures.
- f. Unit Voting Action Officers (UVAOs) are designated in writing by their CO and provide factual, accurate, and totally unbiased information on how the service member and dependents may vote by absentee ballot or in person. It is the duty of the UVAO to:
- (1) Complete FVAP training prior to assuming the duties of the UVAO.
  - (2) Register in FVAP Administrative Portal, <https://www.fvap.gov/portal/login/welcome.html>
  - (3) Train and instruct the command assistant UVAOs in the conduct of their responsibilities.
  - (4) Provide adequate training and information on all aspects of the VAP, to include familiarity with the FPCA and the FWAB, and set aside periods prior to primary elections devoted to registration and voting procedures. Ensure that these sessions are available to spouses and eligible dependents.
  - (5) Retain records of training conducted at the unit level, including dates and attendees, for at least one calendar year.
  - (6) Encourage unit service members to access the FVAP web site (<http://www.fvap.gov/>) for all voting information and materials, when possible.
  - (7) Maintain an adequate supply of current FPCAs and FWABs for issue to every member and eligible dependent. Electronic versions are acceptable.
  - (8) Review the stock of voting materials and ensure adequate quantities are maintained on hand.
  - (9) Advise personnel on how to establish State voting eligibility and when, how, and with what frequency to request ballots.
  - (10) Contact VAO for any issues not covered in the Coast Guard VAP.
  - (11) Work with the CO to plan and establish an effective voting program. It is important for every member of voting age to know his or her State registration status and the specific requirements for a ballot.

11. FORMS/REPORTS. The form referenced in this Instruction is available in USCG Electronic Forms on the Standard Workstation or on the Internet: <http://www.uscg.mil/forms/>; CG Portal at <https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/library/forms/SitePages/Home.aspx>; and Intranet at <http://cgweb.comdt.uscg.mil/CGForms>, and <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/forms/forminfo/forminfo2084.html>.
12. REQUESTS FOR CHANGES. Units and individuals may recommend changes via their chain of command using the Coast Guard memorandum to the Office of Military Personnel, Policy and Standards Division, Commandant (CG-1331): HQS-PolicyandStandards@uscg.mil.

A. S. McKinley /s/  
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Acting Director of Reserve and Military Personnel