U.S. Department of Homeland Security
United States Coast Guard

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United States Coast Guard

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COMDTINST 1742.3K
JUL 20, 2004

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 1742.3K

Subj: COAST GUARD VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Ref: (a) Personnel Manual, COMDTINST M1000.6 (series)
(b) Federal Voting Assistance Guide 2004-2005
(c) Federal Voting Assistance Program, DoD Directive 1000.4
(d) DoD Voting Action Plan 2004-2005

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction promulgates information about the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) and implements the Coast Guard Voting Assistance Program in accordance with the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 USC 1973). This Instruction is for the use of all active duty Coast Guard members and their dependents. It encourages personnel to actively participate in the federal, state, and local electoral processes of their home states.

2. ACTION. Area and district commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistic commands, commanding officers of headquarters units, assistant commandants for directorates, Chief Counsel, and special staff offices at Headquarters shall ensure compliance with the provisions of this Instruction. Internet release is authorized.

3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. The Coast Guard Voting Assistance Program, COMDTINST 1742.3J, is canceled.

4. BACKGROUND.

a. The FVAP is a continuing federal effort to assist eligible voters in registering and voting by absentee process and in person in their home state primary, general, special, and national elections.

DISTRIBUTION – SDL No.141

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NON-STANDARD DISTRIBUTION:

b. Chapter 16.B of reference (a) establishes general policies and fixes responsibility for administering this program within the Coast Guard. Reference (b) provides specific guidance for unit Voting Action Officers' use in conducting unit-voting efforts. References (c) and (d) establish DoD policy concerning federal voting assistance.

c. Responsibility for coordinating the Coast Guard Voting Assistance Program is vested in Commandant (G-WPM-1). To reach the Coast Guard Voting Action Officer, call 202-267-1636, 800-842-8740 (ext. 7-1636), or fax 202-267-4823. Postal mailing and delivery issues should be directed to the Coast Guard Mail Manager at 202-267-2313. Additionally, the Voting Information Center (VIC), phone 800-438-8683 or 703-588-1343, provides a 24-hour recorded service with information on upcoming elections and messages from incumbent government officials. The VIC may also be called from overseas using the appropriate international toll-free number found on the FVAP website or in the Federal Voting Assistance Guide 2004-2005.

d. Enclosures (1), (2), and (3) provide specific information about the 2004-2005 voting season.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS. Environmental considerations were examined in the development of this Instruction and have been determined to be not applicable.

6. FORMS AVAILABILITY. The Registration and Absentee Ballot Request – Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), SF-76 (Rev. 1995), NSN 7540-00-634-5053, Unit of Issue – HD and the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB), SF-186 (Rev. 1995), NSN 7540-01-218-4384, Unit of Issue – HD should be ordered from GSA using unit funds.

THOMAS F. FISHER /s/
Acting Director of Personnel Management

Encl: (1) Voting Action Plan (2004-2005)
(2) 2004-2005 Phased Program Schedule
(3) List of Information Support Materials and Services

VOTING ACTION PLAN (2004-2005)

A. PURPOSE. To implement the federal functions of the Uniformed and Overseas Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002, and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002, disseminate information and guidance, and coordinate tasks related to the voting program.

B. OBJECTIVES. To ensure that the following voters are provided all necessary voting information including voting age requirements, election dates, offices on the ballot, constitutional amendments, other ballot proposals, and absentee registration and voting procedures:

1. Members of the U.S. Armed Forces or uniformed services in active service;

2. Spouses or dependents of members above;

3. U.S. citizens temporarily outside the United States.

C. TASKS.

1. Per reference (b) the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) will:

   a. Coordinate all aspects of the FVAP and perform all tasks assigned to the Presidential designee by the UOCAVA.

   b. Advise all DoD components and other executive branch departments and agencies concerning federal, state, and local election laws and procedures.

   c. Assist eligible persons to register and request absentee ballot.

   d. Publicize the right of citizens to register and vote.

   e. Review and coordinate the informational and educational effort directed toward all persons covered by the UOCAVA.

   f. Provide information on elections, including dates and offices involved.

   g. Conduct training workshops and program orientations in consultation with state and local election officials.

   h. Ensure the IN-HAND delivery of Federal Post Card Applications (FPCA) to all eligible voters.

   i. Actively collect and share best practices identified by Service, agency/department, and state voting assistance programs.

2. Commandant (G-WP) will:

   a. Ensure continuing command support at all levels for the Voting Assistance Program.

   b. Designate the Deputy Director of Personnel Management as the Senior Service Voting Representative who is responsible for Service-wide implementation of respective voting assistance programs. The Deputy Director will also manage the voting program for Reserve component members who have been called to active federal service. The Senior Service Voting Representative shall appoint a Service Voting Action Officer who, preferably, should be a civilian employee (GS-12 or higher) to administer the voting program. If a military member is assigned as Service Voting Action Officer, that member should be at least an O-2, if an officer, or at least an E-8, if enlisted.

   c. Ensure clear channels of communication are maintained to expedite all voting information down to the unit level.

   d. Establish and maintain a voting homepage on the headquarters website. This voting homepage will provide specific information regarding the Coast Guard's Voting Action Plan, procedures to order voting materials, and links to other government voting websites, including a link to the FVAP website.

   e. Direct internal information media to publicize all 2004 and 2005 FVAP aspects.

   f. Coordinate distribution of voting assistance materials for Voting Assistance Officer (VAO) use at all command levels through the Department of Homeland Security initial distribution section.

   g. Ensure VAOs are aware of procedures to obtain additional materials and assistance.

   h. Conduct an information support program along the guidelines set forth in the DoD Voting Information Support Plan, 2004-2005.

   i. Coordinate voting information support materials with the Director, FVAP.

   j. File an after action report NLT 14 January 2005 with the Director, FVAP summarizing successes and/or problems experienced in the conduct of the program. A checklist for and the format of this report will be provided by FVAP.

   k. Assist in conducting a survey of military members, civilian employees outside the U.S., and unit VAOs in the manner specified by the Director, FVAP.

   l. Revise command/organization directives or instructions on voting assistance as necessary.

3. Unit commanding officers will:

   a. Designate in writing a unit VAO responsible for implementation of the unit's voting assistance program.

   b. Ensure all unit VAOs attend an FVAP voting assistance workshop during years with elections for federal offices. If the unit is not scheduled to receive an FVAP workshop, the VAO should attend training at a nearby installation when possible. VAOs at remote locations can access the FVAP website for training.

   c. Ensure that Unit VAOs provide adequate training and information on all aspects of the voting program, to include familiarity with the FPCA and the FWAB, and set aside periods devoted to registration and voting procedures prior to primary elections.

   d. Ensure that these sessions are available to spouses and eligible dependents.

   e. Each unit will designate at least one well-advertised fixed location where absentee voting materials and assistance is available to all military personnel, civilian employees, and their family members.

   f. Locations may include legal assistance offices, family service centers, community centers, etc.

   g. Encourage access to the FVAP Web Site (www.fvap.gov) for all voting information and materials. If web access is not available, ensure that voting information and related materials are obtained and disseminated in a timely manner. FPCAs are to be purchased in sufficient quantities to furnish registration and ballot request support for all primary and general elections. Most states accept the on-line version of the FPCA, which is available at www.fvap.gov.

   h. Ensure the IN-HAND delivery of FPCAs as follows:

      (1) By 15 August of each calendar year to all military personnel, civilian employees, and their eligible dependents who are outside the United States.

      (2) By 15 September of each calendar year to all military personnel and their eligible dependents who are within the United States.

      This distribution is in addition to FPCAs provided for use in primary elections.

i. Emphasize the week of 3-11 September 2004 as Armed Forces Voters Week. Commanding Officers and VAOs will develop comprehensive command-wide voting awareness and assistance programs and activities to include local events publicizing the upcoming elections and focusing on the importance of voting. Activities scheduled should include voting programs aimed at informing eligible voters on procedures required to obtain absentee ballots for the general elections, including dissemination of supporting materials. These events should also be scheduled throughout the voting cycle to emphasize voting awareness and assistance before primary, special, and run-off elections.

j. Commanding officers of cutters with FPO addresses that are at sea during the voting period leading up to a general federal election shall ensure compliance with the Department of Defense Postal Manual, 4525.6-M, which requires proper postmarking and expeditious processing of absentee balloting material. The commanding officer shall also ensure compliance with Public Law 107-107, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002, 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. Commandant (CG-61) will provide survey reporting procedures.

2004 – 2005 PHASED PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Phase I -- Preparation and Initiation During Period of 1 November 2003 - Spring 2004

1. Disseminate the Federal Voting Assistance Guide 2004-2005 and associated materials.

2. Develop and implement Service Voting Action Plans for the 2004-2005 elections.

3. Encourage access to the FVAP website (www.fvap.gov) for all voting information and materials. If web access is not available, ensure mail distribution of voting information.

4. Ensure procurement of FPCAs and FWABs, which are purchased by each unit with unit funds.

5. Commandant (CG-61) shall verify that cutters with FPO addresses have postmarking equipment on-hand and shall provide information regarding the requirement for surveys during the four months leading up to a general federal election.

6. Information efforts shall begin with commanding officers and VAOs conducting command information programs prior to primary elections and repeating, as necessary, to inform and motivate military personnel and their family members to exercise their right to vote in primary and general elections. Family members will be encouraged to participate in these programs.

Phase II -- Registration and Primary Elections During Period of January – October 2004 (This phase will require careful planning and execution of voting assistance programs in order to inform potential voters of the primary elections scheduled to begin in early 2004.)

1. VAOs shall attend a voting assistance workshop and shall concentrate on providing absentee registration and voting assistance to personnel and eligible family members for federal, state, and run-off primary elections.

2. Ensure procurement and distribution of FWABs for use by citizens in overseas areas and on seagoing vessels. The FWAB may be used only for the general election (federal offices) under conditions specified in the Federal Voting Assistance Guide 2004-2005 although some jurisdictions may expand the use of the FWAB to primary, state, and local elections. For specific information, refer to this Guide.

3. Ensure IN-HAND delivery of FPCAs to personnel overseas NLT 15 August.

4. Conduct Armed Forces Voters Week (week of 3-11 2004). Develop programs to create voting awareness and to motivate absentee voters to participate in the general election. Publicize the importance of early action and planning ahead on the part of the absentee voter in order to obtain a ballot for the general election well in advance of election deadlines.

5. VAOs on cutters with FPO addresses that are at sea during the months of July and August shall submit bi-weekly surveys, in accordance with Commandant (CG-61) guidance, and indicate if any voting materials are on-hand awaiting shipment.

Phase III -- Requesting Ballots for the General Election During Period of August – 2 November 2004

1. Continue disseminating voting information.

2. Ensure IN-HAND delivery of FPCAs to personnel within the United States, as NLT 15 September.

3. Communicate how and when to use the FWAB and recommend its use if the voter meets the criteria and does not receive the regular absentee ballot in sufficient time to vote and return it to be counted.

4. VAOs on cutters with FPO addresses that are at sea during the months of September and October shall submit weekly surveys, in accordance with Commandant (CG-61) guidance, and indicate if any voting materials are on-hand awaiting shipment.

Phase IV -- Evaluation During the Period of 3 November – 31 December 2004

Assist, as requested, with post-election surveys of military members, overseas civilian employees and Unit VAOs. The surveys' findings will be used in formulating plans for future voting assistance programs and as a part of the Seventeenth Report on the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

LIST OF INFORMATION SUPPORT MATERIALS AND SERVICES

1. FVAP World Wide Web Home Page. Located at http://www.fvap.gov, the site provides an overview of the FVAP as well as electronic access to voting materials. In addition, this site provides election information, access to the on-line FPCA, links to state government homepages, and links to other sites with election information and results.

2. 2004 - 2005 Voting Assistance Guide. A reference guide for VAOs that provides a compendium of state-by-state absentee voting procedures.

3. VAO Training. A training workshop is available at the FVAP website.

4. Posters. Voting posters are available for use by the Armed Forces, State Department, and other government agencies. Initial requirements for posters will be coordinated by the FVAP with DoD components and other government agencies. Distribution is made through normal supply channels. These posters will also be available for sale to the public through the Government Printing Office.

5. News Articles and Features. News and feature articles are released to all media on the voting assistance program emphasizing primary elections, Overseas Citizens Voters Week, Armed Forces Voters Week, and the general elections. Departments and/or agencies outside the DoD will be sent this information for their use as appropriate.

6. DoD Voting Information Center (VIC). The VIC is a 24-hour automated telephone system that contains election information. Anyone may call the VIC at 800-438-8683, 703-588-1343 or, if overseas, by using the appropriate toll-free number listed on the FVAP website or in the Federal Voting Assistance Guide 2004-2005.

7. Voting Information News Newsletter. This is a monthly newsletter published by the FVAP. It contains up-to-date information on voting-related matters and is distributed to all VAOs by regular mail or e-mail. Current and past newsletters are also available for download on the FVAP website.

8. FVAP Electronic Transmission Service. Where allowed by state law, a military or overseas citizen may electronically transmit the FPCA to local election officials by using one of the following numbers: 800-368-8683, 703-693-5527. or the appropriate international toll-free number listed on the FVAP website or in the Federal Voting Assistance Guide 2004-2005.

9. Ombudsman Service. The FVAP provides an Ombudsman Service for VAOs, voters, and local election officials to resolve problems or answer questions. Call 800-438-8683, 703-588-1584, or use the appropriate international toll-free number listed on the FVAP website or in the Federal Voting Assistance Guide 2004-2005.