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STATEMENT OF
MR. MICHAEL L. DOMINGUEZ
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

ON THE
FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

ON
APRIL 15, 2008

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*Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
for Personnel and Readiness*

Mr. Michael L. Dominguez

Michael L. Dominguez was nominated by the President as the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness on November 21, 2005 and confirmed by the Senate on July 11, 2006. As a presidential appointee confirmed by the Senate, he is the primary assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness providing staff advice to the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of Defense for total force management as it relates to manpower; force structure; readiness; reserve component affairs; health affairs; training; and personnel policy and management, including equal opportunity, morale, welfare, recreation, and quality of life matters.



Prior to this appointment, Mr. Dominguez served, from August 2001 until July 2006, as the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. His responsibilities included developing and overseeing Air Force manpower and personnel policies, readiness, and Reserve Component affairs.

Mr. Dominguez also served as Acting-Secretary of the Air Force from March 28, 2005 thru July 29, 2005. In this role, he was responsible for the affairs of the Department of the Air Force, including the organizing, training, equipping and providing for the

welfare of its more than 360,000 men and women on active duty, 180,000 members of the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve, 160,000 civilians, and their families.

As an Air Force dependent, Mr. Dominguez grew up on bases around the world. After graduating in 1975 from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, reported to Vicenza, Italy, then worked varied assignments with the 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry (Airborne) and the Southern European Task Force. After leaving the military in 1980, Mr. Dominguez went into private business and attended Stanford University's Graduate School of Business. In 1983 he joined the Office of the Secretary of Defense as an analyst for Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E).

Mr. Dominguez entered the Senior Executive Service in 1991 as PA&E's Director for Planning and Analytical Support. In this position he oversaw production of DOD's long-range planning forecast and its \$12 billion in annual information technology investments. He also directed the PA&E modernization of computing, communications and modeling infrastructure. He joined the Chief of Naval Operations staff in 1994 and assisted in the Navy's development of multi-year programs and annual budgets. Mr. Dominguez left federal government in 1997 to join a technology service organization. In 1999 he began work at the Center for Naval Analyses where he organized and directed studies of complex public policy and program issues. In 2001 he rejoined the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations where he worked until his appointment as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force.

Mr. Chairman, Representative Ehlers, and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Federal Voting Assistance Program in the Department of Defense.

In 1988, President Reagan issued Executive Order 12642 designating the Secretary of Defense as his agent to implement the provisions of the 1986 *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* and to discharge the Federal functions required by the *Act*. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Dr. David S.C. Chu, is responsible for administering the UOCAVA.

Background

The UOCAVA safeguards the right to vote for federal offices by absent uniformed Service members and their families, and overseas U. S. citizens. In the administration of this law, the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program works cooperatively with state and local election officials to carry out its provisions. As mandated by the *Act*, the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program prescribes the Federal Post Card Application, which is a uniform registration and ballot request form, and the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot, which is used by voters as a back-up federal office ballot in cases where their requested state ballot does not arrive promptly. In 2005, both forms were revised to make them easier to use while safeguarding the citizen's private information, and providing additional important information to election officials such as the citizen's email address and his or her alternate mailing address.

The absentee voting process for *UOCAVA* citizens requires the successful completion of three basic steps. Step 1: The citizen registers to vote and requests an absentee ballot from his or her local election official using the Federal Post Card Application. Step 2: Upon receipt of the completed Federal Post Card Application, the local election official determines the citizen's legal voting residence based on the information provided, and provides a state absentee ballot to the citizen. Step 3: The citizen votes the ballot and returns it to his or her local election official. Traditionally these steps are accomplished by mail via the United States Postal Service, Military Postal Service Agency, and foreign postal systems. The Department has and will continue to be involved in applying modern information technologies in support of the absentee voting process.

Revised Strategic Plan

The Department has recently revised our strategic plan for supporting all *UOCAVA* citizens in the absentee voting process. Our goals in this plan remain unchanged:

- All U.S. citizens are aware of their right to vote
- All *UOCAVA* citizens have the opportunity to vote and have their votes counted, and
- All states and territories adopt legislation and procedures to make the absentee voting process simple and uniform for *UOCAVA* citizens.

To accomplish these goals, the Department continues to reach out to *UOCAVA* citizens and to federal, state and local government officials; to advocate the maximum

incorporation of existing and emerging technologies within the absentee voting process: and to encourage state adoption of Federal Voting Assistance Program legislative initiatives. The Federal Voting Assistance Program staff monitors the mailing of absentee ballots from local election officials to *UOCAVA* citizens and, when these ballots are not mailed in a timely manner, the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program works with the Department of Justice to ensure these citizens have the opportunity to vote and have their votes counted.

Recent Statutory Direction

Title VII of the *Help America Vote Act of 2002* required the Secretary of Defense to prescribe regulations and procedures so that Voting Assistance Officers are provided time and resources necessary to perform their duties; to implement measures to ensure a postmark or other official proof of mailing is placed on ballots collected by the Department overseas or vessels at sea; and to develop a standard oath for *UOCAVA* voting materials. All of these provisions required by Title VII have been successfully implemented.

The *Act* required states to designate a single office responsible for *UOCAVA* citizen procedures; to report to the Election Assistance Commission on the number of *UOCAVA* absentee ballots sent, received and cast; to extend the effective period of the Federal Post Card Application through the next two regularly scheduled general elections; to inform *UOCAVA* voters if their registration or ballot applications were refused and the reason for the refusal; and to accept a Federal Post Card Application submitted early in the calendar year. The Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program

issued a *Help America Vote Act* interpretative memorandum dealing with *UOCAVA* related issues and sent the memorandum to state and local election officials in August 2003. Title V, Subtitle I of the *National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2005* expanded the use of the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot to allow for its use by uniformed service members and their eligible family members within the United States, thereby allowing all *UOCAVA* citizens to use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot if their state absentee ballot had been requested but not received, providing that the request was received by their local election jurisdiction either 30 days before the general election or the state deadline for registration and ballot request, whichever is later. These changes to the law have led to improvements in the absentee voting process by removing obstacles faced by *UOCAVA* voters.

The NDAA for FY 2005 also required that, prior to proceeding with any electronic voting demonstration project, electronic absentee voting guidelines and standards must be established by the Election Assistance Commission. The Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Election Assistance Commission regarding responsibilities and roles in developing these guidelines and standards. The parties are developing a plan of action and milestones for the issuance of guidelines and standards. The Department has provided the Election Assistance Commission with system design information and lessons learned from electronic voting projects previously carried out by the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

Progress in Working with State Governments

State legislatures are also moving forward to facilitate absentee voting. For several years now, the Federal Voting Assistance Program has proposed legislative initiatives to state officials that would facilitate absentee voting for *UOCAVA* citizens.

The current top legislative priorities are for states and territories to:

- Provide at least 40-45 days between the ballot mailing date and the date ballots are due.
- Give State Chief Election Officials the emergency authority to alter election procedures in certain circumstances (e.g., to extend the ballot return deadline, or to allow electronic transmission of blank or voted ballots).
- Allow election officials to provide a state write-in absentee ballot, to be sent out 90-180 days before all elections. This state write-in absentee ballot would allow the voter to cast votes for federal and state offices.
- Further expand the use of electronic transmission alternatives for voting materials.

Much progress has been made over the years through hard work by all the stakeholders concerned with absentee voting. Currently, 37 states, 3 territories and the District of Columbia provide at least 40-45 days between the ballot mailing date and the date ballots are due; 16 states, Guam and the District of Columbia give Chief Election Officials the emergency authority to alter election procedures in certain circumstances; 27 states allow election officials to provide a state write-in absentee ballot; and 47 states,

3 territories and the District of Columbia provide for the electronic transmission of voting materials.

Educating

The Department devotes considerable resources to ensure that *UOCAVA* citizens are properly informed and educated about the process of absentee voting. Education includes formal training of Voting Assistance Officers, providing information to state and local election officials, and ensuring that *UOCAVA* citizens have adequate and proper access to the necessary materials and the means to request and submit their absentee ballots.

Federal Voting Assistance Program staff members conduct voting assistance workshops to prepare for upcoming elections. These workshops give Voting Assistance Officers the hands-on training they need to understand their mission and to perform their duties. To prepare for the 2004 election, Federal Voting Assistance Program staff members conducted a total of 164 workshops worldwide. In anticipation of the early 2008 primary election schedule, the workshop training began in September 2007 and will continue through September 2008. A total of 155 workshops are planned for this period.

These workshops include:

- 24 at the Federal Voting Assistance Program headquarters in Rosslyn, Virginia.
- 86 at military installations around the world.
- 45 at Department of State posts for State Department personnel and members of overseas citizen organizations who help facilitate the process.

From September, 2007 through March 31, 2008, 125 workshops have been conducted.

For Voting Assistance Officers who are unable to attend an in-person workshop, E-learning options are available to receive certified training via the internet or CD-ROM. A slide presentation for use by installation or unit level Voting Assistance Officers is available online.

In addition to the in-person and on-line training opportunities, the Federal Voting Assistance Program maintains a website that provides Voting Assistance Officers and local election officials with a wealth of information regarding their responsibilities. Recognizing that the website is a vital resource for both persons that provide voting assistance and the voters, the Program is redesigning the site to enhance content and improve usability for all visitors to the site by incorporating results from stakeholder usability testing.

Since state and local election officials are the individuals who administer elections, they are crucial allies in facilitating absentee voting. *UOCAVA* success relies on their actions. Many states have adopted legislation that has brought simplicity, uniformity, consistency and clarity to the absentee voting process. It is important that these election officials be kept abreast of the latest issues with *UOCAVA* voting. The Federal Voting Assistance Program regularly sends memoranda and letters to local election officials providing education and clarification of *UOCAVA* issues. A monthly newsletter specifically addressing military and overseas citizens' issues for election officials is also provided by the Federal Voting Assistance Program. In addition, during

the past year the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program and staff have addressed officials at conferences of these national and international election official organizations:

- National Association of Secretaries of State
- National Association of State Election Directors
- International Association of Clerks, Recorders, Election Officials and Treasurers
- National Association of Election Officials (Election Center) and the Joint Election Official Liaison Committee
- National Association of County Recorders, Election Officials and Clerks

The Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program and staff addressed state and local election officials at conferences in:

- Alabama
- Colorado
- Florida
- Indiana
- Louisiana
- Minnesota
- New Jersey
- New Mexico
- New York
- North Carolina

- Ohio
- Pacific Northwest Elections Conference (Oregon and Washington as co-hosts with 12 other states represented)
- South Carolina
- South Dakota
- Texas
- Virginia
- West Virginia

When addressing these state and local election officials, the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program recommends practices and procedures to maximize the effectiveness of *UOCAVA*. These recommendations include:

- Providing sufficient ballot transit time.
- Providing simple ballot marking and return instructions with absentee ballots, including instructions to return the voted ballot by fax or email where authorized.
- Differentiating between *UOCAVA* and other state absentee voters in state and local literature, in state laws and administrative codes, and on state and local election websites.
- Ensuring all employees in local election offices throughout the state are trained on their responsibilities under *UOCAVA*.

- Preparing a state *UOCAVA* Voter Guide for publication on website and in hard copy.
- Providing a webpage dedicated to *UOCAVA* citizens and elections in which *UOCAVA* citizens can participate, including portals for voter registration verification.
- Using electronic alternatives for the transmission of balloting materials.

Informing and Equipping

The Department works to ensure that uniformed service voters and overseas citizens are informed about upcoming elections and the procedures for registering and requesting an absentee ballot. Department communication efforts seek to gain maximum exposure for the voting program in a variety of communications media. Department and Federal Voting Assistance Program leadership publicize absentee voting through commercial print and broadcast media outlets. Stories on absentee voting are run on the American Forces Radio and Television Service, the American Forces Network, the Pentagon Channel, American Forces Information Service, and Defense Link, as well as in private and military focused print publications such as *Stars and Stripes* and in overseas publications. As in past years, reminders about voting are printed on the leave and earnings statements of all service members and overseas DoD personnel. One email notification regarding voting has already been sent to more than one million service members, with more planned as we approach the November election.

Communication is undertaken through extensive Service and Executive Branch command support. Particular emphasis is placed on voting awareness to reach individual

members of military units. Messages regarding absentee voting are included on Service websites, in the Plans of the Day, and at Commander's Call briefings. Billboards have been posted on installations informing members of their right to vote. The Department's new Infonet system is being used in the Pentagon, the Navy Annex, and the Pentagon Library Conference Center to broadcast electronic messages that encourage voter registration and participation in both the primary and general election. Installations support Armed Forces Voters Week (August 31 – September 7, 2008). Efforts extend to family members through displays, voter registration drives, and information at Morale, Welfare and Recreation Facilities, Family Service Centers, medical facilities, commissaries and exchanges, and DoD Dependent Schools. As in years past, the Department will use Absentee Voting Week, October 12-18, 2008, to encourage voters to return their voted ballots for the General Election to the local election official offices.

Absentee voting information and materials are distributed to the Department of State posts through State's internal communication networks. The Federal Voting Assistance Program provides on-site training to post Voting Assistance Officers to ensure that they are equipped to provide non-partisan voting assistance. Additionally, the Program supports overseas citizens groups by directly providing voting assistance and thousands of copies of the Federal Post Card Application, Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot, the *Voting Assistance Guide*, and other informational and motivational voting materials. Overseas Citizens Voters Week (June 28-July 7, 2008), scheduled by the Department biennially since 1994, is promoted through the Federal Voting Assistance Program's training workshops and their monthly newsletter, the *Voting Information*

News. State Department posts and overseas citizens groups are encouraged to use this week to conduct voter registration drives, inform U.S. citizens residing abroad about their voting rights and responsibilities, and provide them with the materials they need to successfully vote absentee.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program website (www.fvap.gov) provides uniformed service members, voting age family members, and overseas citizens with remote access to voting information directly on their computer. The site received 2,483,757 separate page requests for calendar year 2007. During that time period, the online version of the Federal Post Card Application was accessed 102,946 times. The site is updated frequently with information pertinent to absentee voters. For the first three months of calendar year 2008, the site received 3,073,413 page requests. The online version of the Federal Post Card Application was accessed 262,635 times.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program provides up-to-date information to Voting Assistance Officers through its monthly newsletter and issues special news releases to announce time sensitive information (e.g., changes in absentee procedures or the holding of special federal elections). Both the newsletter and the News Releases are distributed electronically via email and posted on the Federal Voting Assistance Program website. The newsletter is also made available in a hardcopy format.

The Department provides voters and Voting Assistance Officers the tools, materials, and information necessary to facilitate registration, ballot request, and ballot transmission. The Federal Voting Assistance Program made the updated 2008-2009 *Voting Assistance Guide* available for distribution 2.5 months earlier than in previous

years to accommodate the early primary election dates for 2008. Since September 1, 2007, tens of thousands of hard copies of the Federal Post Card Application and the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot have been distributed directly to the states, the Services, State Department offices, other executive branch agencies, overseas citizens groups, and individuals. The Services distribute *Voting Assistance Guides*, Federal Post Card Applications and Federal Write-in Absentee Ballots to their Voting Assistance Officers and individual voters through their normal supply chains. All of these materials are, of course, also available through the Federal Voting Assistance Program website.

Facilitating Ballot Transmission

The Department takes extraordinary steps to ensure that members of the uniformed services, their family members, and overseas citizens have an opportunity to vote. Expediting ballots through any and all media accepted by state and local election officials is a very important aspect of the absentee process.

In 2004 and 2006 the U. S. Postal Service handled ballots using Express Mail procedures while those ballots were within its system. I want to thank the U. S. Postal Service, particularly Mr. Paul Vogel, Senior Vice President of Global Business, for the outstanding support provided in expediting balloting materials so that our service men and women could exercise their franchise. The Military Postal Service also used special handling and expediting procedures while transporting ballots outside the U.S. to and from overseas military post offices.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program, in conjunction with the U. S. Postal Service and Military Postal Service Agency, is again ensuring that military absentee

ballots are expedited. Beginning September 15, 2008 absentee ballots from local election officials will be handled expeditiously with special handling procedures to the military mail gateways and then to overseas military post offices to ensure that absentee ballots arrive promptly. This expedited delivery includes special marking and handling of absentee ballots. Beginning October 29, 2008 through November 4, 2008 the Military Postal Service Agency will ensure absentee ballots from overseas military postal activities are expedited back to the local election official.

The Department's effort to expedite delivery of ballots starts well before the election year. The Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) ensures that its postal personnel are trained, certified and have the necessary resources to handle absentee ballots. MPSA published a 2008 Voting Action Plan, Calendar and monthly voting messages to all military postal activities reminding them of the proper procedures in handling ballots. All military postal activities in forward deployed roles have postmarking devices to ensure that ballots are legibly postmarked. Surveys of all military post offices are conducted weekly from November 2007 through November 2008 to ensure ballots are not delayed. The Military Postal Service Agency publishes recommended mailing dates based on transportation transit times and geographic locations, to help ensure ballots are received by state deadlines and service members understand when their absentee ballots must be returned to their local election officials.

For those citizens who may not be able to vote by mail, the use of technology can provide alternative means for voters and local election officials to send and receive voting materials. In 1990, the Federal Voting Assistance Program initiated an emergency

measure (with the cooperation of the states and territories) to use electronic transmission (facsimile technology) and established the Electronic Transmission Service so that uniformed services members deployed during Operation Desert Shield could participate in the upcoming general election. The Electronic Transmission Service allowed these voters deployed in the Persian Gulf to fax their registration request application and the local election official to fax the blank ballot to the voter. What began as a special effort is now widely accepted by most states and institutionalized through state legislation. The Department aggressively promotes expanding use of technology through electronic transmission alternatives. Fax and email options for registering to vote, requesting an absentee ballot, receiving the absentee ballot, and returning the voted absentee ballot greatly reduce the amount of time needed to complete the absentee voting process, and give *UOCAVA* voters additional alternatives when regular mail is slow or unreliable. The Department urges the states to provide as many options as possible to meet citizens' needs. Electronic transmission by fax, email or through the Internet have become worthwhile alternatives to the by-mail absentee voting process for our men and women in uniform.

Currently, the Electronic Transmission Service exists as a toll-free option for voters to send their applications, receive their blank ballots and return voted ballots to local election officials. Voters have the capability of sending and receiving their absentee balloting materials through toll-free fax numbers in 51 countries. Uniformed service members and dependents also have access to a toll-free number through the Defense Switch Network. Currently:

- 28 states, 2 territories and the District of Columbia allow *UOCAVA* voters to submit a Federal Post Card Application for registration by fax.
- 47 states, 3 territories and the District of Columbia allow *UOCAVA* voters to submit a Federal Post Card Application for absentee ballot request via fax.
- 35 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands allow *UOCAVA* voters to receive the blank ballot via fax.
- 23 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands allow *UOCAVA* voters to return the voted ballot via fax.

Many states and territories have expanded their electronic transmission alternative capabilities to include email. The Federal Voting Assistance Program is aggressively urging states to consider using email as an integral part of the electronic alternatives made available to their citizens. Since many forward deployed soldiers have email capabilities but do not have access to fax capabilities, the institution of processes that allow for email ballot request, ballot delivery, and ballot return can be crucial to enfranchisement. Currently:

- Seventeen jurisdictions allow *UOCAVA* voters to submit a Federal Post Card Application for absentee ballot request via email.
 - Alaska
 - Colorado (for active duty outside the U.S.)
 - Illinois (the City of Chicago and suburban Cook County)
 - Indiana (must use FVAP's electronic transmission service only)

- Minnesota
 - Mississippi (for active duty overseas)
 - Missouri
 - Montana
 - North Carolina
 - North Dakota
 - Oregon
 - Puerto Rico
 - South Dakota
 - Virginia
 - Washington
 - West Virginia (certain counties only)
 - Wisconsin
- Ten states allow *UOCAVA* voters to submit a Federal Post Card Application for registration via email.
 - Alaska
 - Colorado (for active duty outside the U.S.)
 - Indiana (must use FVAP's electronic transmission service only)
 - Mississippi (for active duty overseas)
 - Montana
 - North Carolina
 - Oregon

- Virginia
- Washington
- West Virginia (certain counties only)
- Fourteen states allow *UOCAVA* voters to receive the blank ballot via email.
 - Colorado (for active duty outside the U.S.)
 - Delaware
 - Florida
 - Illinois (the City of Chicago and suburban Cook County)
 - Indiana (must use FVAP's electronic transmission service only)
 - Mississippi (for active duty overseas)
 - Montana
 - North Dakota
 - Oregon
 - South Carolina
 - Virginia
 - Washington
 - West Virginia (certain counties only)
 - Wisconsin
- Eight states allow *UOCAVA* voters to return the voted ballot via email.
 - Colorado
 - Indiana (must use FVAP's electronic transmission service only)
 - Mississippi (for active duty overseas)

- Missouri (for voters in federal service in inaccessible locales for 2008 primary election)
- Montana
- North Dakota
- South Carolina
- West Virginia (certain counties only)

Since 2005, the Federal Voting Assistance Program has encouraged states and territories to make available to citizens website portals that allow voters to check their registration. To date, ballot registration status sites have been launched in 29 jurisdictions:

- Arizona
- Arkansas
- Colorado
- Delaware
- District of Columbia
- Georgia
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Louisiana

- Maryland
- Michigan
- Nebraska
- Nevada
- New Mexico
- New York
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- Puerto Rico
- Rhode Island
- South Carolina
- South Dakota
- Utah
- Virginia
- Washington
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin

In 2004, the Department administered the Interim Voting Assistance System (IVAS). IVAS was a voluntary project implemented in September 2004 and maintained through the conclusion of the 2004 election. The Department spent \$576,000 on the

project. It allowed eligible absentee voters (active duty military, activated Guard and reserve personnel, their dependents, DoD overseas federal agency personnel in Central Command and DoD contractors overseas) to request and receive their absentee ballots via the internet. In order to take advantage of IVAS, voters must have already been in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, be a *UOCAVA* voter, and registered to vote in a state and county that volunteered to participate in the DoD project.

Using IVAS, the voter could request a ballot over the internet. After the local election official approved the request, IVAS notified the voter via email that the ballot was available to download. The voter then could download and print the ballot, mark it by hand, and return it by mail to the local election official.

One hundred eight counties in 6 states and one territory (Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New Mexico, South Carolina, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) participated in IVAS 2004. At the end of the election, 28 of those counties had received and processed ballot requests, and uploaded ballots for *UOCAVA* voters to pick up. Voters downloaded 17 ballots.

The Department, as mandated by Congress, continued the IVAS effort in 2006. IVAS was renamed and launched as the Integrated Voting Alternative Site, which provided a feature on the Federal Voting Assistance Program website consolidating information from the 55 states and territories on electronic ballot request and delivery alternatives with the goal of communicating these alternatives to all *UOCAVA* voters.

Additional features of IVAS 2006 were 2 online ballot request and delivery tools being offered for use by states and territories through the Department. The Federal

Voting Assistance Program communicated with the 50 states, 4 territories, and the District of Columbia regarding the options that were available to them regarding this project. The jurisdictions chose the tool best suited to the needs of their *UOCAVA* voters and their respective laws and administrative procedures. Indiana, Kentucky and 2 Montana counties chose the tool that utilized secure server technology to request and receive absentee ballots. The tools were available for use by uniformed service members, family members, and overseas employees and contractors. Between the September 1, 2006 launch date and November 5, 2006 the IVAS section of the Federal Voting Assistance Program website received 34,857 distinct user hits. The Department invested approximately \$1,100,000 in the 2006 effort.

For the 2008 general election, the Department is developing a state-specific automated registration and ballot request form and additional capabilities for blank ballot transmission and user identification and verification. The automated registration and ballot request form is available to all voters covered under *UOCAVA*. These citizens are guided through the completion of the Federal Post Card Application form based on the requirements of their state of voting residence, and, if allowed by state law, may upload the form to their local election office. The blank ballot delivery capability will allow participating local election officials to upload a specific blank ballot for an individual voter. After receiving an email notification, the citizen can download, print, mark, sign the blank ballot, and submit it in accordance with state law.

NDAA for FY 05 requires the DoD to carry out an electronic voting demonstration project after the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), in conjunction with the

National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), releases electronic absentee voting guidelines. The EAC internet voting guidelines will be the basis for future Federal Voting Assistance Program initiatives aimed at satisfying the Congressional mandate for an internet-based absentee voting demonstration project.

In May, 2007 the GAO issued a report recommending specific strategies for the DoD to apply in the planning and development of a future electronic voting project. The Department agrees with those recommendations, and, in fact, published similar observations in a report to Congress released prior to the GAO findings.

Results

There is no definitive information regarding voting participation rates, and there is no centralized system that accurately tracks who votes and who doesn't. The only detailed survey is conducted by the DoD during Presidential election years. This statistically-sound, random sample survey of *UOCAVA* citizens and local election officials is mandated by the *UOCAVA* and is conducted to gather post-election information on the effectiveness of assistance by the Federal Voting Assistance Program. The survey allows us to analyze uniformed services voter participation, overseas U.S. citizen participation, and State-Federal cooperation. The results of the DoD post-election survey reflected improved voting participation among uniformed service members from 2000 to 2004. For the 2004 general election, of uniformed services members (stateside and overseas) who responded, 73% voted and an additional 6% attempted to vote (as compared to 57% and 12%, respectively in 2000). Of federal civilian employees overseas who responded, 77% voted and an additional 3% attempted to vote (versus 55%

and 10%, respectively in 2000). Of non-federal civilians overseas who responded, 53% voted and an additional 5% attempted to vote (compared to 22% and 15%, respectively in 2000). Particularly noteworthy in 2004 is the significant reduction in the number of voters who unsuccessfully attempted to vote in each community (uniformed service members, federal civilians overseas, and overseas citizens). These are the only statistically-sound data describing voting behavior among *UOCAVA* citizens. Other reports and “surveys” can provide useful information, but owing to the methodological approaches they use, cannot be extended to determine the percent of *UOCAVA* voters who successfully exercised their franchise. Our data are authoritative. Information gleaned from self-selected, non-random populations with very low response rates should not be relied upon as the exclusive basis for crafting *UOCAVA* policy or programs.

UOCAVA requires the EAC to collect comprehensive data from the states on all of the ballots sent to and received from *UOCAVA* voters within 90 days after each regularly scheduled general election, and to make a report of the data available to the general public. The EAC published *UOCAVA* survey results for the November 2004 Presidential election in March 2006, and published data for the November 2006 mid-term election in September 2007. These reports provided data from 49 states, the District of Columbia and America Samoa, but cited problems with incomplete data and variations in the collecting and reporting of numbers from the states. The collection of quality data as required by *UOCAVA* is essential for proper evaluation of the administration of the absentee voting process. We ask the Congress to support the EAC and the states in their

efforts to obtain the required data using rigorous, peer-reviewed, statistically sound methodologies.

In both 2004 and 2006 the DoD and our sister Executive Branch agencies, and volunteers with American citizen organizations overseas conducted all-out efforts to inform our men and women in uniform and citizens outside the U.S. about their right to vote, how to go about the absentee voting process, and to provide assistance and materials for these citizens to participate in elections. In a March 2008, Report to Congress, the Department of Defense Inspector General concludes that "...the Services are working diligently to ensure that their respective Voting Assistance Programs are effective" and "...the Services' Voting Assistance Programs are compliant with the policies and instructions in DoD Directive 1000.4." We commit ourselves to continue concerted state and federal cooperative efforts to improve the absentee voting process and participation in elections by *UOCAVA* citizens.

Looking Forward

Over the last four years, the Department has continued to build on the successes of the 2004 Presidential Election. The ongoing efforts of the Department, the U.S. and Military Postal Services, the Department of Justice, the Department of State, other federal agencies, state and local governments, and a variety of not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations are giving more voters a greater opportunity to participate in elections. Through our collective efforts to improve ballot transit time and promote and implement expanded electronic transmission alternatives, voters will continue to reap the benefits of these improvements in this and future elections.