

# Executive Summary

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## Evaluation of the Voting Assistance Program

**Who should read this report?** DoD civilian and military personnel who are responsible for the administration, oversight, and implementation of the Federal Voting Assistance Program and the Military Services' voting assistance programs should read this report.

**Methodology.** We used statistical data collected via web-based survey and installation visits to assess the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP). Analysis of the data is intended to capture indications of broad trends in the areas assessed. We reviewed the results and established a method for assigning levels of effectiveness and compliance based on statistical criteria. See Appendix A for a detailed discussion of scope and methodology.

**Results.** Overall the Services are compliant. Survey responses suggest there are opportunities to improve program effectiveness with enhanced methods for delivering training, information, and materials to absentee voters.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD P&R) and the Military Services have implemented a voting assistance program and established detailed policy and guidance. USD P&R and the Services have made resources, voter information, and materials readily available to uniformed absentee voters and dependents. However, our survey results and installation visits indicate that large percentages of those surveyed do not get essential training, information, and materials. Furthermore, the FVAP leadership does not get meaningful, timely feedback that would help them take effective corrective action in deficient areas.

### Observations:

**1. Oversight:** Management of the FVAP would benefit from an accurate, embedded, and consistent measurement effort. (See Recommendation 1.a.)

**2. Training of Voting Assistance Officer (VAO):** VAOs are not trained on all program objectives. Training does not include "Good Ideas" or "Best Practices." (See Recommendation 1.b.)

**3. Automated Delivery and Reporting Infrastructure:** To compensate for the fact that voting assistance will always be a secondary duty, senior leadership can expect significant improvement only if a radically different approach is applied. (See Recommendation 1.c.)

**4. Change to Public Law:** If the FVAP leadership modifies the current monitoring process to improve program performance, a legislative change to Public Law 107-107 may be justified to reduce IG oversight requirements. (See Recommendation 1.d.)

**5. Gaps in Policy:** While the Services' policies adequately cover assistance for uniformed absentee voters, three of the Services' policies are silent on assisting one or more of the other populations (i.e., dependents, dispersed personnel, deployed personnel, tenant organizations) directed by the DoD Directive 1000.4, "Federal Voting Assistance Program," April 14, 2004. The Marine Corps alone addressed all populations outlined in the directive. (See Recommendation 2.)

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**Recommendations.** We recommend:

1. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness:
  - a. Revise DoD Directive 1000.4, “Federal Voting Assistance Program,” June 3, 2002, to require the Federal Voting Assistance Program Office and Military Services collect and analyze metrics on a more frequent basis, as a means of identifying areas of concern in accomplishing program objectives. See Appendix F, “Recommended FVAP Metrics.”
  - b. Revise DoD Directive 1000.4 to:
    - Require Voting Assistance Officer training include all program objectives outlined in DoD Directive 1000.4.
    - Require Voting Assistance Officer training include appropriate good ideas and best practices as tools for accomplishing objectives.
    - Require Voting Assistance Officer complete Federal Voting Assistance Program training within 60 days of appointment.
  - c. Develop an automated delivery and reporting system.
  - d. Develop and forward a legislative change proposal to Congress that would reduce or eliminate oversight requirements by Services’ and DoD IGs, commensurate with the success of process improvements and automated reporting procedures.
2. The Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force revise all Voting Assistance Program instructions to include policy to support all eligible personnel as directed by DoD Directive 1000.4.

**Management Comments.** We received comments from the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Chief of Naval Operations did not provide comments in time for this report. See Appendix N for detailed management comments.

- The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness partially or fully concurred with Recommendations 1a, b, c, and d. Recommendation 2 is not applicable the Office of the Under Secretary. USD (P&R) did not consider the survey methodology, as prescribed by statute, appropriate to judge the effectiveness of the program.
- The Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, did not comment on Recommendations 1a, b, c, and d. The Chief of Staff stated that the Army has revised their regulation to address Recommendation 2.
- The Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force, concurred with all recommendations except 1.d. The Chief of Staff did not consider the survey methodology, as prescribed by statute, appropriate to judge the effectiveness of the program.
- The Commandant of the Marine Corps commented that a web-based system will be implemented in CY 2005 to monitor the Voting Assistance Program. None of the recommendations applied to the Marine Corps.