

MILITARY VOTER PARTICIPATION INCREASED 21% IN 2010 ELECTION

Military and military dependents vote at greater rate than general electorate

October 18, 2011 - The Federal Voting Assistance Program released its 2010 [Post-Election Survey Report](#) of military and overseas voting. Continuing the trend from the 2008 election, the 2010 survey found both military personnel and military spouses were registered to vote and voted at greater rates than the general population.

46% of the military voted in the 2010 election, according to the survey, when adjusted for the substantial age and gender differences between the military and the general population. That compares to a 45.5% voter participation rate for the general population.

Overall military voter participation rose 21% between the 2006 and 2010 election, while military voter participation by 18 to 24 year olds – historically the group with the lowest voter participation rates – rose 33%.

This strong military voting performance carries through to military voter registration:

- While 65% of the general population registered to vote for the 2010 election, 77% of the military registered to vote, even before adjusting for age and gender.
- And while the national voter registration rate dropped more than 8% between 2008 and 2010, the military voter registration rate stayed the same.

“I’m proud of the work the military and State Department Voting Assistance Officers did during the 2010 election,” remarked Bob Carey, Director of the Federal Voting Assistance Program. “Despite all the complexities and hurdles facing military and overseas civilian voters, these Voting Assistance Officers were able to do what the military always does well: figure out how to adapt and achieve success.”

These robust military voter registration efforts bore fruit in more military voters actually receiving and voting their ballots:

- 27% more military voters received their absentee ballots in 2010 than in 2006, and 24% more military cast them, or an additional 55,000 military ballots cast.
- Unfortunately, the percentage of military voters expecting an absentee ballot and never receiving it rose from 17% in 2008 to 29% in 2010.
- This equates to more than 112,000 military voters never receiving their absentee ballot, an increase of 13,000 over 2008.

Carey noted, “We took a much more direct approach to the voter in 2010 than we have in the past: easy, intuitive online voting assistance tools, direct advertising, and voting assistance emails to all military personnel, provided voters the tools and knowledge to seamlessly and quickly complete on their own the necessary voting requirements, and in most States, even download their ballots from the Web.”

The 2010 survey showed these outreach efforts raised military voters' awareness of available voting assistance services.

- The percentage of military voters who said they did not know how to get an absentee ballot dropped from 11% to 8% between 2008 and 2010.
- Awareness of Unit Voting Assistance rose by 46% overall and by 66% for the 18-24 year olds.
- Awareness of the FVAP.gov website rose 21% overall, and by 33% among 18-24 year olds.

For the first time with the 2010 election, FVAP conducted a survey of military spouse voting, which showed similarly strong voter participation.

- 52% of military spouses voted in the 2010 election, again when adjusted for age and gender, compared to a national 45.5% voter participation rate.
- However, of the military spouses who vote, 57% vote in person and not by absentee ballot. For military personnel, only 33% of those who vote, vote in person.

More than 3,600 local election jurisdictions also responded to FVAP's 2010 post-election survey. While the nationwide ballot transmission and return numbers for military and overseas voters were roughly comparable to those reported by the States to the Election Assistance Commission, Carey warned against drawing overall conclusions from those numbers alone because, "one-third of military voters and three-fifths of military spouses vote in person; the election officials are only reporting the military absentee ballot numbers. Also, it's tough for election officials to properly identify military voters and their spouses if they don't use the federal voter registration forms. Yet, 38% of the military and 73% of the military spouses used State and local forms, and were likely missed in those election jurisdiction counts."

"Overall," concluded Carey, "we're very happy with the progress we've made. We still aren't where we want to be, but everything appears to indicate we are making substantial improvements in the number of voters getting ballots, successfully returning ballots, and having access to quality, timely voting assistance."

All statistics for this Survey Report, as well as discussions of sampling and nonsampling errors, and the methods FVAP and DMDC used to reduce such errors, can also be found in Appendices V through XVIII. The entire report, and all data tabulations, can be found at <http://www.fvap.gov/reference/2010report.html>.

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If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with Director Bob Carey, please call Erin St Pierre with FVAP at 703-588-8110 or email Miss St. Pierre at erin.stpierre@fvap.gov. If you'd like more information on the DoD Federal Voting Assistance Program or need help with the absentee voting process you can go to www.fvap.gov or contact the FVAP at 703-588-1584 (toll free 1-800-438-VOTE) or email the program at VOTE@FVAP.GOV.