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Personnel

VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY

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This instruction implements Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-31, *Personal Affairs*; Department of Defense (DoD) Directive (DoDD) 1000.4, *Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)*, June 3, 2002, and the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986 (UOCAVA)* that apply to members of the uniformed Services, Merchant Marine, and their spouses and dependents, and United States (US) citizens who are temporarily residing outside the territorial limits of the US. It informs personnel about voting and the opportunities to exercise the right to vote, including opportunities for absentee voting. This instruction also applies to Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard forces on activation, mobilization, or serving on active duty. Process supplements that affect any military personnel function as shown in Air Force Instruction (AFI) 33-360, volume 1, *Publications Management Program*. Headquarters (HQ) Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC)/DPSF must review all supplements to this instruction. Maintain and dispose of records created as a result of prescribed processes in accordance with Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 37-139, *Records Disposition Schedule*. Send comments and suggested improvements of this AFI on Air Force (AF) IMT 847, **Recommendation for Change of Publication**, to HQ AFPC/DPSF, 550 C Street West Suite 37, Randolph AFB TX 78150-4739.

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS

This document is substantially revised and must be completely reviewed.

This publication expands the role of the AF in assisting personnel with voting matters, especially absentee voting. Clarifies the roles and responsibilities of HQ United States Air Force (HQ USAF) (paragraph 4.2.), AF Inspector General (paragraph 4.3.), HQ AFPC/DPSF (paragraph 4.4.), Major Command (MAJCOM)/DPs (paragraph 4.5.), MAJCOM Voting Assistance Officers (paragraph 4.6.), Installation Commanders (paragraph 4.7.), Installation Voting Assistance Officers (IVAO) (paragraph 4.8.), Unit Voting Assistance Counselors (UVAC) (paragraph 4.9.), and Military Personnel Flight (MPF) Customer Support Section (paragraph 4.10).

1. Director, Washington Headquarters Services (WHS). WHS administers the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) in accordance with DoDD 1000.4. FVAP issues a biennial Voting Action Plan and the Air Force (HQ AFPC/DPSF) writes and publishes a comparable voting plan (<http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil>). FVAP's Voting Action Plan and the Air Force Voting Plan remain in effect until superseded by the new plans issued in general election years only.

2. Where To Get Information on Elections.

2.1. Air Force specific voting information can be found on the AFPC website: (<http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil>). Information on specific elections and application procedures can be found at the Federal Voting Assistance Program website: <http://www.fvap.gov>. This information assists IVAO and UVAC in carrying out their voting responsibilities.

2.2. Refer to the following DoD publications available at <http://www.fvap.gov>:

2.2.1. The *Voting Assistance Guide* (VAG) (issued biennially), available in hard copy.

2.2.2. Voting News Releases (available website only) are periodic, time sensitive notices that alert citizens of special elections and other important voting issues.

2.2.3. The Voting Information News (available via the FVAP'S website, hard copy, or E-mail) is a free, monthly newsletter published by the FVAP.

2.3. The DoD Voting Information Center (VIC) provides information on elections and recorded messages from candidates, governors, US Senators, and US Representatives. Callers can have their call forwarded to an FVAP staff member, leave a message for the FVAP or have their call forwarded to their Senator's, Representative's, Governor's or State Chief Election Official's office. The VIC also answers questions concerning voting, elections, candidates, or issues that cannot be answered locally. Refer to the current edition of the VAG for telephone numbers and calling instructions.

2.4. The FVAP Ombudsman Service (toll free from most countries) puts voting representatives, citizens and local election officials directly in touch with the FVAP. Calling instructions are available from the VAG, embassies, consulates, and international telephone operators in the US.

2.5. Voters may subscribe to hometown newspapers, write to state and local political groups for information, or refer to the FVAP website.

3. Restrictions on Voting Activities. Certain activities associated with the voting are federal crimes, including the following:

3.1. Commissioned, noncommissioned, warrant, or petty officers in the Armed Forces may not use military authority to:

3.1.1. Influence or attempt to influence the vote of a member of the Armed Forces.

3.1.2. Require or attempt to require a member of the Armed Forces to march to a polling place. (Title 18, United States Code [U.S.C.], Section 609, *Use of Military Authority to Influence Vote or Member of Armed Forces*)

3.2. No member of the Armed Forces may:

3.2.1. Prescribe or fix, or attempt to prescribe or fix, the qualifications of voters.

- 3.2.2. Prevent or attempt to prevent by any means (including advice) any qualified voter from fully exercising the right to vote.
- 3.2.3. Order or compel, or attempt to compel, any election officer to receive a vote from a person not legally qualified to vote.
- 3.2.4. Impose or attempt to impose any regulations for conducting elections different from those prescribed by law.
- 3.2.5. Interfere in any way with an election officer's discharge of duties. (Title 18, U.S.C., Section 593, *Interference by Armed Forces*)
- 3.3. No person in the civil or military service of the US may cause or require any troops or armed personnel to be at any place where an election is held, unless such force is necessary to repel armed enemies of the US. (Title 18, U.S.C., Section 592, *Troops at Polls*)
- 3.4. No person may:
 - 3.4.1. Intimidate, threaten, coerce or attempt to intimidate, threaten or coerce, voters. (Title 18, U.S.C., Section 594, *Intimidation of Voters*)
 - 3.4.2. Offer to pay another either to vote or withhold a vote, or to vote for or against any candidate.
 - 3.4.3. Solicit, accept, or receive any payment to vote or withhold a vote. (Title 18, U.S.C., Section 597, *Expenditures to Influence Voting*)
 - 3.4.4. Poll any member of the Armed Forces at any time with reference to the member's choice of vote for any candidate.
 - 3.4.5. State, publish, or release any result of any purported poll taken from or among the members of the Armed Forces, or include within it the statement of choice for such candidate or votes cast by any member of the Armed Forces. (Title 18, U.S.C, Section 596, *Polling Armed Forces*) "Poll" means any oral or written request for information which requires or implies the need for an answer, made with the intent to compile the results obtained for personal use, for association or corporation, or to publish it orally, by electronic transmission, or in information necessary to measure participation in absentee voting by AF members and civilian employees of the AF. If any such member is polled, that event shall be reported through the chain of command to the Director, FVAP. This does not preclude conducting official surveys to report to the President and the Congress the effectiveness of the assistance provided to eligible voters, including a statistical analysis of Uniformed Service voting participation, a general assessment of overseas non-military participation, and a description of State and Federal cooperation.

4. Voting Assistance Responsibilities.

- 4.1. All persons assisting in the voting process shall take all necessary steps to prevent fraud and to protect voters against any coercion.
- 4.2. HQ USAF/DP.
 - 4.2.1. Designates a Senior Air Force Voting Representative and Air Force Action Officer.

The Senior Air Force Voting Representative must be a general officer. The Air Force Action Officer should be a GS-12 or higher, if a civilian, O-4 or higher, if an officer, or E-8, if an enlisted member.

4.2.2. Plans program actions and establishes goals and/or milestones.

4.2.3. Ensures basic training and command courses emphasize and advertise voting assistance programs to encourage junior Service members to register and subsequently vote, and include instruction on voting rights, responsibilities, and procedures on absentee registration and voting.

4.2.4. Ensures command support at all levels for the FVAP.

4.2.5. Continually evaluates command voting programs.

4.3. Air Force Inspector General.

4.3.1. Includes the voting program as an annual item for review to evaluate the effectiveness of the AF Voting Assistance Program at every level of command to ensure compliance with DoD regulations and public law (see AFI 90-201, *Inspector General Activities*).

4.3.2. Focuses on various areas of the program, to include the availability of adequate supplies (*Voting Assistance Guides*, Federal Post Card Applications [FPCAs], etc.)

4.3.3. Provides a report of assessment required under DoDD 1000.4, subparagraph 5.2.1.8, to the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, by January 31 of each year.

4.4. HQ AFPC/DPSF. HQ USAF has designated HQ AFPC/DPSF as the AF Representative for the AF Voting Assistance Program.

4.4.1. Acts as liaison between FVAP and Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) (MAJCOMs/installations).

4.4.2. Develops written policies or instructions to support all eligible military personnel and their family members, including those in deployed, dispersed, and tenant organizations (including units from other Services and Reserve components).

4.4.3. Establishes goal tracking and reporting.

4.4.4. Provides responses to problems that cannot be answered by IVAOs or their respective MAJCOMs.

4.4.5. Establishes and publicize a special telephone service, the "Voting Action Line," to link all voting officers with the AF Voting Action Officer.

4.4.6. Establishes and maintain a Voting Assistance Program homepage on the AFPC website.

4.4.7. Provides after action reports and lessons learned reports in accordance with DoDD 1000.4.

4.5. MAJCOM/DPs.

4.5.1. The Director of Personnel at each MAJCOM monitors, evaluates, and ensures the success of the FVAP for the MAJCOM commander.

4.5.2. Designate in writing a Primary and Alternate VAO to coordinate the programs conducted by subordinate units within their command. The MAJCOM VAO should be a civilian general schedule (GS)-12 or higher. If a military member is assigned as the MAJCOM VAO, that officer

should hold the rank of O-4 or higher. Where possible, MAJCOM VAOs should serve at least 2 years and through a general election year.

4.5.3. Ensure the appointed VAO receives FVAP training. VAOs should attend the training workshops conducted by the FVAP when unit temporary duty (TDY) funds are available. If unable to attend a training workshop, use an alternate FVAP training medium.

4.6. MAJCOM Voting Assistance Officers.

4.6.1. Annually review, update, and send a copy of the MAJCOM/FOA list of current designated IVAOs to HQ AFPC/DPSF no later than (NLT) 15 January of each year.

4.6.2. Ensure each base IVAO completes an FVAP designated training workshop or alternate media training course, as specified by the FVAP.

4.6.3. Submit after-action reports and lessons learned as directed by HQ AFPC/DPSF.

4.7. Installation Commanders.

4.7.1. Appoint a Primary and Alternate IVAO. Appointments will be in writing, and sent to HQ AFPC/DPSF with an info copy sent to the MAJCOM VAO. The IVAO should be a civilian GS-12 or higher. If a military member is assigned as the IVAO, that officer should hold the rank of O-4 or higher. Where possible, IVAOs should serve at least 2 years and through a general election year.

4.7.2. Should set up an installation voting committee to develop and administer the local voting program. The committee will be chaired by the IVAO and consist of representatives listed in Annex A of the AF Voting Plan.

4.7.3. Ensure unit commanders appoint, in writing, one unit UVAC, at the O-2/E-7 level or above, per every 100 unit members. A unit member includes military personnel of any Service, civilians (for OCONUS only), and contractor personnel (for OCONUS only).

4.7.4. Ensure the base Staff Judge Advocate provides answers to legal questions regarding residency issues and the right to vote.

4.7.5. Ensure the IVAOs' and UVAC's performance of duties with respect to the Voting Program is included in their performance evaluation.

4.7.6. Ensure the appointed IVAO receives FVAP training. IVAOs should attend the training workshops conducted by the FVAP when unit TDY funds are available. If unable to attend a training workshop, use an alternate FVAP training medium. Ensure all training is documented.

4.7.7. Ensure voting registration materials and assistance information are continually available at a well-advertised and fixed location on the installation such as Family Support Center (FSC) or Military Personnel Flight (MPF).

4.7.8. Ensure all personnel deploying in excess of 30 days are briefed on the absentee voting process and are afforded the opportunity to complete a Standard Form (SF) 76, **Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)**.

4.8. Installation Voting Assistance Officers.

4.8.1. Establish a voting assistance program according to the current AF Voting Plan and the VAG. The AF Voting Plan will be forwarded to IVAOs electronically by the MPF Customer Support element, and is also available at the AFPC website. The VAG will be available for IVAOs at the MPF;

MPFs will notify IVAOs when the shipment of voting materials arrives. The VAG is also available electronically on the FVAP's website.

4.8.2. Chair the Installation Voting Committee. See Annex A of Air Force Plan for list of representatives. The Installation Voting Committee should formulate and conduct aggressive base-level publicity on voting information for the entire period of the plan.

4.8.3. Ensure unit voting counselors are appointed in a ratio of one counselor for every 100 members served. This includes assisting personnel (military and civilian) assigned to other uniformed Services and geographically-separated units (GSU). IVAOs are responsible for providing voting materials and training support to GSUs serviced by their installation and tenant units located on their installation. Unit Commander's Support Staff will provide the UVACs with a list of personnel.

4.8.4. Ensure all unit voting counselors are trained. In even-numbered years with elections for Federal offices, UVACs should attend the training workshops conducted by the FVAP when unit TDY funds are available. Monitor the FVAP or AFPC websites for dates and locations. If unable to attend a training workshop, use an alternate FVAP training medium.

4.8.4.1. Keep a written record of unit counselors trained, and train replacements as needed.

4.8.4.2. Ensure all Armed Forces personnel receive at least one briefing, training period, or information period of instruction devoted to absentee registration and voting during federal election years. Special emphasis should be given to providing training to junior enlisted personnel and those who have not previously used an absentee ballot to vote. Keep written documentation to reflect the briefing/training period and track attendance. Use internal information media to emphasize the availability of voting information, supporting materials, personal assistance, and the importance of voting.

4.8.5. Track installation goals. Refer to the current AF Voting Plan for goals and format to track during the current voting season. Each IVAO should take measures to regularly track data to ensure their voting program is in line with DoDD 1000.4, this instruction and the current AF Voting Plan. Submit one report at the end-of-year voting season as directed by HQ AFPC/DPSF. Ensure a courtesy copy is provided to the MAJCOM VAO.

4.8.6. Develop a system to ensure the in-hand delivery of FPCAs to all eligible voters. The system of record keeping may include numbers or percent contacted, but may not include names (or any other identifying information) of individual citizens. This distribution is required by the DoDD 1000.4 to ensure ballots are requested. SFs 76 must be issued by 15 January of each calendar year to eligible voters and their voting age dependents. During even-number years, issue the SFs 76 no later than 15 August to eligible voters, including DoD civilian employees and voting age dependents who reside outside the territorial limits of the US, and issue SFs 76 no later than 15 September to those who reside in the US. Refer to the current AF Voting Plan for specific guidance pertaining to Continental United States (CONUS) and Overseas installations.

4.8.7. Provide a plan for Armed Forces Voters Week to HQ AFPC/DPSF by the date specified in the current AF Voting Plan. Conduct Armed Forces Voters Week. Publicize the importance of early action to obtain ballots for elections well in advance of election deadlines. Report results of Armed Forces Voters Week to AFPC/DPSF (see current Air Force Voting Plan for format).

- 4.8.8. Provide registration materials and a briefing on the absentee voting process at all Individualized, Newcomer, Treatment, and Orientation (INTRO) programs (newcomer's orientation). This duty can be rotated among all voting counselors at the installation.
- 4.8.9. Provide the base telephone operator with name, E-mail address, and telephone number of the IVAO and other key UVACs.
- 4.8.10. Ensure mail handlers process voting materials quickly.
- 4.8.11. Coordinate with the MPF Customer Support element to ensure they have contact information to ensure notification when voting materials arrive. IVAOs are responsible for distributing the voting materials to the UVACs. Voting materials include the VAG, electronic messages, SF 76, and SF 186, **Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB)**.
- 4.8.12. Ensure that your UVACs order *four* SF 76 and *one* SF 186 per military member assigned to their unit, from the AF Publishing web site at: <http://www.e-publishing.af.mil>. UVACs should register on the site to obtain an account number or submit forms order through the Organization Account Representative (unit personnel responsible for ordering forms and publications). Local unit accounts are not charged for these forms.
- 4.8.13. Distribute the VAG to UVACs. VAGs are automatically shipped to each Air Force MPF based on installation military population. MPF personnel will contact the IVAO when voting material arrives. Guides are shipped at a rate of approximately one for every 50 personnel assigned.
- 4.8.14. Conduct a Post Election Survey in the manner specified by the Director, FVAP. Do not poll members on their choice of or their vote for a specific candidate. Focus on participation in the absentee registration and balloting process.
- 4.8.15. Maintain and keep current a continuity book which will be passed on to the succeeding IVAO.
- 4.9. UVACs.
- 4.9.1. Carry out the duties outlined in the Voting Assistance Guide, this instruction and the Air Force Voting Action Plan. Review and update list of assigned personnel as changes occur.
- 4.9.2. Provide voting assistance through one-on-one contact with the people they will serve. UVACs will ensure that all small and geographically separated units (GSUs) are assisted. When military personnel (including noncommissioned officers) are designated in writing as VAO, DoDD 1000.4 authorizes them to administer oaths in connection with voter registration and voting.
- 4.9.3. Order *four* SF 76 and *one* SF 186 per military member assigned to your unit, from the Air Force Publishing web site at: <http://www.e-publishing.af.mil>. UVACs should register on the site to obtain an account number or submit forms order through the Organization Account Representative (unit personnel responsible for ordering forms and publications). Local unit accounts are not charged for these forms.
- 4.9.4. Make in-hand delivery of SFs 76 to all assigned personnel of voting age. Make SFs 76 available to all eligible individuals, including dependents, for use in general, primary, and special elections. Issue the SFs 76 by 15 January of each calendar year to eligible voters and their voting age dependents. Additionally, during even-number years, issue the SFs 76 no later than 15 August

to eligible voters, including DoD civilian employees and voting age dependents who reside outside the territorial limits of the US; and issue SFs 76 no later than 15 September to those who reside in the US. Refer to the VAG for instructions on the SF 76.

4.9.5. Provide SFs 186 to overseas voters (one per voter) and as the FVAP directs for CONUS voters.

4.9.6. Provide individuals with absentee voting information for their home states, including (but not limited to) election dates, absentee registration, and voting rules. Election officials within a state determine eligibility requirements. State guidelines are in the VAG.

4.9.7. File an after-action report and lessons learned as directed by the IVAO.

4.9.8. Assist IVAO in conducting a Post Election Survey in the manner specified by the Director, FVAP. Do not poll members on their choice of or their vote for a specific candidate. Focus on participation in the absentee registration and balloting process.

4.9.9. Assist individuals who need help reading or understanding English language material. Provide assistance in the individual's appropriate language.

4.9.10. Assist IVAO with Armed Forces Voters Week. Publicize the importance of early action to obtain ballots for elections well in advance of election deadlines.

4.10. MPF Customer Support Section.

4.10.1. Provide assistance to the IVAO. (Refer to the AF Voting Plan annex on Personnel responsibilities.)

4.10.2. Advise the IVAO when voting materials (messages, publications, posters, forms, etc.) arrive at the MPF. IVAOs will pick up and distribute the voting materials/information to the UVACs. Contact HQ AFPC/DPSF if voting materials do not arrive by the prescribed dates. HQ AFPC/DPSF will provide the approximate shipping dates in advance, via message or E-mail.

4.10.3. Review, update, and send a copy of the current IVAO appointment letter to the MAJCOM VAO NLT 15 Dec of each calendar year. The IVAO should be a 2-year appointment. The MPF must verify IVAO information on an annual basis. If there is no change in IVAO for the upcoming year, it is not necessary to send a new appointment letter to the MAJCOM.

4.10.4. Comply with the current AF Voting Plan.

5. Voting by Absentee Ballot. Voters will:

5.1. Use the SF 76 to register and to request a ballot. Type or print each entry on the SF 76.

5.2. Complete the ballot according to the instructions received with the ballot. See AFI 51-504, *Legal Assistance, Notary, and Preventative Law Programs* and the VAG on notary/witness requirements for each state and territory. Enlisted personnel serving as voting counselors are authorized to administer oaths in connection with voting registration and voting in accordance with (IAW) DODD 1000.4.

5.3. Comply with specific state instructions for stuck ballots if available. Otherwise, state balloting material stuck in the envelope should be opened in the way that least tears the balloting material. After voting, seal or tape the envelope as carefully and cleanly as possible. On the back of any return envelope that shows forced opening, write the following statement, "Envelope flap stuck when received,

required forced opening before voting." The voter and, if applicable, the administrator of the voting oath must sign the statement.

5.4. Mail the completed ballot (and, if required, the oath on separate paper) in the return envelope provided with the ballot to the address on the envelope or named in the instruction.

6. Information Collections, Records, and Forms .

6.1. Information Collections. No information collections are created by this publication.

6.2. Records. No records are created by this publication.

6.3. Forms Prescribed.

6.3.1. Adopted Forms. AF IMT 847, **Recommendation for Change of Publication**, SF 76, **Federal Post Card Registration and Absentee Ballot Request**, and SF 186, **Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot**.

6.3.2. Prescribed Forms. No forms are prescribed in this publication.

RICHARD E. BROWN III, Lt General, USAF
DCS/Personnel

Attachment 1**GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION*****References***

AFPD 36-31, *Personal Affairs*

AFI 33-360, volume 1, *Publications Management Program*

AFI 51-504, *Legal Assistance, Notary, and Preventative Law Programs*

AFI 90-201, *Inspector General Activities*

AFMAN 37-139, *Records Disposition Schedule*

DoDD 1000.4, *Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)*

Title 18, U.S.C.

Section 592, *Troops at Polls*

Section 593, *Interference by Armed Forces*

Section 594, *Intimidation of Voters*

Section 596, *Polling Armed Forces*

Section 597, *Expenditures to Influence Voting*

Section 609, *Use of Military Authority to Influence Vote of Member of Armed Forces*

Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AF—Air Force

AFI—Air Force Instruction

AFMAN—Air Force Manual

AFPC—Air Force Personnel Center

AFPD—Air Force Policy Directive

CONUS—Continental United States

DoD—Department of Defense

DoDD—Department of Defense Regulation

FPCA—Federal Post Card Application

FSC—Family Support Center

FVAP—Federal Voting Assistance Program

FWAB—Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot

GS—General Schedule

GSU—Geographically Separated Unit

HQ—Headquarters

IAW—In Accordance With

INTRO—Individualized, Newcomer, Treatment, and Orientation

IVAO—Installation Voting Assistance Officers

MAJCOM—Major Command

MPF—Military Personnel Flight

NLT—No Later Than

OSD—Office of the Secretary of Defense

SF—Standard Form

TDY—Temporary Duty

U.S.C.—United States Code

UOCAVA—Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986

US—United States

USAF—United States Air Force

UVAC—Unit Voting Assistance Counselors

VAG—Voting Assistance Guide

VAO—Voting Assistance Officer

VIC—Voting Information Center