

Veterans Voting Information & Best Practices

Background

On September 13, 2012, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) hosted a roundtable discussion on Best Practices for Veterans Voting: Examining Election operations, procedures, and accessibility.

The [roundtable](#) brought together election officials from the state and county level, representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), advocacy organizations, and academic researchers.

The session produced several short-term and long-term recommendations for the elections community on ways to enhance veterans outreach. Below are informational tips and best practices to further assist election officials in helping veterans vote this November.

The veterans population is highly mobile and a diverse constituency composed of men and women from many demographics, including veterans with cognitive and physical disabilities. Furthermore, veterans are located across the U.S. and are active election participants. With [over 21.8 million veterans](#) living in the U.S. with diverse demographic backgrounds, needs, goals, and service, as well as those who may have suffered injuries in the line of duty, it is important the elections community help this constituency exercise their right to vote.

Currently, many public and nonprofit entities are engaged in projects aimed at enhancing the life of veterans and veterans with disabilities. However, few, if any, programs focus directly on methods to help these individuals with the elections process and their accessibility needs.

Below are informational resources that might help you identify where you can find veterans in your community and how your office might reach out to them. These are just two of the areas discussed in the below resources.

Veterans Voting Information for Election Officials

As you assess the veteran's community in your election jurisdiction, the following information and links may provide assistance.

Finding Your VA Facilities: The Department of Veterans Affairs [facilities locator](#) allows you to find facilities located in your election jurisdiction.

Reaching out to VA Facilities for Veterans Registration and Voting Assistance: The VA's Voluntary Service Program Officers are the primary contact for voting and registration-related questions in VA facilities across the country. They can help coordinate your efforts with VA facilities. Download the [VA contact information for Voluntary Service Program Officers](#).

For additional information and questions, [contact the VA Voluntary Service Office in Washington, D.C.](#)

Working with State Officials: You may also wish to reach out to your state or territories' [Veteran's Affairs Office](#). This table provides links to state and territory veteran's offices.

Assessing the veteran's population in your jurisdiction: The VA website contains [veteran's population information](#) at the state and county level and offers a tool for predicting future population statistics.

Helping Veterans with Disabilities Vote: As of July 2012, over 49,000 men and women have been wounded in service in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, post traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury have impacted thousands more service members. The Information Technology Innovation Foundation recently completed an EAC-sponsored study titled: [Making Voting More Accessible for Veterans with Disabilities](#). Visit the executive summary for information on working with this important population.

Best Practices for Election Officials

The EAC roundtable produced several best practices and tips for reaching veterans. Below are best practices and useful links.

Veterans Who Vote: Alabama Secretary of State Beth Chapman currently runs [Veterans Who Vote](#). This state-wide initiative seeks to harness veterans for registration outreach and to serve as poll workers.

Veterans Advocacy Organizations: During the roundtable, election officials emphasized the benefits of working with local veteran service organizations. As a starting point, the [VA website](#) provides information on service organizations recognized by the VA.

Contacting Transition Units: Local military transition units help transition service members as they return to the U.S. These entities can help election officials offer recently separated service members registration materials and additional information as they transition into civilian voter status.

Reaching Veterans at Colleges and Universities: Upon separation from active duty, veterans often enter institutions of higher education. Many colleges and universities have veteran services offices. Contacting these offices can help with identifying veterans in your election jurisdiction.

Polling Place Accessibility: In advance of the election, officials have organized polling place field trips for veterans with disabilities in VA facilities. The purpose of the outreach is to evaluate polling place accessibility for this important population.

For additional information in coordinating with your local VA facility, [contact](#) Laura Balun, Director, Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Office.

Oregon and Tablet Computer Ballot Marking for Voters with Disabilities: Recently, the Oregon Secretary of State's Elections Office [utilized tablet computers](#) for assisting voters with disabilities in marking their ballot. This type of project could potentially be used for helping veterans with disabilities in VA recovery facilities.