U.S. Department of Transportation
United States Coast Guard

Commandant
United States Coast Guard

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COMDTINST 1742.3J

JUN 3 2002

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 1742.3J

Subj: COAST GUARD VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Ref: (a) Personnel Manual, COMDTINST M1000.6(series)
(b) DoD Voting Assistance Guide (2002-2003 VAG)
(c) DoD Directive 1000.4
(d) DoD Voting Action Plan 2002-2003

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction promulgates information about the Federal Voting Assistance Program and implements the Coast Guard Voting Assistance Program in accordance with the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) (42 USC 1973). This Instruction is for the use of all active duty Coast Guard members and their dependents. It encourages personnel to actively participate in the federal, state, and local electoral process of their home states.

2. ACTION. Area and district commanders, commanders, maintenance and logistic commands, commanding officers of headquarters units, assistant commandants for directorates, Chief Counsel, and chiefs of special staff divisions at Headquarters shall ensure compliance with the provisions of this Instruction. Internet release authorized.

3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. Federal Voting Assistance Program, COMDTINST 1742.3I is canceled.

4. BACKGROUND.

a. The Federal Voting Assistance Program is a continuing federal effort to assist eligible voters in registering and voting by absentee process and in person in their home state primary, general, and special elections and national elections.

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NON-STANDARD DISTRIBUTION:

b. Chapter 16 in reference (a) establishes general policies and fixes responsibility for administering this program in the Coast Guard. Reference (b) provides specific information for unit Voting Action Officers' use in conducting unit-voting efforts.

c. Responsibility for coordinating the Coast Guard Voting Assistance Program is vested in Commandant (G-WPM-1). To reach the Coast Guard Voting Action Officer, call (202) 267-1636, 1-(800) 842-8740, ext. 7-1636 or FAX at (202) 267-4823. Additionally, calls made to the Voting Information Center (VIC), (703) 588-1343, may be directly transferred to the Coast Guard Voting Action Officer. The VIC also provides information on upcoming elections and various candidates' recorded messages, often specifically directed toward the military member.

d. Enclosures (1), (2), and (3) provide specific information about the 2002-2003 voting season.

SALLY BRICE-O'HARA
Director of Personnel Management

Encl: (1) Voting Action Plan
(2) 2002-2003 Phased Program Schedule
(3) List of Information Support Materials and Services

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VOTING ACTION PLAN (2002-2003)

A. PURPOSE. To implement the Federal functions of the Uniformed and Overseas Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), disseminate information and guidance, and coordinate tasks related to the Voting Program.

B. OBJECTIVES. To ensure that the following voters are provided all necessary voting information, including voting age requirements, election dates, offices to be elected, constitutional amendments, other ballot proposals, and absentee registration and voting procedures:

1. Members of the U.S. Armed Forces or uniformed services in active service;

2. Spouses or dependents of (1.) above;

3. U.S. citizens temporarily outside the United States.

C. TASKS.

1. Per reference (c) the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) will:

   a. Coordinate all aspects of the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

   b. Advise all executive branch departments and agencies concerning federal, state, and local election laws and procedures.

   c. Assist eligible persons to register and request absentee ballot.

   d. Publicize the right of citizens to register and vote.

   e. Review and coordinate the informational and educational effort directed toward all persons covered by the UOCAVA.

   f. Provide information on elections, candidates, and issues. Operate the DoD Voting Information Center (VIC) in a nonpartisan manner.

   g. Conduct training workshops and program orientations to Voting Assistance Officers in consultation with state and local election officials.

   h. Ensure the IN-HAND delivery of Federal Post Card Applications (FPCA) to all eligible voters in accordance with reference (c) and (d).

   i. Actively collect and share best practices identified by Service, Agency/Department, and State voting assistance programs.

2. The American Forces Information Service will:

   a. Coordinate with the Director, FVAP all aspects of information for release, including: radio, television, and print media materials.

   b. Provide other information support as required.

   c. The Armed Forces Information Service (AFIS) will conduct special multi-media activities emphasizing registering for and voting in primary and general elections both in the United States and overseas.

3. Commandant (G-WPM-1) will:

   a. Ensure clear channels of communication are maintained to expedite all voting information down to the unit level.

   b. Direct internal information media to publicize all 2002 and 2003 Federal Voting Assistance Program aspects.

   c. Coordinate distribution of voting assistance materials for Voting Assistance Officers use at all command levels through the Department of Transportation Initial Distribution Section.

   d. Ensure Voting Assistance Officers are aware of procedures to obtain additional materials and assistance.

4. Unit Commanding Officers will:

   a. Designate in writing a unit Voting Assistance Officer responsible for implementation of the unit's voting assistance program.

   b. Ensure that unit Voting Assistance Officers provide adequate briefings, training, or information periods devoted to registration and voting procedures prior to primary elections.

   c. Ensure that these sessions are available to spouses and eligible dependents.

   d. Ensure that incoming personnel are provided voting information and departing members are advised to notify election officials of their new address.

e. Monitor internal information media to ensure that voting information is available to all eligible voters by encouraging access to the FVAP Web Site (www.fvap.ncr.gov) for all voting information and materials. If Web access is not available, ensure that adequate supplies of voting information and related materials such as the 2002-2003 Voting Assistance Guide, and FPCAs for registration and absentee ballot requests are obtained and disseminated in a timely manner. FPCAs are to be purchased through unit funds (NSN 7540-00-634-5053, U/I 1 HD, and cost $10.86.

f. Ensure the IN-HAND delivery of FPCAs as follows:

1. By January 15th of each calendar year to all Armed Forces members and their eligible family members, overseas civilian employees and eligible dependents.

2. By August 15th, 2002 to Armed Forces members and their eligible family members and to civilian employees and eligible dependents residing with or accompanying them, who are serving outside the territorial limits of the United States.

3. By September 7th, 2002 to Armed Forces members and their family members within the United States.

This distribution is in addition to FPCAs provided for use in primary elections.

g. Emphasize the week of September 1-7, 2002, as "Armed Forces Voters Week." Commanding Officers and Voting Assistance Officers will develop comprehensive command-wide voting awareness and assistance programs and activities to include local events publicizing the upcoming election and focusing on the importance of voting. Activities scheduled should include voting programs aimed at informing eligible voters on procedures required to obtain absentee ballots for the general elections including dissemination of supporting materials.

Encl. (2) to COMDTINST 1742.3J

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2002-2003 PHASED PROGRAM SCHEDULE

A. **Phase I**. Preparation and initiation during the Spring and Summer 2002.

1. Commandant (G-WPM) will disseminate the Federal Voting Assistance Program Action Plan 2002-2003 to all commands and ensure distribution of voting information and the 2002-2003 Voting Assistance Guide, as well as any changes thereto.

2. Units will develop and implement Command Voting Action Plans for the 2002 elections.

3. Unit Voting Assistance Officer (VAO's) shall ensure procurement and distribution of Federal Post Card Applications (FPCA's) (NSN 7540-00-634-5053, U/I 1 HD, Cost $10.86) and Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots (FWAB's) (NSN 7540-01-218-4384, U/I 1 HD, Cost $11.68), which are purchased through the General Services Administration/Federal Supply & Services (GSA/FSS), General Products Center, 819 Taylor St. Ft Worth, TX 76102, telephone number (817) 978-2508.

4. MLC Compliance Staff shall review command voting assistance programs and plans to help assure unit voting assistance officers are appointed, trained, and have sufficient supplies.

5. Information efforts shall begin with commanding officers and voting assistance officers conducting command information programs prior to primary elections and repeating, as necessary, to inform and motivate military personnel and their family members to exercise their right to vote in primaries and general elections. Family members will be encouraged to participate in these programs.

B. **PHASE II**. Registration and Primary Elections occur during Period of January-October 2002. This phase will require careful planning and execution of voting assistance programs in order to inform potential voters of the primary elections:

1. VAO's shall concentrate on providing absentee registration and voting assistance to personnel for federal, state and run-off primary elections.

2. VAO's shall ensure procurement and distribution of FWAB's for use by citizens in overseas areas and on Coast Guard cutters. The FWAB may be used only for the general election (federal offices) under conditions specified in the 2002-2003 Voting Assistance Guide. Some jurisdictions may allow use of the FWAB for state and local elections by all absentee voters, but only under specified conditions, which are announced by the Federal Voting Assistance Program, if and when authorized, or as specified in the 2002-2003 Voting Assistance Guide.

3. VAO's shall ensure IN-HAND delivery of FPCA's to personnel overseas by 15 August 2002.

Note - The National Defense Authorization Act for FY-02 requires the states to accept a single FPCA as a request for ballots for all elections in a calendar year.

4. VAO's shall continue command information programs and dissemination of voter information.

5. Unit VAO's will conduct "Armed Forces Voters Week" (week of September 1-7, 2002) and, as applicable, "Overseas Citizens Voters Week" (week of June 30 to July 6, 2002). Develop programs to support the objective of creating an awareness and motivation to participate in the general election. Publicize the importance of early action on the part of the voter in order to obtain a ballot for the general election well in advance of election deadlines. In many cases, a separate FPCA request must be submitted for a ballot for the general election.

C. **PHASE III**. Requesting Ballots for the General Election During Period of August –5 November 2002.

1. VAO's will continue disseminating voting information.

2. VAO's shall ensure IN-HAND delivery of FPCA's to personnel within the United States by 15 September 2002.

3. VAO's will ensure they know how and when to use the FWAB and recommend its use if the voter meets the criteria and does not receive the regular absentee ballot in sufficient time to vote and return it to be counted.

D. **PHASE IV**. Evaluation During the Period of 6 November - 31 December 2002.

1. VAO's shall participate in and assist, as requested, with post-election surveys of military members and overseas civilian employees. The survey's findings will be used in formulating plans for future voting assistance programs, and as a part of the Sixteenth Report on the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

Encl. (3) to COMDTINST 1742.3J

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LISTS OF INFORMATION SUPPORT MATERIALS AND SERVICES.

1. FVAP World Wide Web Home Page. Located at www.fvap.ncr.gov or www.fvap.gov , the page provides an overview of the FVAP as well as electronic access to many of the materials listed in this section. In addition, this site provides election information, election results and links to state government home pages and other sites with election information.

2. 2002 - 2003 Voting Assistance Guide. (VAG). VAGs are distributed annually during the month of December, and are also available for viewing at www.fvap.ncr.gov or www.fvap.gov.

3. Posters. The 2002-2003 voting posters will be available for use by the Armed Forces, State Department, and other government agencies. Initial requirements for posters will be coordinated by FVAP with DoD components and other government agencies. Distribution is made through normal supply channels. These posters will also be available for sale to the public through the Government Printing Office.

4. News Articles and Features. News and feature articles on the Voting Assistance Program 2002 - 2003, emphasizing primary elections, "Armed Forces Voters Week," and the general election, will be released to all media.

5. DoD Voting Information Center (VIC). The DoD Voting Information Center will be in operation 24 hours a day providing news and information on elections, candidates and issues. Anyone may call the VIC at (703) 588-1343 or the toll free number found in this section, paragraph 8, Ombudsman Service.

6. Voting Information News (VIN) Newsletter. The VIN is a monthly publication that is primarily distributed to all Voting Assistance Officers. The newsletter contains information on elections and other voting-related matters of interest to citizens covered by the UOCAVA. VIN should be distributed as extensively as possible throughout your organization. Voting Assistance Officers are encouraged to extract information from VIN and copy articles for internal media use.

7. Federal Voting Assistance Program Electronic Transmission Service. The FVAP provides the Electronic Transmission of Election Materials Service. If a state allows the electronic transmission of election materials, a military or overseas citizen may electronically transmit the FPCA for registration/ballot request, receive the regular blank absentee ballot by fax, return the voted ballot by fax, or any combination of these three. The FVAP also makes available Electronic Transmission Manuals to Voting Assistance Officers and Local Election Officials to assist them in using this service. If a state allows transmission by faxing, all voting materials must be transmitted only through the following numbers: (703) 693-5527 or (800) 368-8683.

8. Ombudsman Service. The Federal Voting Assistance Program provides an Ombudsman Service for both the voter and local election officials to resolve problems that cannot be solved locally or answer questions concerning procedures for registration and ballot requests, including timely receipt of ballots. With the international toll-free numbers contained on the inside back cover of the 2002 - 2003 Voting Assistance Guide, citizens and local election officials may call for assistance. The number for citizens in the United States is 1-800-438-VOTE (8683). Assistance is available during normal business hours, Eastern Time, or a recorded message may be left at other times.

9. Coast Guard Voting Action Officer. The Coast Guard Voting Action Officer is available at Commandant (G-WPM-1), (202) 267-2239, 1-(800)-842-8740, ext. 7-2239, or fax (202) 267-4823.

10. The Director Federal Voting Assistance Program can be contacted at:

Director	Telephone number:	(703) 588-1584
Federal Voting Assistance Program		1-800-438-1584
Department of Defense	Email address:	vote@fvap.ncr.gov
Washington Headquarters Services	Home page:	www.fvap.ncr.gov
1155 Defense Pentagon	Fax number:	(703) 588-0108
Washington, DC 20301-1155		