

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

## **7 FAM 1500 FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

7 FAM 1510 What is the Consular Officer's Authority and Responsibility Regarding Voting Assistance?

7 FAM 1520 Definitions and Descriptions

7 FAM 1530 Voting Forms and Supplies

7 FAM 1540 Voting Action Plan

7 FAM 1550 The Basic Absentee Voting Process

7 FAM 1560 Post-election Reporting

# **7 FAM 1500**

## **FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

*(TL:CON-81; 06-18-2004)*  
*(Office of Origin: CA/OCS/PRI)*

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) covers millions of military and civilian voters residing abroad who may be eligible to vote in federal elections under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), 42 U.S.C., Chapter 20, Subchapter I-G. (42 U.S.C. 1973ff) The Secretary of Defense has been designated by the President to have primary responsibility for federal functions under UOCAVA. The U.S. Department of State assists the Secretary of Defense in carrying out these functions with respect to U.S. civilians abroad.

The Departments of State and Defense play a vital role in assisting U.S. citizens overseas to exercise their right to vote. You are charged with reminding U.S. citizens (other than members of the military and their families) of their right to register and vote, providing non-partisan information about local, state and federal elections, and facilitating, to the extent the law allows, the voting process.

FVAP has an excellent website that provides extensive information and training materials for Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs). It also contains information for U.S. citizens covered by UOCAVA, such as voter registration information and deadlines; a downloadable form for registration and absentee ballot requests; links to current office holders; lists of Federal, state and local candidates; and media website links in every state for current information about candidates and issues.

Voting laws and procedures vary from state to state complicating your role as a Voting Assistance Officer. The Voting Assistance Guide published by the Department of Defense is your most important reference. It describes the Federal Voting Assistance Program and your responsibilities as a Voting Assistance Officer. Additionally, it contains state-by-state registration and absentee voting procedures as well as a brief summary of tax laws affecting U.S. citizens residing abroad.

**Ombudsman Service**, a major resource of the Federal Voting Assistance Program, assists Voting Assistance Officers by putting VAOs, citizens and local election officials directly in touch with the FVAP.

E-mail: [Vote@fvap.ncr.gov](mailto:Vote@fvap.ncr.gov)

U.S. Toll-free Telephone: 800-438-8683

Commercial: 703-588-1584

FAX: 703-588-0108

FVAP Overseas toll-free telephone/FAX numbers site

Refer any questions regarding non-U.S. citizens in the United States wanting to vote absentee in their country's elections at an embassy or consulate in the U.S. to [ASKPRI@state.gov](mailto:ASKPRI@state.gov).

## **7 FAM 1510 What is the Consular Officer's Authority and Responsibility Regarding Voting Assistance?**

*(TL:CON-81; 06-18-2004)*

7 FAM 1510.1 Authorities

7 FAM 1510.2 What is the Role of the Consular Officer Regarding Voting Assistance?

7 FAM 1510.3 What is the Role of CA/OCS/ACS?

7 FAM 1510.4 What is the Role of CA/OCS/PRI?

### **7 FAM 1510.1 Authorities**

*(TL:CON-81; 06-18-2004)*

42 U.S.C. 1973ff et. seq Federal responsibilities

Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)

Executive Order No. 12642 of June 8, 1988, 53 F.R. 21975 (6/10/88) designating the Secretary of Defense with primary responsibility for federal functions under the Act.

## 7 FAM 1510.2 What is the Role of the Consular Officer Regarding Voting Assistance?

*(TL:CON-81; 06-18-2004)*

Specific responsibilities for Voting Assistance Officers and Voting Assistants (VA) may vary by post, but generally they include:

**a. Voting Assistance Officers (VAO):**

VAO Global e-mail address:

CA-Voting-Assistance-Officers@state.gov

- Contact the Department's Chief Voting Action Officer (CA/OCS/ACS/AF) upon assignment as the post's Voting Assistance Officer, and upon relinquishing your position as VAO (E-mail:Vote@state.gov.)
- **EDUCATE YOURSELF:** Familiarize yourself with the Voting Assistance Guide and useful media and state websites. Become familiar with Form FPCA SF-76, the Federal Post Card Application and Form FWAB SF-186, the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot so that you know how to complete them and can explain the procedure easily to your voters.
- **START EARLY/PREPARE A VOTING ACTION PLAN:** Your responsibility in an election year is not confined to the 2-3 months before the general election. To be an effective officer you have to have your voting action plan in place a full year in advance. Have adequate supplies on hand and make your community aware of its responsibility for registering and requesting absentee ballots as early as possible.
- **DEVELOP A NETWORK:** Ensure that everyone at post knows who you are – the Ambassador, security guards, receptionists, and the Foreign Service Nationals so they can refer inquiries to you.

Identify and train voting volunteers in the private U.S. community who can help you disseminate voting information. Provide them with Voting Assistance Guides (VAGs), posters, calendars and Federal Post Card Applications (FPCAs).

Know the extent of the U.S. community in your consular district. Develop and implement an outreach program to educate potential voters – the official U.S. government community, corporations, Peace Corps volunteers, overseas schools, study abroad programs, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other groups comprised solely or in part of U.S. citizens.

- **DISSEMINATE INFORMATION:** Alert U.S. citizens of deadlines for registration and mailing in their ballots. Assist them in understanding their voting rights and how to vote absentee under UOCAVA.

Provide accurate, **non-partisan** voting information and assistance to potential voters. Your understanding of the registration and absentee voting procedures and your ability to direct people to on-line resources may well determine whether or not your fellow citizens participate in the electoral process.

Create and maintain a voting section on your post's website.

Include voting supplies in your post's annual budget as a routine operating item as well as funding for travel to a voting workshop.

Keep a record of your voting assistance efforts. The statistics will be extremely useful when preparing your post election report.

**b. Voting Assistants (VA):**

VA Global E-mail address: (CA-Voting-Assistants@state.gov)

Voting Assistants are usually Foreign Service Nationals, consular associates, and consular assistants who help the voting assistance officer run an effective Voting Assistance Program in his/her consular district.

- Familiarize yourself with the VAG. Refer legal questions to CA/OCS/PRI for referral to states. Refer procedural issues or questions not covered in the VAG to the Department's Voting Assistance Office (CA/OCS/ACS/AF).
- Assist U.S. citizens living abroad in the voting process and voting absentee under UOCAVA. Alert them to the deadlines for registration and mailing ballots.
- Maintain orderly files on voting instructions and information.
- Maintain a list of voting volunteers in the U.S. citizen community and a record of U.S. citizen community outreach efforts.
- Monitor post's voting supplies; order all supplies as necessary.
- Disseminate information about state and national primary and general elections to your wardens and other network contacts for advertisement in the U.S. citizen community.
- Post state and national primary and general election notices in the ACS area. Include your section telephone number, E-mail address, hours open to the public and any outreach activities scheduled.
- Direct individuals to useful websites such as the post website and media websites in every state for current information on candidates and issues. FVAP provides several excellent websites for national, state and local elections/organizations, click on "state election sites" and/or "other Federal sites."
- Establish a "voting section" on the post's website and keep it current.

## **7 FAM 1510.3 What is the Role of CA/OCS/ACS?**

*(TL:CON-81; 06-18-2004)*

- a. The Chief Voting Action Officer in the Office of American Citizens Services (ACS) oversees the Department's Voting Assistance Program and provides guidance and disseminates information to posts regarding absentee voting by U.S. citizens living abroad. The Chief Voting Action Officer serves as liaison with the Federal Voting Assistance Program headquarters at the Department of Defense.
- b. The role of the Chief Voting Action Officer is to:

- Maintain a current list of Voting Assistance Officers and Voting Assistants at posts abroad.
- Provide guidance to VAOs and VAs in understanding their roles and responsibilities.
- Help posts develop voting action plans.
- Advise posts of general voting laws and/or criteria and subsequent changes.
- Provide accurate non-partisan voting information for posts to disseminate to U.S. citizens living abroad.
- Send out periodic announcements for dissemination through wardens and other networks about upcoming elections, changes in state procedures for registration and submission of registration forms and ballots.
- Advise posts about voting reporting requirements.
- Provide guidance to VAOs and VAs on ordering forms and obtaining supplies.
- Mail VAGs and motivational posters to posts.
- Inform and remind posts about outreach programs.

## **7 FAM 1510.4 What is the Role of CA/OCS/PRI?**

*(TL:CON-81; 06-18-2004)*

The Office of Policy Review and Interagency Liaison (PRI) is the Department's liaison with other Federal, state and local agencies regarding legal and policy issues concerning overseas absentee voting and the enforcement of applicable laws. Send legal questions on voting issues to CA/OCS/PRI by telegram, FAX (202-736-9111) or e-mail (ASKPRI@state.gov).