REACHING VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES OVERSEAS

A Volunteer Guide to VMF Community Outreach and Voter Registration

Your mission is to connect with American veterans, military families, and DOD-connected civilians living overseas to help them exercise their right to vote. This guide covers strategies for building those connections, both on and off base, and directing people to the right resources to register and return their ballot.

KNOW YOUR RESOURCES

The primary tools you'll be directing people to:

- **VoteFromAbroad.org** (Democrats Abroad): streamlined online tool for U.S. citizens overseas. Walks users through registration and ballot requests state by state. Recommended for all voter assistance activities that are not on an overseas U.S. military installation.
- **FVAP.gov** (Federal Voting Assistance Program): the official government resource, and the primary resource when assisting voters located on any U.S. military installation. Best for active duty, Guard, Reserve, and their families. Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) are also listed here.

It's helpful to know which tool fits which audience: active duty members and their families may be more comfortable with FVAP; veterans and those living off-base may find VoteFromAbroad more helpful. Both tools help voters understand their rights under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), which you will be helping them navigate.

Take the VoteFromAbroad.org online training as soon as possible,
and the FVAP.gov training if planning to volunteer on-base

OFF-BASE OUTREACH

The VMF community off base is often harder to identify but reachable through the right channels:

- **Veteran service organizations**: Different VSO communities exist in many overseas cities (e.g. VFW, American Legion, Wounded Warriors).
    - Attend meetings, introduce yourself, and offer a short registration walk-through if they don't already offer voter support to their local members.
- **Military spouse and family networks**: Check with Facebook groups, WhatsApp chats, and local FRGs or other spouse/family support groups.
    - Ask to share a link to VFA or host an info session.
- **U.S. community hubs**: American Chambers of Commerce, international schools, and American churches often have high concentrations of military-connected families. Also consider English-speaking co-working spaces, sports leagues, and trivia nights.
    - Offer to present or leave materials for their members.
- **One-on-one outreach**: A personal message from a trusted contact converts far better than a flyer.
    - Identify VMF members locally and encourage them to register and return their ballots.

ON-BASE OUTREACH

Military installations obviously have a high concentration of the VMF community, but they require a careful approach. DoD Directive 1344.10 prohibits partisan political activity on base. Accordingly, you should operate as a private citizen sharing non-partisan voter registration information.

What you can do:

- Encourage all eligible voters to register and return their ballots without referencing any party, candidate, or political organization

- Share official resources only: FVAP.gov and vote.gov are both non-partisan and appropriate
- Distribute non-partisan registration information during your personal time, not while in uniform or in any official capacity
- Attend on-base community events as a private attendee and have individual conversations

What you should avoid:

- Identifying yourself as representing any political party or partisan organization
- Distributing any materials that reference a party, candidate, or political position
- Conducting any organized activity that could be characterized as partisan

---

MAKING THE ASK

1. **Establish connection**: Are you a U.S. citizen? Have you voted from overseas before?
2. **Identify the barrier**: Most unregistered voters overseas are unaware they're eligible to vote, don't know how, or think it's too complicated.
3. **Dispel any myths or voter concerns**: "Voting from abroad does not affect federal taxes or the IRS. However, voting in state or local elections may have state tax consequences."
4. **Offer the solution**: "It takes about 5 minutes at VoteFromAbroad.org. I can walk you through it right now if you'd like."
5. **Follow through**: If they're not ready, get a contact and follow up. One touchpoint is rarely enough.

QUICK TIPS

- Bring an Internet-connected phone or laptop so you can help people register on the spot
- Track who you've spoken with and follow up before key registration and ballot return deadlines
    - Consider breaking it down by those who requested a ballot, those who indicated they would make a request, and those that took information
- Don't overlook dependents and extended family members
- If someone is hesitant, leave them with a resource but don't pressure them
- Don't collect completed ballots
- Don't collect or store personal voter data

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Voter submitted FPCA ☑️
- Voter received ballot ☑️
- Voter returned ballot on time ☑️
- Voter confirms with local election office that their ballot was received, counted, and verified ☑️
- Voter knows they'll need to repeat the process next year ☑️

BUILDING FOR THE NEXT CYCLE

Every outreach interaction is also an opportunity to build durable relationships. When appropriate, note which groups, organizers, or individuals were receptive and maintain contact after the election. Trusted relationships with VSOs, spouse networks, schools, and community hubs make next year's registration and ballot-chase work more effective and reduce the need to rebuild trust from scratch.

Questions? Email us at veteranscaucus@democratsabroad.org.