



ASPEN TECH
POLICY HUB

PROJECT



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Voting from Abroad: Reducing Obstacles for Military and Overseas Voters

Elevating technology best practices to help military and overseas citizens vote from abroad

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the 2020 election, only 7% of military and overseas voters voted – ten times less than the domestic average – making them one of the country’s most disenfranchised demographics. According to the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), turnout could be closer to 46.9% if obstacles — like lack of awareness, lack of understanding of how to vote, and postal delays — were removed. In an era of advanced technology and global interconnectivity, state election officials should implement digital signatures, ballot tracking, and other core communications and design principles to better support military and overseas voters. Similarly, FVAP, an agency tasked with helping military and overseas voters and a variety of other stakeholders, should implement a wizard tool on its website to more rapidly assist voters in finding the resources they need to vote.



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THE PROBLEM

Military and overseas voters under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) face outsized obstacles when it comes to voting. Historically, they consistently vote at rates ten times lower than the domestic average, constituting them as one of the country's most disenfranchised demographics. While every state contains these voters (which can include military, Peace Corps, corporate executives, students, and more), not every state implements the same measures to ensure that voters have access to resources to help them submit a ballot on time.

” *Military and overseas voters vote at a 7% rate — ten times less than the domestic average. Turnout could be closer to 46.9% if obstacles were removed.*

THE SOLUTION

Election officials and FVAP should better integrate technology to reduce obstacles facing military and overseas voters and thus increase their turnout. Recommendations for these groups include:

1. State election officials should facilitate digital signatures on the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA);
2. State election officials should implement ballot tracking;
3. State election officials should communicate with voters via email and ensure emails are frequent, concise, and clear;
4. State election officials should ensure that communications abide by clear design principles; and
5. FVAP should implement a website wizard to better guide voters using their website toward the resources they need to vote.

By implementing these changes, military and overseas voters would have better access to the tools they need to vote.

For more information on this proposal, see: 1) a [playbook](#) for state election officials; 2) a sample [memo](#) for the National Association of Secretaries of State; and 3) a [demo](#) of a website wizard to help overseas citizens navigate resources on the Federal Voting Assistance Program website.

ABOUT THE HUB

The Aspen Tech Policy Hub is a Bay Area policy incubator, training a new generation of tech policy entrepreneurs. We take tech experts, teach them the policy process, and support them in creating outside-the-box solutions to society's problems.

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