



Marine Corps Voting Assistance Officer (VAO) Guide

1. **Voting Assistance Officers, welcome!** The Voting Assistance Officer is an important collateral duty; it is very manageable and won't take too much time.
 - The Marine Corps Service Voting Action Officer (SVAO) administers the Marine Corps Voting Assistance Program and is located at Headquarters Marine Corps, MFP-4; the SVAO can be reached at vote@usmc.mil and at 703 784-9511.
 - **Major Command Voting Assistance Officers (MCVAOs)** are the liaison between the SVAO and their subordinate commands, organizer of voting events, and pass on pertinent voting information from the SVAO and FVAP.
 - **Installation Voting Assistance Officers (IVAOs)** are specifically appointed by the Installation Commanding Officer and manages the Installation Voting Assistance Office (IVA Office).
 - **Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs)** are in every Marine Corps unit of 25 or more personnel and provide voting assistance to the unit's personnel and their eligible family members. One UVAO is appointed for every 200 Service Members.

2. **VAO primary responsibility.** To be an expert on all-things voting for your command, including providing voter registration and information on the absentee voting process. VAOs assist absentee voters and their dependents within their respective command.

3. **The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP).** The Department of Defense organization responsible for implementing legislation to help Service Members, their family members, and civilians living overseas vote absentee. Think of FVAP as the senior DoD agency that maintains oversight over all of the military services' voting activities.

4. **Other major VAO responsibilities.**
 - a. Submission of quarterly metrics via the FVAP Admin Portal (see 6 & 7)
 - b. Read MCO 1742.1B and corresponding voting directives (see 8)
 - c. Provide annual voting training to the personnel in your command (see bullet 11)
 - d. Pass your IGMC/CGIP inspections
 - e. Maintaining a Continuity Binder containing:
 - (1) DoDI 1000.04
 - (2) MCO 1742.1B
 - (3) VAO Appointment Letter
 - (4) VAO Training Certificate (see bullet 10)
 - (5) The Marine Corps Voting Action Plan
 - (6) Current pertinent voting election information
 - (7) Record of annual command training (see bullet 11)
 - (8) All Correspondence you disseminate to your command relating to voting

5. **Getting your program started.**

- a. Once appointed, complete your training and get very familiar with the FVAP website at www.fvap.gov. This is the primary resource where you can find all necessary information, guidance, training, and voting related resources, to include posters and other downloadable items for your command. On the FVAP homepage you will see a VAO TAB (top of page) for all things supporting the VAO.

6. **Register for an account on www.FVAP.gov to submit your quarterly metrics.** All VAOs are required to maintain an account in the FVAP Admin Portal and submit a quarterly voting assistance report. **FVAP has the ability to track who does and who does not submit metrics; scrutiny will increase as Election Day approaches.** To register for an account:

- a. From the website home screen at www.fvap.gov, click on the “Voting Assistance Officer” Tab, click on “Directives And Guidance” and locate “VAO Admin Portal Access” on the lower right hand corner of the screen under “**Voting Assistance Officer Portal (Database) and Metrics Submission.**”
- b. Accept the privacy terms to get to the sign in page. From here select “Register for an Account.”
- c. Select the account type that applies to you. In the vast majority of cases, you will select “Unit Voting Assistance Officer,” unless you’ve specifically been designated as an Installation Voting Assistance Officer.
- d. Fill out the required information. In the “Service Unit” block, input your unit’s name, the block will auto-fill with possible matches; select your unit from the list of matches. If you cannot locate your unit, simply type it in as you wish it to appear and proceed with completion of your registration.

*** Recommend logging into your FVAP account at least every 45 days, account will go into “Expiration Mode” after 45 days of inactivity.**

7. **Quarterly reporting on the FVAP Portal.** Once you’ve established an account you’ll be required to log on and submit a quarterly report (VAOs can submit reports on a monthly basis if they choose.) Submitting your report is not difficult. **Log into your account, click on the METRICS tab towards the top of the page, fill in the blocks, and click SAVE.** Your report will be automatically submitted to FVAP when you hit SAVE. Print a copy of the submitted report directly from the portal and file for two years. The Admin Portal allows for rolling submissions so you may choose to update your report whenever you provide voting assistance. Otherwise, a few days before the quarter ends submit your numbers. Quarterly voting assistance metrics deadlines are:

- a. **Quarter 1 – Submit Report before 31 March**
- b. **Quarter 2 – Submit Report before 30 June**
- c. **Quarter 3 – Submit Report before 30 September**
- d. **Quarter 4 – Submit Report before 31 December**

8. **Program Instructions.** The Marine Corps’ Voting Assistance Program is Marine Corps Order 1742.1B; there is additional guidance provided by MarAdmin 544/16.

9. **Appointment/Grade Waiver Letter.** You are required to be appointed in writing by your Commanding Officer. The appointment letter and grade waiver letter template can be obtained from the Marine Corps SVAO; your grade waiver letter must be submitted to the SVAO for processing and approval.
10. **VAO training.** You are required to complete the Voting Assistance Officer training before providing voting assistance. Voting Assistance Officer training is conducted online via the FVAP website: <http://www.fvap.gov/vao/training>. Be sure to keep a copy of your training certificate in your Continuity Folder. Instruction on how to create a Continuity Folder is on the FVAP website under the "Voting Assistance Officer" Tab and click on "Continuity Folder".
11. **Annual command training.** You are required to administer annual voting training to all personnel of your command and keep attendance rosters in your Continuity Folder. The method of training is up to you, but you can find training materials online at: <http://www.fvap.gov/vao/training/voter-training>.
12. **Voting alerts.** You can sign up for Voting Alerts on the FVAP website at <http://www.fvap.gov/vao/alerts>. FVAP will automatically send you pertinent information about upcoming elections, State Election offices POC, VAO Workshop schedules, voter registration events, primary dates, etc.
13. **USMC voting website.** The Marine Corps Voting Section is located on the M&RA website (click on the Family Tab, Marine and Family programs Division link, Military Personnel Services link, and the Voting link). Updates and other information will be posted.
14. **Per Federal Law.** Voting Assistance Officers are required to have their performance as VAOs commented on in their Fitness Report; for Civilian VAOs on their annual evaluation. This requirement is also part of the IGMC Functional Area Checklist 1742.
15. **Voting materials.** Voting materials (Posters, banners, handouts) that can be ordered through your unit's S-1 (or possible S-4/MMO) office via the Marine Corps Publications Distribution System (MCPDS). Voting forms (SF 76 - FPCA and SF 186 - FWAB) are available through the Direct Support Stock Control (DSSC) Outlets, General Services Administration (GSA), or through your unit's Supply Officer via SABRS.
16. **Guidance on political campaigns and activities.** This guidance is to ensure that our Marines, Sailors, and civilian employees exercise their rights and obligations of citizenship without violating statutes, regulations, or policies prohibiting official involvement or the appearance of official involvement in partisan political activities. As an example, Marines shall not wear a uniform when they attend a partisan or nonpartisan political fundraising activity, meeting, rally, debate, or convention as a spectator. Marines and other members of the Armed Forces are subject to generally more restrictive rules than civilian employees. Guidance for civilian federal employees, their use of social media and email is covered in the Hatch Act at: <https://osc.gov/pages/hatch-act-social-media-and-email-guidance.aspx>.

a. Active duty Marines and Sailors may:

- Register to vote and vote.
- Express a personal opinion on political candidates/issues not on behalf of the USMC.
- Promote and encourage others to vote, if such does not constitute use of their official authority or influence to interfere with the outcome of any election.
- Join a partisan or nonpartisan political club and attend its meetings when not in uniform.
- Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper expressing their personal views on public issues or political candidates, if such action is not part of an organized letter-writing campaign or a solicitation of votes for or against a political party or partisan political cause or candidate. If the letter identifies the Member as being on active duty, the letter should clearly state the views expressed are those of the individual only and not those of the Department of Defense.
- Make monetary contributions to a political organization, party, or committee favoring a particular candidate subject to campaign finance limitations.
- Display a partisan political bumper sticker on their POV.
- Attend political meetings, rallies, debates, or activities as a spectator when not in uniform.
- Participate fully in the Federal Voting Assistance Program.
- Express his or her own personal views on public issues or candidates via social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or personal blogs, much the same as they would be permitted to write a letter to the editor of a newspaper. If a social media site/post identifies the Member as on active duty (or is otherwise identifiable as an active duty member), then the entry must clearly and prominently state that the views expressed are those of the individual only and not those of the Department of Defense and the USMC.

b. Active duty Marines and Sailors may not:

- Participate in partisan political fundraising activities.
- Use official authority or influence to interfere with an election.
- Speak before a partisan political gathering, including any gathering that promotes a partisan political party, candidate, or cause.
- Perform clerical or other duties for a partisan political committee or candidate during a campaign (e.g., stuffing envelopes, manning a phone bank, precinct walking, distributing campaign literature and buttons, etc.), on Election Day or after an Election Day during the process of closing out a campaign.
- Solicit or otherwise engage in fundraising activities in federal offices or facilities, including military installations for any political cause or candidate.
- March or ride in a partisan political parade.
- Display a large political sign, banner, or poster (as distinguished from a bumper sticker) on a private vehicle.
- Display a partisan political sign, poster, banner, or similar device visible to the public at one's residence on a military installation or even if that residence is part of a privatized housing development.
- Post or make direct links to a political party, partisan political candidate, campaign, group, or cause, because such activity is the equivalent of distributing literature on behalf of those entities or individuals, which is prohibited.
- Solicits or receives political contributions at any time, wearing campaign badges or buttons on government premises, displaying campaign materials (pictures, posters, coffee mugs, mouse pads, etc.) in a federal workplace, distributing campaign materials on government property, over government email systems (e.g. sending emails to co-workers urging support of a political candidate), and distributing political materials to subordinates through any email system.

16. Contact the SVAO at vote@USMC.mil with any questions you have on your duties as a VAO.