

STATEMENT OF
MS. GAIL H. MC GINN
PERFORMING DUTIES AS UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

ON THE
FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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Executive Summary

The *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* safeguards the right to vote for federal offices by absent uniformed services members and their families, and overseas U. S. citizens. In the administration of this law, the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) works cooperatively with state and local election officials to carry out its provisions.

The absentee voting process for *UOCAVA* citizens requires the successful completion of three basic steps. Step 1: Register to vote and request an absentee ballot. Step 2: Local election official determines the citizen's legal voting residence and provides a state absentee ballot. Step 3: Vote the ballot and return it to the local election official. Traditionally these steps have been accomplished by mail. Modern information technologies provide alternative methods to streamline the process to better support absentee voters. The Department continues to advocate for expanding use of technology through electronic transmission alternatives. Fax and email options for registering to vote, requesting an absentee ballot, receiving the absentee ballot, and returning the voted absentee ballot greatly reduce the amount of time needed to complete the absentee voting process, and gives *UOCAVA* voters additional alternatives when regular mail is slow or unreliable.

To prepare for upcoming elections, the FVAP staff members conduct voting assistance workshops. These workshops give Voting Assistance Officers the hands-on training they need to understand their mission and to perform their duties. To prepare for the 2008 election, the FVAP conducted a total of 193 workshops worldwide in addition to addressing election officials at conferences of national and international election official organizations.

Expediting ballots is a very important aspect of the absentee process. In 2004, 2006 and again in 2008, the FVAP, in conjunction with the U. S. Postal Service and Military Postal Service Agency, ensured that military absentee ballots were expedited. The U. S. Postal Service handled ballots using Express Mail procedures while those ballots were within its system. Additionally, FVAP redesigned its website to make it easier for *UOCAVA* citizens to register to vote and request a ballot via this website.

In July 2008, the FVAP launched the Voter Registration and Ballot Delivery (VRBD) system, continuing and improving on systems the Department provided in 2004 and 2006. This included an automated version of the Voter Registration/Ballot Request form that voters could print, sign, and submit to their local election officials, as well as receive their blank absentee ballot. FVAP is currently pursuing the next generation of electronic tools to include the online capability for completion of the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot in the event a state ballot is not received.

The Department continues to build on the successes and take lessons learned from past elections to minimize or remove barriers that make it difficult or impossible for *UOCAVA* voters to exercise their right to vote. The ongoing efforts of the Department, the U.S. and Military Postal Services, the Department of State, other federal agencies, state and local governments, and a variety of not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations are giving more voters a greater opportunity to participate in elections. Through these collective efforts to improve ballot transit time and promote and implement expanded electronic transmission alternatives, voters will continue to reap the benefits of these improvements in this and future elections.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Bennett, and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on the problems faced by uniformed services and overseas voters. These voters face unique challenges in exercising their right to participate in our election process. The Department of Defense continues to identify the individual and systemic barriers to voting faced by these voters and to assist these voters in overcoming these obstacles. I will review some of the steps the Department's Federal Voting Assistance Program has taken and the plans to lessen the burdens faced by these voters.

Background

The *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* safeguards the right to vote for federal offices by absent uniformed services members and their families, and overseas U. S. citizens. In the administration of this law, the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) works cooperatively with state and local election officials to carry out its provisions. As mandated by the *Act*, the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program prescribes the Federal Post Card Application which is a uniform registration and ballot request form, and the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot which is used by voters as a back-up federal office ballot in cases where their requested state ballot does not arrive promptly. In 2005, both forms were revised to make them easier to use while safeguarding the citizen's private information, and providing additional important information to election officials such as the citizen's email address and his or her alternate mailing address.

The absentee voting process for *UOCAVA* citizens requires the successful completion of three basic steps. Step 1: The citizen registers to vote and requests an absentee ballot from his or her local election official using the Federal Post Card Application. Step 2: Upon receipt of the completed Federal Post Card Application, the local election official determines the citizen's legal voting residence based on the information provided, and provides a state absentee ballot to the citizen. Step 3: The citizen votes the ballot and returns it to his or her local election official. Traditionally these steps are accomplished by mail via the United States Postal Service, Military Postal Service Agency, and foreign postal systems. Modern information technologies provide various methods to streamline the process to better support absentee voters.

FVAP Goals

The goals for supporting all *UOCAVA* citizens in the absentee voting process are straight forward and enduring:

- all U.S. citizens are aware of their right to vote
- all *UOCAVA* citizens have the opportunity to vote and have their votes counted, and
- all states and territories adopt legislation and procedures to make the absentee voting process simple and uniform for *UOCAVA* citizens.

To accomplish these goals, the Department continues to reach out to *UOCAVA* citizens and to federal, state and local government officials to advocate the maximum incorporation of existing and emerging technologies into the absentee voting process and, to encourage states to adopt legislation that provides uniformity for all *UOCAVA* citizens. While we have worked

directly with the states on uniformity in legislation, we are now also working with the Uniformed Law Commission to accomplish this goal. The Federal Voting Assistance Program staff monitors the mailing of absentee ballots from local election officials to *UOCAVA* citizens and, when these ballots are not mailed in a timely manner, the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program works with the Department of Justice to ensure these citizens have sufficient time to vote and have their votes counted.

Recent Statutory Direction

Title VII of the *Help America Vote Act of 2002* required the Secretary of Defense to prescribe regulations and procedures so that Voting Assistance Officers are provided time and resources necessary to perform their duties; to implement measures to ensure a postmark or other official proof of mailing is placed on ballots collected by the Department overseas or on vessels at sea; and to develop a standard oath for *UOCAVA* voting materials. All of these provisions required by Title VII have been successfully implemented. The Department and Service regulations require Commanding Officers to provide Voting Assistance Officers with the time and resources they need to perform their duties and the Military Postal Service Agency has provided postmarking devices to all overseas military post offices and the direction to ensure absentee ballots are properly postmarked. A standard oath has been proscribed to the states and has been incorporated in the 2005 revision of the Federal Post Card Application and Federal Write-In absentee Ballot forms.

The *Act* required states to designate a single office responsible for *UOCAVA* citizen procedures; to report to the Election Assistance Commission on the number of *UOCAVA* absentee ballots sent, received and cast; to extend the effective period of the Federal Post Card Application through the next two regularly scheduled general elections; to inform *UOCAVA* voters if their registration or ballot application was refused and the reason for the refusal; and to accept a Federal Post Card Application submitted early in the calendar year. The Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program issued a *Help America Vote Act* interpretative memorandum dealing with *UOCAVA* related issues and sent the memorandum to state and local election officials in August 2003. Title V, Subtitle I of the *Ronald Reagan National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2005* expanded the use of the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot to allow for its use by uniformed service members and their eligible family members within the United States, thereby allowing all *UOCAVA* citizens to use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot if their state absentee ballot had been requested but not received, providing that the request was received by their local election jurisdiction either 30 days before the general election or the state deadline for registration and ballot request, whichever is later. These changes to the law have led to improvements in the absentee voting process by removing obstacles faced by *UOCAVA* voters.

The *NDAA for FY 2005* also required that, prior to proceeding with any electronic voting demonstration project, electronic absentee voting guidelines and standards must be established by the Election Assistance Commission. The Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Election Assistance Commission and the National Institute of Standards and Technology regarding responsibilities and roles in developing these guidelines and standards. The parties are developing a plan of action and milestones for

the issuance of guidelines and standards. The Department has provided the Election Assistance Commission and the National Institute of Standards and Technology with system design information and lessons learned from electronic voting projects previously carried out by the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

In May, 2007 the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report recommending specific strategies for the DoD to apply in the planning and development of a future electronic voting project. The Department agrees with those recommendations and published similar observations in a report to Congress released prior to the GAO findings.

Progress in Working with State Governments

State legislatures are also moving forward to facilitate absentee voting. For several years, the Federal Voting Assistance Program has proposed legislative initiatives to state officials that would facilitate absentee voting for *UOCAVA* citizens. The current top legislative priorities are for states and territories to:

- Provide at least 45 days between the ballot mailing date and the date ballots are due
- Give State Chief Election Officials the emergency authority to alter election procedures in certain circumstances (e.g., to extend the ballot return deadline, or to allow electronic transmission of blank or voted ballots)
- Allow election officials to provide a state write-in absentee ballot, to be sent out 90-180 days before all elections. This state write-in absentee ballot would allow the voter to cast votes for federal and state offices
- Further expand the use of electronic transmission alternatives for voting materials

There have been many successes over the years through hard work by all the stakeholders concerned with absentee voting. Currently, 27 states, 3 territories and the District of Columbia provide at least 45 days between the ballot mailing date and the date ballots are due; 17 states and the District of Columbia give Chief Election Officials the emergency authority to alter election procedures in certain circumstances; 27 states allow election officials to provide a state write-in absentee ballot; and 47 states, 3 territories and the District of Columbia provide for the electronic transmission of AT LEAST SOME voting materials. We believe that with involvement of the National Conference of Commissioners of Uniform State Laws, more states will adopt uniform legislation.

A bipartisan group consisting of five Secretaries of State from Pennsylvania, Indiana, Mississippi, Florida and California was invited by the Secretary of Defense to visit the troops to promote voting participation. These are the Chief Election Officials of their states and, through their positions in national election organizations, represent all the states. The delegation travelled from September 28 to October 4, 2008 to Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan and Germany.

The delegation saw first-hand how the voting assistance programs operate at the installation and field level through meetings with installation commanders and key officials, Installation Voting Assistance Officers and with the troops both individually and in panel discussions. The delegation also visited Military Postal Service facilities and saw the priority

they placed on voting materials. Finally, they visited with wounded warriors at the hospitals at Balad Air Base in Afghanistan and Landstuhl Army Medical Center in Germany.

As a result of this visit, the Secretaries of State found that “Our troops are tune in to the electoral.... Many are eager to vote and are pleased with the efforts of their commanding officers and voting assistants to help them cast their ballots.” The Secretaries made several recommendations:

1. require local election official to capture the email address of the military personnel at the time the request for absentee ballot is received
2. require the local election official to confirm via email the absentee request has been received and inform the voter the estimated date the ballot will be sent to the voter
3. require local election official to notify the voter via email that their voted absentee ballot was received
4. allow the transmission of balloting materials via email, both outgoing and incoming

Educating

The Department devotes considerable resources to inform *UOCAVA* citizens about the process of absentee voting. This includes formal training of Voting Assistance Officers, providing information to state and local election officials, and ensuring that *UOCAVA* citizens have access to the necessary materials and the means to request and submit their absentee ballot.

Federal Voting Assistance Program staff members conduct voting assistance workshops to prepare Voting Assistance Officers for upcoming elections. These workshops give Voting Assistance Officers the hands-on training they need to understand their mission and to perform their duties. To prepare for the 2008 election, the Federal Voting Assistance Program conducted a total of 193 workshops worldwide starting in September 2007 and continuing through September 2008. These workshops included:

- 27 at the Federal Voting Assistance Program headquarters in Rosslyn, Virginia
- 95 at military installations around the world
- 71 at Department of State posts for State Department personnel and members of overseas citizen organizations who help facilitate the process

For Voting Assistance Officers who were unable to attend an in-person workshop, learning options were available to complete certified training via the internet or CD-ROM. A slide presentation for use by installation or unit level Voting Assistance Officers was available online.

In addition to the in-person and on-line training opportunities, the Federal Voting Assistance Program maintains a website that provides Voting Assistance Officers and local election officials with a wealth of information that will help them fulfill their responsibilities.

Since state and local election officials are the individuals who administer elections, they are crucial allies in facilitating absentee voting. *UOCAVA* success relies on their actions. Many

states have adopted legislation that has brought simplicity, uniformity, consistency and clarity to the absentee voting process. It is important that these election officials be kept abreast of the latest issues with *UOCAVA* voting. The Federal Voting Assistance Program regularly sends memoranda and letters to local election officials providing education and clarification of *UOCAVA* issues. A monthly newsletter specifically addressing military and overseas citizens' issues for election officials is also provided by the Federal Voting Assistance Program. In addition, the Federal Voting Assistance Program staff addressed officials at conferences of these national and international election official organizations, such as the:

- National Association of Secretaries of State
- National Association of State Election Directors
- International Association of Clerks, Recorders, Election Officials and Treasurers
- National Association of Election Officials (Election Center) and the Joint Election Official Liaison Committee
- National Association of County Recorders, Election Officials and Clerks
- National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws

The Federal Voting Assistance Program staff addressed state and local election officials at conferences hosted by 32 different states.

When addressing these state and local election officials, the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program recommends practices and procedures to maximize the effectiveness of *UOCAVA*. These recommendations include:

- Providing 45 days ballot transit time
- Providing simple ballot marking and return instructions with absentee ballots, including instructions to return the voted ballot by fax or email, where authorized
- Differentiating between *UOCAVA* and other state absentee voters in state and local literature, in state laws and administrative codes, and on state and local election websites
- Ensuring all employees in local election offices throughout the state are trained on their responsibilities under *UOCAVA*
- Preparing a state *UOCAVA* Voter Guide for publication on website and in hard copy
- Providing a webpage dedicated to *UOCAVA* citizens and elections in which *UOCAVA* citizens can participate, including portals for voter registration verification
- Using electronic alternatives for the transmission of balloting materials

The Department provides voters and Voting Assistance Officers the tools, materials, and information necessary to facilitate registration, ballot request, and ballot transmission. The Department uses a variety of communications media to inform uniformed service members and overseas citizens about upcoming elections and the procedures for registering and requesting an absentee ballot through commercial print and broadcast media outlets. Stories on absentee voting are run on the American Forces Radio and Television Service, the American Forces Network, the Pentagon Channel, American Forces Information Service, and Defense Link, as well as in private and military-focused print publications such as *Stars and Stripes* and in overseas publications.

At the installation and unit level, messages regarding absentee voting are included on Service websites, in the Plans of the Day, and at Commander's Call briefings. Billboards are posted on installations informing members of their right to vote. The Department's new Infonet system, which is made up of video screens throughout the Pentagon and the Navy Annex, are used to broadcast messages that encourage voters to register and vote. Installations supported Armed Forces Voters Week by conducting voter registration drives and voter awareness outreach events and were extended to family members through displays, voter registration drives, and information at Morale, Welfare and Recreation Facilities, Family Service Centers, medical facilities, commissaries and exchanges, and DoD Dependent Schools. As in years past, the Department used Absentee Voting Week to encourage voters to return their voted ballots for the General Election to their local election official offices.

Absentee voting information and materials are distributed to the Department of State posts through the State Department's internal communication networks. The Federal Voting Assistance Program provides on-site training to post Voting Assistance Officers to ensure that they are equipped to provide non-partisan voting assistance. Additionally, the Program supports overseas citizens groups by directly providing voting assistance and thousands of copies of the Federal Post Card Application, Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot, the *Voting Assistance Guide*, and other informational and motivational voting materials. Overseas Citizens Voters Week, scheduled by the Department biennially since 1994, is promoted through the Federal Voting Assistance Program's training workshops and their monthly newsletter, the *Voting Information News*. State Department posts and overseas citizens groups are encouraged to use this week to conduct voter registration drives, inform U.S. citizens residing abroad about their voting rights and responsibilities, and provide them with the materials they needed to successfully vote absentee.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program website (www.fvap.gov) provides uniformed service members, voting age family members, and overseas citizens with remote access to voting information. The site received 11,536,125 separate page requests during calendar year 2008. During that time period, the online version of the Federal Post Card Application was accessed 1,060,203 times. The site is updated frequently with information pertinent to absentee voters. Recognizing that the website is a vital resource for both persons who provide voting assistance and the voters, the site was redesigned to enhance content and improve usability for all visitors to the site by incorporating results from stakeholder usability testing. The most significant change to the website was to make it easier to register to vote and request a ballot.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program provides up-to-date information to Voting Assistance Officers through its monthly newsletter and issues special news releases to announce time sensitive information (e.g., changes in absentee procedures or the holding of special federal elections). Both the newsletter and the News Releases are distributed via email and posted on the Federal Voting Assistance Program website. The newsletter is also made available in a hardcopy format.

Currently, the Federal Voting Assistance Program is coordinating a completely revised *2010-2011 Voting Assistance Guide* with the individual states. The new streamlined *Guide* will be distributed in early September of this year. The Services distribute *Voting Assistance Guides*,

Federal Post Card Applications and Federal Write-in Absentee Ballots to their Voting Assistance Officers and individual voters through their normal supply chains. All of these materials are also available through the Federal Voting Assistance Program website.

Facilitating Ballot Transmission

The Department has taken extraordinary steps to ensure that members of the uniformed services, their family members, and overseas citizens have an opportunity to vote. Expediting ballots through any and all media accepted by state and local election officials is a very important aspect of the absentee process.

In 2004, 2006 and again in 2008, the Federal Voting Assistance Program, in conjunction with the U. S. Postal Service and Military Postal Service Agency, ensured that military absentee ballots were expedited. The U. S. Postal Service handled ballots using Express Mail procedures while those ballots were within its system. The Military Postal Service also used special handling and expediting procedures while transporting ballots outside the U.S. to and from overseas military post offices. These special handling procedures were used to ensure that absentee ballots arrived promptly. This expedited delivery included special marking and handling of absentee ballots. The Military Postal Service Agency ensured absentee ballots from overseas military postal activities were expedited back to the local election official.

The Department's effort to expedite delivery of ballots starts well before the election year. The Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) ensured that its postal personnel are trained, certified and have the necessary resources to handle absentee ballots. For the 2008 elections, MPSA published a Voting Action Plan and Calendar, and sent monthly voting messages to all military postal activities reminding them of the proper ballot handling procedures. All military postal activities in forward deployed areas have postmarking devices to ensure that ballots are legibly postmarked. The Military Postal Service Agency published recommended mailing dates based on transit times and geographic locations to help ensure ballots were received by state deadlines and that service members were aware of these mailing deadlines.

For those citizens who may not be able to vote by mail, technology provides an alternative means for voters and local election officials to send and receive voting materials. In 1990, the Federal Voting Assistance Program initiated an emergency measure (with the cooperation of the states and territories) to use electronic transmission (facsimile technology) and established the Electronic Transmission Service so that uniformed services members deployed during Operation Desert Shield could participate in the upcoming general election. The Electronic Transmission Service allowed service members deployed to the Persian Gulf to fax their registration request application and the local election official to fax the blank ballot to the voter. What began as a special effort is now widely accepted by most states and institutionalized through state laws. Currently:

- 29 states, 2 territories and the District of Columbia allow *UOCAVA* voters to submit a Federal Post Card Application for registration by fax.
- 47 states, 3 territories and the District of Columbia allow *UOCAVA* voters to submit a Federal Post Card Application for absentee ballot request via fax.

- 36 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands allow *UOCAVA* voters to receive the blank ballot via fax.
- 23 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands allow *UOCAVA* voters to return the voted ballot via fax.

The Department aggressively advocates for expanding use of technology through electronic transmission alternatives. Fax and email options for registering to vote, requesting an absentee ballot, receiving the absentee ballot, and returning the voted absentee ballot greatly reduce the amount of time needed to complete the absentee voting process, and give *UOCAVA* voters additional alternatives when regular mail is slow or unreliable. The Department urges the states to provide as many options as possible to meet citizens' needs. Electronic transmission by fax, email or over the Internet have become worthwhile alternatives to the by-mail absentee voting process for our men and women in uniform and citizens overseas.

Many states and territories have expanded their electronic transmission alternative capabilities to include email. The Federal Voting Assistance Program urges states to consider using email as an integral part of the electronic alternatives made available to their citizens. Since many forward deployed soldiers have email capabilities but do not have access to fax capabilities, institutionalizing email ballot request, ballot delivery, and ballot return can be crucial to enfranchisement. Currently:

- Twenty-nine jurisdictions allow *UOCAVA* voters to submit a Federal Post Card Application for absentee ballot request via email.
- Sixteen states allow *UOCAVA* voters to submit a Federal Post Card Application for registration via email.
- Twenty-one states allow *UOCAVA* voters to receive the blank ballot via email.
- Eleven states allow *UOCAVA* voters to return the voted ballot via email.

Since 2005, the Federal Voting Assistance Program has encouraged states and territories to make available to citizens website portals that allow voters to check their registration status. To date, ballot registration status sites have been launched in 39 jurisdictions.

In July 2008, the Federal Voting Assistance Program launched the Voter Registration and Ballot Delivery (VRBD) system, continuing and improving on systems the Department provided in 2004 and 2006. This included an automated version of the Voter Registration/Ballot Request form (Federal Post Card Application or FPCA) embedded with state specific requirements that produced an electronic version of the FPCA that voters could print, sign, and submit to their local election officials. This feature provided all citizens covered by *UOCAVA* an easy way to fill out their FPCAs. In total, the system guided over 21,000 military and overseas citizens through completion of the form online.

The system also included options for states to receive the FPCA for registration and ballot request, as well as provide a blank ballot to the voter via a secure server. Only citizens from 425 local election offices from 11 states were able to use one or both of these features. From July 23 –November 4, 2008, 780 citizens uploaded ballot request forms to local election offices, and 124 voters downloaded their blank ballots.

The system used a multi-layer approach to security which ensured that the voter's personal information was not viewed by anyone except the intended recipient. The VRBD system provided military and overseas voters an easy way to register and request absentee ballots, as well as an alternative to the by-mail process of absentee voting, without sacrificing the security of the voter's identity.

FVAP is currently pursuing the next generation of electronic tools to assist *UOCAVA* voters called the Automated Register, Request and Receive Ballot Process (R3). R3 will expand the VRBD process to add the online capability for completion of the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot in the event a state ballot is not received. R3 will expand and enhance the election community's means to provide blank ballots and, unlike all the previous initiatives, would be owned and operated by DoD and hosted at DoD secure facilities, thus mitigating potential threats to personal privacy data and permitting easy refinement and expansion in the future.

Results

There is no definitive information regarding voting participation rates, and there is no centralized system that accurately tracks who votes and who doesn't. However, to gauge participation in the voting process, DoD conducts a detailed survey after each Presidential election. This statistically-sound, random sample survey of *UOCAVA* citizens and local election officials is mandated by the *UOCAVA* and is conducted to gather post-election information on the effectiveness of assistance by the Federal Voting Assistance Program. The survey allows us to analyze uniformed services voter participation, overseas U.S. citizen participation, and State-Federal cooperation. The data of the DoD post-election survey for the 2008 general election are currently being analyzed and a report of the results will be provided to the President and Congress by December 2009. However, as soon as we have final results, we plan on briefing this committee, and the other committees that have oversight responsibilities for *UOCAVA* matters.

Other reports and surveys can provide useful information. But caution must be exercised when using or referring to those results if those results are based on self-selected, non-random populations.

UOCAVA requires the EAC to collect comprehensive data from the states on all of the ballots sent to and received from *UOCAVA* voters within 90 days after each regularly scheduled general election, and to make the data available to the general public. The EAC published data for the November 2006 mid-term election in September 2007. The data is collected from 49 states, the District of Columbia and America Samoa. It is worth noting that the report on the 2006 election cited problems with incomplete data and variations in the collecting and reporting of numbers from the states. The collection of quality data as required by *UOCAVA* is essential for proper evaluation of the administration of the absentee voting process. To obtain reliable results, rigorous, peer-reviewed, statistically sound methodologies must be applied when collecting the state data and preparing the summary information.

In both 2006 and 2008 the DoD and our sister Executive Branch agencies, and volunteers with American citizen organizations overseas conducted all-out efforts to inform our men and

women in uniform and citizens outside the U.S. about their right to vote, how to go about the absentee voting process, and provided assistance and materials to these citizens to help them participate in elections. In an April 2009, report to Congress, the Department of Defense Inspector General concluded that the Services' "... programs were effective and in compliance with DoD regulations and public law. The oversight programs of the FVAP Office and the Services continue to evolve, presenting opportunities to improve the effectiveness and compliance aspects of the Voting Assistance Program." We commit ourselves to continue concerted state and federal cooperative efforts to improve the absentee voting process and participation in elections by *UOCAVA* citizens.

Looking Forward

The Department continues to build on the successes and take lessons learned from past elections to minimize or remove barriers that make it difficult or impossible for *UOCAVA* citizens to exercise their right to vote. The ongoing efforts of the Department, the U.S. and Military Postal Services, the Department of Justice, the Department of State, other federal agencies, state and local governments, and a variety of not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations are giving more voters a greater opportunity to participate in elections. Through these collective efforts to improve ballot transit time and promote and implement expanded electronic transmission alternatives, voters will continue to reap the benefits of these improvements in this and future elections.



Biography



Gail H. McGinn

***SES, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Plans, performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness)
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CURRENT ASSIGNMENT: Mrs. Gail H. McGinn was appointed as the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Plans in November 2002. She began performing the duties of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness 11 April 2009. In her capacity as the DUSD(Plans), she serves as the official within the Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness responsible for developing integrated evaluation processes to measure the success of personnel programs. She provides advice and assistance to the Under Secretary on the management of military and civilian personnel programs affecting over 2 million service members and employees; oversees the development of strategic plans for human resources; and directs involvement with oversight and consultant boards to achieve human resource goals. She was appointed as the Senior Language Authority for the Office of the Secretary of Defense in May of 2004, with responsibility for improving foreign language capability within the Department of Defense. She is also responsible for developing policies and approaches to address sexual assault within the Armed Forces and diversity management and equal opportunity for the entire DoD workforce. Mrs. McGinn recently assumed responsibility for managing the Senior Oversight Committee to support the wounded warrior and joint strategic planning efforts between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

PAST EXPERIENCES: Mrs. McGinn became a member of the Senior Executive Service in 1992. Her prior SES assignments include Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management Policy and Principal Director for Personnel Support, Families and Education. Beginning her service in the Office of the Secretary of Defense in 1988 Mrs. McGinn provided personal leadership to the planning and development of military family support programs; child development programs; and family advocacy and domestic violence prevention programs. She also led a special effort to design a military funeral honors program for our nation's veterans. Before coming to the Office of the Secretary of Defense in 1988, Mrs. McGinn was the Director of Program Analysis and Evaluation at the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center (1985-1988). From 1983-1985, Mrs. McGinn worked on the Army staff and served on a special task force that inaugurated family programs in the Department of the Army. She has also held a number of positions in the drug and alcohol field. These included positions at Headquarters V Corps in Frankfurt, Germany; and at Seneca Army Depot.

AWARDS: Mrs. McGinn is a recipient of the Presidential Distinguished Executive Rank Award and is a two-time recipient of the Presidential Meritorious Executive Rank Award. Her other awards include the Department of Defense Award for Distinguished Civilian Service; the Secretary of Defense Awards for Distinguished Civilian Service, Meritorious Civilian Service and for Exceptional Civilian Service; as well as the Department of the Army decoration for Meritorious Civilian Service, the Commander's Award for Civilian Service, and the Order of the White Plume. She is also the recipient of the Alumni Achievement Award from William Smith College and is an honorary member of the Phi Sigma Iota foreign language honor society.

EDUCATION: Born in East St. Louis, Illinois, and raised as a military child, Mrs. McGinn has lived in many locations in the U.S. and abroad. She attended William Smith College in Geneva, New York, where she graduated Magna Cum Laude with a B.A. in Psychology and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. She completed graduate study with a Masters Degree in Education from Boston University. Mrs. McGinn has studied both French and German and spoke Danish as a child on the playgrounds of Odense, Denmark.