



From the Desk of the President

Voting: Exercising One of Your Civic Duties

With the presidential election right around the corner, let's reflect on the important *right* and civic duty of voting. Some may think voting is a privilege, but it is mentioned several times in the constitution as a right. One of NCOA's mantras is "Voice of the Enlisted." As you should know, NCOA has a strong legacy of weighing in on legislative affairs and working to bring your enlisted perspectives to the attention of policy and policy leadership. Having this platform and access was a hard-earned privilege, and we will continue to work with our partners in [The Military Coalition](#) to do this while looking for new ways to strengthen our voice in legislative and policy affairs. But each of us also brings our unique voice to the process. As citizens of the United States, we all enjoy the right and civic duty and responsibility to throw our individual voice into the political arena. Voting is one opportunity and avenue to accomplish that.

It's essential to take time and reflect on the efforts many people put forth to advocate for the opportunities and processes which enable our voting rights, specifically, for active-duty members and their families. There was a recognition that even while deployed or stationed overseas, service members, spouses, and family members should still be able to exercise their right to vote. The [Federal Voting Assistance Program \(FVAP\)](#) was established to ensure service members, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to do so - from anywhere in the world successfully. What a great program and resource, but how informed are YOU on the tools and resources you need? Don't let the ignorance of the process be an excuse to waive your civic right and responsibility to vote.

So now it's up to YOU! It would be best if you took ownership of your responsibility in this civic duty and responsibility—you can't outsource it. Unfortunately, it's far too easy to become complacent and take our voting rights for granted, to fear election process interference, or to become cynical at our country's political landscape. I get it, electing not to vote is a vote, but perhaps taking some time to understand how seriously citizens in countries that haven't had this right until recently is a way to recalibrate your beliefs. Value and respect those who advocated for programs such as FVAP, don't let their efforts and YOUR opportunity go to waste. Again, part of responsible citizenship is understanding and being involved in the governance processes that result in decisions that can impact many areas of your personal life. Enough said! Get informed, get registered, and get to the polls and vote!