

News Release

New York State Board of Elections



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For Release: **IMMEDIATELY**

New York Receives Military Voting Grant ***State Board of Elections gets Largest Single Federal Award in First Round***

ALBANY, NY (11/10/2011) -- The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) announced today the first seven recipients of its Electronic Absentee Systems for Elections (EASE) grants program, with New York receiving the largest single award of \$2,480,597.60. This grant will be used to upgrade and integrate the various information systems created in 2010 and utilized by local boards of elections, the state board of elections and the more than 40,000 military and overseas voters currently registered to vote in New York and covered under the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE) of 2009. With the goals of providing greater online access and automation of voter registration tools and absentee ballot systems, New York is committed to making the absentee voting process easier, more intuitive, and more seamless for military and civilian voters overseas while maintaining the integrity of the process.

"This money will go a long way toward helping us get absentee ballots out and back from military and overseas voters in a timely fashion. New York had the highest number of downloaded ballots via the new online system in 2010 and we look forward to increasing that number next year. As we commemorate Veterans Day, it important to note that we reached voters in 39 countries last year and this money will help us expand those successes," said Co-Executive Director Robert A. Brehm.

"The State and local boards of elections worked very hard last year to get our system up and running. Despite a few minor hiccups we provided a new and efficient way for our military personnel to vote. More than 80% of the users who responded to our survey rated the system as good or excellent. This grant will enable military and overseas voters from the State of New York to request, receive and track their ballots online," said Co-Executive Director Todd D. Valentine.

Federal Voting Assistance Program Director Bob Carey said, "FVAP continuously researches how to improve these absentee ballot acceptance rates. One way to improve the success rates of voted ballots is to research the technology used by the voters. These grants give the States a chance to test technologies to learn what helps military and overseas voters most."

Last May, the Department of Defense announced the availability of \$16,400,000 in federal funding to support research to advance the electronic options for military and overseas citizens when voting absentee. DOD has increased the funding level to \$20,600,000. All U.S. state, territory, and local governments were eligible to apply for the grants. Other states receiving money in the first round were California, Virginia, Washington, Maryland and Ohio.

New York developed and implemented an online absentee ballot delivery system in 2010 as one of the components to comply with the federally-mandated MOVE Act. New York partnered with FVAP to be one of 20 states to participate in their Electronic Voting Support Wizard pilot program. Military members can now

fill out their registration to vote and absentee ballot applications using these online tools, and if they do not receive their ballot in time, they may use the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB), for which a full online tool is also available. In 2010, there were approximately 65,000 military and overseas voters eligible for absentee ballots in New York State.

The MOVE Act was enacted by Congress in 2009, after a delegation of state secretaries of state reported visiting military personnel in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Germany that, everyone they visited with stated a preference for greater e-mail and Internet access to voting. Those same troops stated that email access extended even to remote areas of their theater of operations.