

Three States' Experience

Facilitating

UOCAVA VOTERS

**A White Paper Detailing the Experience of Building a
Wizard to Deliver (and Retrieve) Online Ballots to
Uniformed and Civilian Overseas Voters**

**ABVote.com
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Konnech', Inc.**

PREFACE

In early 2010 the Federal Voter Assistance Program (FVAP) offered to fund software wizards for States who wished to provide ballots online to their UOCAVA voters. After examining security, capability, and reliability, the FVAP identified appropriate software for the program.

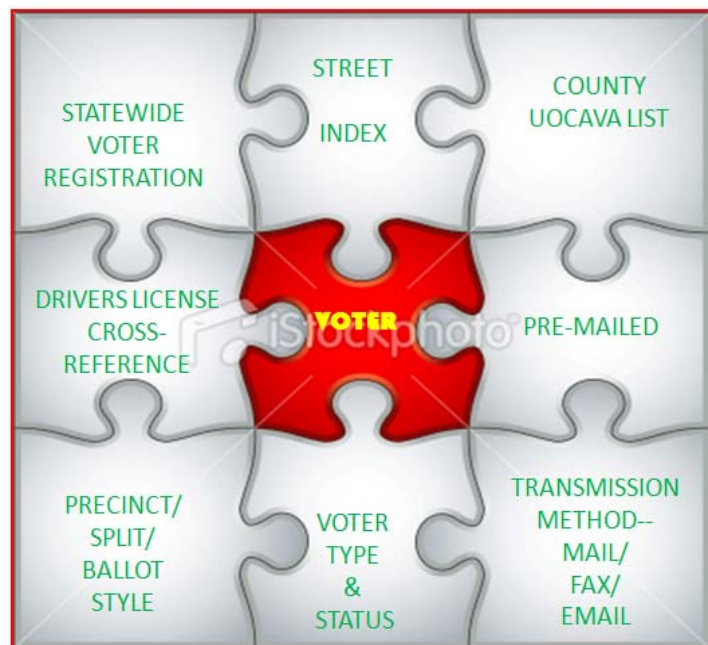
Montana, Nevada, and New Jersey each took advantage of the opportunity to have a custom crafted wizard for their UOCAVA voters.

PREPARATION

To prepare for the program, election administrators explained their election procedures, submitted samples of their databases, and uploaded their ballot styles. Some ballot styles were uploaded in word tables, some in Excel spreadsheets, and some in PDF documents. The most efficient method was the Excel spreadsheets.

WIZARD OPERATION

The wizards had links directly to and from the FVAP website, the respective State websites, and the appropriate county websites. They also interfaced to the States' registered voter databases, county databases, etc. The voter went online and entered address and identity and email information. The wizard consulted the state-wide registration database to determine if this was a properly registered voter. It also checked to see if the voter was on an existing list of UOCAVA voters. In two States, that UOCAVA list was stored in the state-wide voter registration database, but in one State, the wizard had to consult databases maintained at the County level. If the voter did not appear on the registration database, or appeared there but not on the UOCAVA list, the wizard produced a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to complete and submit.



In one State, matching information from all three sources -- the registration database, the UOCAVA list, and the declarations entered online -- were sufficient to qualify the voter for a ballot, and ballot access was instant; for the other two States, the voter was instructed both on the screen and by an email that a Personal Identification Number (PIN) would be emailed to him/her after an election administrator reviewed and approved the request.

For those two States, the County election administrators would receive an email notifying them that a UOCAVA ballot request was pending. The administrator would click on a link in the email

to view a comparison of the information in the registration database, in the UOCAVA list, and the information entered online.

The example below shows the comparison of information the administrator viewed. The pink arrows point to the symbols that marked mis-matches of information—for instance, this voter had not entered his middle initial, had failed to include his apartment number, and had not included the word “Township” after the city name. The administrator could view the information and make a judgment as to whether the discrepancies were sufficiently major to merit disapproval, or so minor that they should be overlooked.

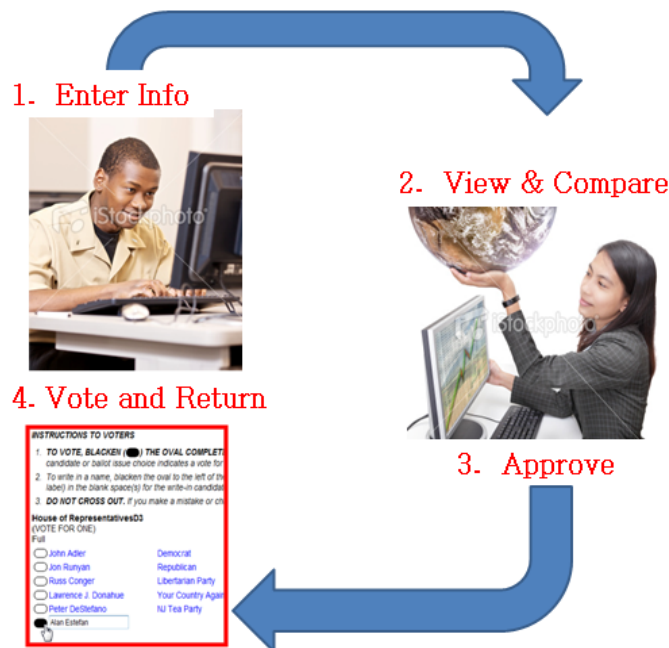
Voter Enter Information		UOCAVA Information(Listed)		SVRS Information(Listed)	
Last Name:	Redacted	Last Name:	✓ Redacted	Last Name:	✓ Redacted
First Name:	John	First Name:	✓ John	First Name:	✓ John
Middle Name:		Middle Name:	⚠ P	Middle Name:	⚠ P
Suffix:		Suffix:		Suffix:	
DOB:	2/3/1971	DOB:	✓ 2/3/1971	DOB:	✓ 2/3/1971
Email:	laura@konnech.com	Email:		Email:	
Phone:	5058684491	Phone:		Phone:	
Fax:		Fax:		Fax:	
Personal Identification		Personal Identification		Personal Identification	
Driver's License Number:		Driver's License Number:		Driver's License Number:	
OR, Last 4 Digits of SSN:	4479	OR, Last 4 Digits of SSN:		OR, Last 4 Digits of SSN:	
Voting Residence		Voting Residence		Voting Residence	
Residence Address:	BEECHWOOD CT	Residence Address:	✓ BEECHWOOD CT	Residence Address:	⚠ BEECHWOOD CT, 226,
City:	MOUNT LAUREL TOWNSHIP	City:	✓ MOUNT LAUREL TOWNSHIP	City:	⚠ MOUNT LAUREL
Zip:	08054	Zip:	✓ 08054	Zip:	✓ 08054
County:	Burlington	County:	✓ Burlington	County:	✓ Burlington

If the administrator clicked on the “Reject” button, an email to the voter included a text box to explain to the voter.

✕

Rejection Reasons:
Please reply with your middle initial.

Submit
Cancel



If, on the other hand, the administrator clicked on the “Approve” button, the system would display the precinct assigned in the registration database. The administrator could change the precinct if necessary, then the system sent an email to the voter with a PIN and a link to click that whisked him or her to the proper webpage. After entering the PIN, the correct ballot appeared, along with the template for instructions, an official reply envelope, and various state-specific forms to be signed, such as waiver of secrecy, certification of voter, voter’s oath, etc.

The voters could click on the ballot ovals to make their selections, or could print, then mark by hand.

All three States allowed their voters to return their ballots and documentation by mail, by fax, or by email. To ensure the confidentiality of the vote, the server retained no information of the voted selections, so the voters returning the ballots by email had to attach them to their own personal emails.

VARIATIONS

There were, of course, variations between the states. As mentioned earlier, one State allowed instant access to the ballot if all information matched, whereas the other two required the scrutiny and approval of the County election administrators. In one State, voters who are overseas indefinitely are entitled to only the federal portion of the ballot, not the State and local portion, so the voters must identify their status, and the county officials must have the opportunity to override that description. One state required the instructions to inform the voter that even after the voted ballot was emailed or faxed in, the original ballot must be mailed in before the polls closed on election day. One State wanted a satisfaction survey to be available for the voters. Signatures on Oath of Voter, Waiver of Secrecy, Certification of Voter, and reply envelopes vary State by State. Each State, of course, had different styles and numbers of databases to be interfaced to. A single basic wizard was created, then tweaked to each State’s needs.

RESULTS

One State chose not to burden the County administrators with learning a new procedure so close to the election. The other two went live with their wizards 45 days before the election.

One State’s very first voter to use the wizard contacted the State election director to express his appreciation, saying that in all his years overseas in the military, he had never voted before because of the difficulty of obtaining and returning a ballot in time to be counted.

Not surprisingly, the traffic to the websites increased dramatically in the last week before the election. These votes almost certainly would not have been cast, received, and counted if the votes had been relegated to the mail.



The wizards served voters from around the world—Syria, China, United Kingdom, Iraq, Cote d'Ivoire, Vietnam—35 countries in all. A high percentage found their wizards by clicking on the links embedded in the FVAP or their Secretary of States' websites, a few through search engines, and most by going directly to the site; we speculate that they were probably informed of the URL by colleagues who had first used it themselves.

VERDICT

The FVAP greatly advanced the cause of re-enfranchising UOCAVA voters with these wizards to provide online voting.

NEXT STEP

The next step will be developing the wizards to send ballots to absent voters who are already enrolled on the UOCAVA list 45 days in advance of the election, without requiring them to request the ballots individually online.

As any County Clerk can attest, this is not a simple matter of pulling out all the addresses of the voters who've checked absentee ballot on their forms. There are a number of complex actions to be performed, so the wizard must be equally complex.

The wizard will first have to comb through the voter registration databases to extract the list of all absentee voters and identify their precincts and associated ballot styles. It must distinguish the UOCAVA absentee voters from the non-UOCAVA absentee voters. For the non-UOCAVA voters, it must prepare an address list with precinct annotated so the election administrators can address, stuff, and mail the absentee ballot materials.

UOCAVA voters, however, present more variations. Some States dictate that voters overseas indefinitely are not entitled to a full ballot, but only to the federal portion, so the program must discriminate that status category. UOCAVA voters also are entitled to receive their ballots electronically, so the system must distinguish those who chose mail from those who chose email or fax. For those who chose mail, it will create an address list with appropriate ballot style annotated so the administrators can mail them out. For the fax and email groups, however, it will send the appropriate ballot and supporting materials directly to the fax number or email address the voter has submitted.

This step is under development and is projected to be ready in 2011.

CONCLUSION

The tools to reach the goal of making voting accessible to all uniformed, dependent, and overseas citizens are ready for the States who choose to implement them.