Transcription results:

Hello, and welcome to the Election Assistance Commission's Election Administration and Voting Survey webinar. I'm Thad Hall of Fors Marsh Group, a social science research company based in Arlington, Virginia. We work with both government and private clients including the Elections Assistance Commission, the Federal Voting Assistance Program, the Department of Defense, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Facebook. Fors Marsh Group will be providing technical assistance support for the 2016 Election Administration and Voting Survey, or EAVS as we like to call it. Let me take care of two webinar housekeeping items. First, you can ask questions during the webinar by sending a message through the Q&A button on the upper left corner of zoom. You can also send an email to EAVS@forsmarshgroup.com that's E-A-V-S at F-O-R-S M-A-R-S-H G-R-O-U-P.com. The webinar will be posted on the EAVS project website, which is eavsportal.com, as well as on the EAC's website. We really want this to be an interactive process, and I know that can be a little bit difficult during the webinar, but we would like for you to ask as many questions and make as many comments as you would like during the webinar, and we will try to answer them either during the webinar, or if we don't get to your question, then we'll answer it after the webinar concludes. With me today are three key people involved in the 2016 EAVS. First, we have EAC Vice Chair Matt Masterson. As many of you know, prior to coming to the EAC, Commissioner Masterson was the Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff to the Ohio Secretary of State and was Deputy Director of Elections in Ohio.

Commissioner Masterson welcome. We're glad that you're here today. Could you talk a little bit about the importance of the EAVS to the EAC.

Yeah, and thank you Thad and thank you to Fors Marsh and Director Boehmer for being here. Thank you to all of you taking the time in the middle of your election preparation to be on this call and prepare for the EAVS. As some of you may already know, the collection of EAVS data is one of our core missions at the EAC, critically important to what we do to try to serve you better. At the same time, we recognize that the EAVS can be a challenge, that for many of you collecting EAVS data is difficult with very little return on the back end. It is the commitment of the EAC on behalf of all three of the commissioners to improve the collection process, to collect better and more complete data, and then to make that data more useful to you on the back end so that it's not just something for academics or other institutions, but, in fact, something useful to election administrators to either make a case for more resources or better resources, or to improve the efficiency of their offices. This effort to improve the EAVS collection and the EAVS process has started already, not just on this call, but in the selection process we use. All of you need to know that the EAC is committed to a customer service based process with the EAVS process. Our goal is to make this as painless as possible for you all, while getting the best possible data back from your systems. This started with this call. It also stared with the work that we're doing with FVAP and CSG with the Section B working group to improve the data collection and quality for military and overseas voters that Director Boehmer's going to talk about. Then also with our tech tool series. I'd encourage you all, if you haven't already, go to EAC.gov and on EAC.gov on our Be Ready '16 page, we've created a series entitled Tech Tools that are videos on how to use data to improve the efficiency of your office. It's taking EAVS data as well as other data sources to improve the function in your office. We hope you see that those sorts of efforts will make this data tangible to you, real to you, and so you don't just associate it with the pain of submitting, but in fact associate it with positive innovations in your office and using it to improve your performance heading into elections.

Next we have Matt Boehmer, who is the Director of the Federal Voting Assistance Program or FVAP. Mr. Boehmer's been with the Department of Defense for 24 years now. He came to FVAP after his successful tenure running the military's Joint Advertising Market Research and Studies office. Matt, it's great to have you here today. Can you talk a little bit about the importance of Section B data for FVAP and for serving our men and women in the Armed Forces and overseas citizens?

Absolutely, again thanks to everybody for including me as part of this conversation. As you know, FVAP works to ensure that our military members, their families, and our overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and then have the tools and resources to do so. Part of that mission that we have is to actually collect data, to inform our program and to make sure that our UOCAVA voters are getting the services that they need. In the not so distant past, I think all of you will remember you were actually doing two collections for UOCAVA voters, both on the EAC survey and FVAP had its own survey. But in 2014, two federal agencies got together and you could say we got our act together, to make that process hopefully easier for you. All we did at that point was to combine the two surveys. You will probably also realize, as Commissioner Masterson mentioned, that we are working with the Council of State Government and election officials to improve that survey. So, not only have we combined the survey but now working to improve that survey to reduce redundancies and to make sure that things are much clearer particularly in terms of instructions and the things that election officials need to do. We really use this data because it's really critical for us to understand the transactional data that go into our UOCAVA voters. How were they fairing in terms of undeliverables, and we looked at these things to ensure that our communication and our marketing is really what our customers need. And then finally, reporting to Congress and our other key stakeholders, what's really going on in the UOCAVA world, so that again we can make better decisions. Thank you.

Great, thank you. And finally, we have former San Diego County Registrar of Voters, Deborah Seiler. Debora's working with FMG on the EAVS and she'll be a part of our technical assistance team. Already being a registrar in San Diego, she was Chief of Elections in the State of California and also served as Deputy Registrar in Solano County, California where she was in charge of elections. We're very happy to have her on our team. Deborah, why don't you take a moment to talk to us a little bit about your experiences as a registrar working on the EAVS and doing the data collection?

Thank you very much, Thad. It's certainly a pleasure to be here today and a pleasure to be a part of this very important project. For the past three and a half years, I've been retired and doing some election consulting on election administration issues. I'm happy to be involved with this project because I do hope to be of value, not only to the EAC, but also to my former election official colleagues. As a former election official, I totally understand how busy you are in the run up to an important November election. I also understand how after the election, you're really tired, but the election isn't over. You still have to have a lengthy canvas process. You have provisional ballots and absentee ballots entering into the count. You're dealing with losing candidates and you're also probably facing a recount if you're unlucky. So, there's lots going on and doing the EAVS survey on top of it, of course, feels like a lot of work. In San Diego, I had a jurisdiction of about a million and a half registered voters. In Solano County, I had about 160,000 registered voters, so very different size jurisdictions. The survey is the same regardless of the size of your jurisdiction. How to survive it, how best to survive it: Planning ahead is really what's going to make the EAVS process much easier for you. Reviewing the data elements and then determining how to either track them in your election management system if you have one or track them manually if you need to.

It's so beneficial when the time comes to complete this data. So much about the survey is creating the categories, knowing what the categories are, and then slicing and dicing the information to fit into those categories. So this advance planning really pays off at the back end. Next up, I'd say look at the data you collected the last time. Take a look at your 2014 survey. The survey hasn't changed.

So by reviewing that survey that you did before, you'll be able to remember what problems you encountered, what questions you had, and try to avoid those for the 2016 survey. Finally, make sure you have a process for collecting the data. Some of the survey questions can be completed now. For example, you already probably know the equipment you're using, how many polling places you have, how many precincts you have, what poll books you're going to use. I would include this information in packets to the media and candidates because they were very interested in the information. So this you could already fill out now before the elections. Some of the data can be very easy to collect if you do it during the election preparation phase. Let me give you an example. One of the survey questions asked for the age of your poll workers. If you have, on the application of your poll workers, a birth date category, you could just enter that into a spreadsheet and bingo, you have the information. You don't have to go back to the poll workers' voter registration information or any other data to collect that information. So that's kind of an easy example. Some of the data is going to come from reports you already have, your canvass reports. That's

going to give you your voter turn-out, they'll give you the number of ballots you've counted and rejected, and your number of provisional and absentee ballots. So some of that you already have. So it's just important to plan ahead.

Great, thank you Deborah. Let me take a little bit of time just to talk about the technical assistance that Fors Marsh Group will be providing during the 2016 EAVS process. We're very excited that we were selected by the EAC to provide this service, and our goal is to provide the highest level of customer service possible to each state. Over the past month, we've spoken to the points of contact in 44 states in order to learn about their previous EAVS experiences, and the information that we were able to glean from these conversations are going to help us provide better technical support. To the EAVS, FMG will be providing each state with their own technical assistance staff person, who'll be available to provide you with the assistance you need to complete the EAVS. These individuals are going to be extensively trained on all aspects of the EAVS, and they're going to also if your state had significant issues in 2014, and understand the ins and outs of each of the items on the survey. Additionally, Deborah and I will be available to address any difficult issues that may arise where you need additional support. We're going to be using an integrated customer relationship management process to ensure that your concerns are efficiently addressed, and if we identify any problems that one state might have, we can quickly communicate that to our other technical assistance people and communicate it to you so we can ensure that any problems that arise are addressed rather quickly.

The EAVS data collection process, hopefully, will be easier this time. We're in the process of updating the excel spreadsheet that you've used in the past, and we're designing it in a way that'll be easier for both local jurisdictions and states to copy and paste data into it. The spreadsheet will still have validations in it and data checks to make sure that if you make any sort of data-entry errors, that they're relatively easy to identify.

The system will identify that. And we're also in the process of finalizing that design, but what we're likely going to be doing is moving the validations to a separate tab so that you could copy and paste entire sections of data into the spreadsheet. We're also improving the language of the Supplemental Instruction Manual so that it'll be easier for you to understand and make the questions clearer. We've talked to some election officials about specific items that they had issues with. So for instance, what does it mean for an absentee ballot to be submitted for counting? It turns out that that varied across states and we've been able to clarify that language in the Supplemental instructions, and these edits should make it easier for everyone.

Can I add something just real quick--

Sure.

-- so that folks on the call understand that the instructions from Fors Marsh and EAC staff are to make this a customer service-friendly approach. And so as folks encounter difficulties or if there are challenges, when Thad and his team say contact him, he means it. You need to reach out to them, but that goes for EAC staff and EAC commissioners as well. If you're having difficulty, if this process isn't working for you, reach out to us. We'll provide contact at the end of this, but the commitment is that we are there to serve you on this. We know it could be a heavy lift for the data and we want this experience to feel different than it has in the past, in serving you all to get the data. I want to make sure that is a priority for us on doing this.

And we communicate with the EAC regularly during the week, and so if any issues do come up where we need to communicate with them, we can definitely make sure that any question that you have is being addressed as quickly as possible. Let me provide you with a little bit of a time line for the EAVS. First, you should have already received the 2016 EAVS survey items. And the questions have not changed from 2014, so you can already be planning or answering the questions for 2016. In early October, we'll be sending you the supplemental instructions that have been revised, as well as the Excel template, and you can start completing the EAVS, as soon as your state election closes and you're ready to go. In January and February, we'll be providing you with technical assistance to complete the EAVS. And so we'll have technical assistance people on staff fielding any kind of questions that you have, either by phone or by email during January and February. And then, by the end of February, we'll be asking all the states to submit their data, and in March we'll be coming back to the states, to either answer questions about the data validations or to just certify that they're satisfied with the quality of their data. There are six sections to the EAVS, so let's just dive in and start with section A, voter registration. Commissioner Masterson, can you just take a moment to

discuss why the data in section A are so important?

Sure, and thank you, Thad. Section A, which deals with voter registration data, is critically important. It's the section that we most often see cited in various articles and academic studies. And so the accuracy and nature of that data's vital to us. In addition, it's something that the EAC has used to help promote things like online registration, the importance of list maintenance, which we did in the 2014 survey, as well what states are doing well in NVRA. So I'll highlight the states of Michigan and Delaware. They do a really remarkable job with their NVRA process and have been cited for that, based on the EAVS data. Having done this survey in Ohio, having worked through with my colleague, Pat Wolfe in Ohio, I understand how difficult it is sometimes to identify the sources of registrations and where it's coming from. But the better and more accurate this data is, the better case the State's going to be able to make on making improvements or modifications to their processes as well as making a case about what a great job they're doing in places like the performance index and answering questions to that. This data, again, is referenced constantly and I think States understand how critical this is to the work they do.

Great. Let's take a minute and walk through Section A and what you'll be required to answer as a part of the EAVS survey. First, you'll be reporting the total number of registrations you had in 2016. That will be for the entire period of what the registration was at the time of the November 2016 election. Second, you'll be reporting information on all registrations that you processed between the close of the November 2014 election and the close of the November 2016 election. You'll be answering questions about the types of registrations and then the source of the registration. The types of registrations will include new registrations, duplicate registrations, invalid registrations, registrations that are changes of address or name changes, or changes in party affiliation. The source of the registration will include the number of registrations that were submitted to your office from the Department of Motor Vehicles, submitted by mail, the number that you received from public assistance agencies, or the number that were received through voter registration drives or conducted by political parties, candidates, or advocacy groups. And so as the table shows you will be reporting the source of registration for each type of registration. For example, for all the new registrations, what was the source of each registration? How many new registrations came from the DMV versus how many came from voter registration drives? And for all duplicate registrations, where did they originate? Were you getting a lot of duplicate registrations from voter registration drives where they were registering the same people? I know that's actually something that happens in Ohio in a battleground state where people get registered over and over. Section A will also ask about the number of confirmation notices that your jurisdiction sent out between the close of November 2014 election and the close of the November 2016 election. This is because individuals showed signs that they were no longer living in their jurisdiction, or they had not voted in several federal elections, and then you'll be asked of these notices how many were returned confirming registration, how many were returned as undeliverable, and how many were returned as confirming the need to invalidate that person's registration? And finally, you'll be asked how many registrants were removed from the registration rolls between 2014 and 2016 and why were they removed. For instance, how many people were removed because they had moved out of your jurisdiction, how many people were removed because you received a death notice, those types of things? I'll just point out that the items regarding removals and notices are items that have historically had a slightly lower response rate than the overall turnout data and so it's something we'll ask you to make sure that you're focusing on. Deborah, if I could just turn to you since you are the registar and had to deal with all these slicing and dicing. Can you talk a little about the secret to answering the Section A?

I don't know if there's a perfect secret to this, but I think certainly Section A is complicated because, as you said, it requires the state or the local election official to understand what the source of each of these registrations is - is it a NVRA, DMV, over the counter, and so forth - and then the type of registration it is - whether it's a new registration, a duplicate. Yes, collect it and then slice and dice it into those categories. I think the key here is to recognize that you need to query your database to address these items. It's really critical to tag each registration correctly as it comes in. That's going to make answering these questions so much easier on the back end. It's so much easier to sort the data that you've already collected than it is to go back and try to recreate the information from source documents.

I'd just reiterate what Deb was saying and point out that the questions haven't changed and so the categories haven't changed either. So you've at least done this before, seen it several election cycles in a row, and so revisiting that process and ensuring it. To give kudos to the states, this is an area where we've seen the data improve dramatically

over time. States and locals have worked extremely hard to figure out a good way to do this and have gotten good at.

I would just point out, too, that I know this is one of the most scrutinized sections of data by both advocacy groups and other as well. It's a section where it's very important to report the most accurate data possible.

We have a question about-- I think-- I'm guessing this is may be from Oregon - one of the newer states. As you know, there are several states that have adopted automatic voter registration. Should they put those under the DMV or is there another category that they would put them under or how would you address the automatic voter registration issue?

That's a really good question and one that we'll follow up, I think, with Oregon on to find out the best way for them to categorize it. This is a really good example of the innovation in elections that's come about and we haven't changed the questions because we tried to remain static. What we'll do is work directly with the states that have this question to figure out the best way for them to categorize that works within their process.

Let's move on to Section B. This section asks for data related to the registration and voting by individuals covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act or UOCAVA. UOCAVA covers overseas citizens as well as uniformed services personnel, and uniformed services personnel consists of members in the Armed Forces plus members of the Public Health Service and the Coast Guard as well as their dependents. As is the case with Section A, there is a legal requirement for states to report Section B to the Election Assistance Commission and FVAP. Let's take a quick minute and review the key items asked in Section B.

Section B starts by asking for several key totals. It's going to ask for the total number of UOCAVA ballots that were transmitted to voters, the total number of those transmitted ballots that were returned by voters and the total number of ballots that were returned as undeliverable. When it's saying ballots transmitted, it's saying this because UOCAVA voters can also send in what we refer to as a Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot, and those need to be counted separately. Second, Section B is going to ask you to report the ballots returned broken up by whether the person returning the ballot is a uniformed services voter or is an overseas citizen. Whether those ballots were sent out to you-- by you to the voter, or whether it was a Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot or a FWAB, which is what we call them. Then, you'll be asked to report the total number of ballots rejected, again divided between uniformed services voters and overseas civilians and between ballots you sent to voters and the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballots. For each ballot rejected, you'll be asked why it was rejected. Did it come in after the deadline? Was it missing a signature? Or was there some other problem? Finally, you'll be asked to report the total number of registered voters you have, as well as how many Federal Post Card Applications you received for this election and how many were rejected? How many of the ballots that were requested and sent out sent out prior to the 45 day deadline that was established by the MOVE Act, and how many were requested and sent out closer to election day?

Director Boehmer, can you take a moment to talk a little bit about the importance of Section B for FVAP?

Yeah, absolutely.

Thanks.

And thanks again to all of the election officials for filling out Section B. I heard, for the first time, during the EAC's Data Summit back in August of 2015, how complicated this section is for election officials, and it was an eye-opening experience for me because I wasn't really prepared to hear about all of these different challenges. But ultimately these data that you're putting in to Section B are incredibly important to FVAP for a couple of different reasons. One, it really helps us with the totality of the experience. We use the EAVS data, along with our survey data of our active duty members, in addition to the customer satisfaction survey that we send you election officials, to really tell us the story of the 2016th and the military and the overseas voter experience. We also want to take that data and say, hey listen, what can we do better in preparation for 18 and 20? So, although this data are a little bit of a pain, particularly when you add in the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot and some of the distinctions that we're asking, they're incredibly important. They can also inform some policy decisions. One of the things that we've been telling election officials this year, to our voters - it's complex, being able to figure out the different rules, the regulations and the deadlines that you have between the 50 states, the District of Columbia and our four territories. There is some

confusion. What we want to be able to do is say, hey listen, it's one policy that a state has, for example, taking a look at how many days after an election you're allowed to return a ballot, do our UOCAVA voters have a different experience? Can we learn something from this data that would help inform other states of potentially some work that they can do to help our military and overseas voters? And then finally, taking a look at the data, and what messaging can we do for our voters. We listen to election officials when you tell us things. So let's take a look at the reasons that ballots were rejected: Is it because they're late? Is it because they're missing a signature? We've taken that information and really have change our communications, we changed our forms for example, we learned from Maryland that simply putting an X on the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot or the Federal Post Card Application, that that really helps people remember, "Ah, I need a signature here." And to look at the data, yes, you guys were telling us that ballots were being rejected because signatures weren't there. Also, reasons for lateness. One of our key messages to our voters, "You've got to do these things early, early, early" because the data are showing us that ballots are getting rejected due to lateness. As well as our work with United States Postal Service here to make sure that post of delivery is as effective as it is possibly is.

Right.

So Matt, you were saying-- Matt, this Matt was saying earlier --

The Matts.

Exactly. But you were saying earlier that-- about doing the work that you've been doing with CSG and the overseas voting initiative. Can you talk a little bit about the section B working group with how section B may feel a little bit different this time?

Yeah, absolutely. We, after the Data Summit in August of 2015, the commissioners and I got together with the Council of State Governments, and we decided that because of the challenges that you were telling us about Section B, that this deserves some attention, and we have a co-operative agreement with the Council of State Governments. It's a fantastic opportunity for the Department of Defense, for the Elections Assistance Commission, and for election officials to participate in what I consider solving some of the challenges that our military and overseas voters face. And then some of the challenges that you particularly face with dealing with our military and overseas voters. So we created the Section B working group, and it's made up of both local and state election officials throughout the country, who have volunteered their time to come together to say, "Hey listen, we understand these challenges." We've got a good sense, just like Deborah mentioned, of what those challenges are. And how can we help, not only themselves with this section, but how can we help all election officials with this section? You mentioned, how are things different? Quite simply, most of the things are the same. We didn't change the questions. What we wanted to do was we wanted to make it easier for you. So as I mentioned earlier when we chatted, that surveys were just combined at one point, so 2014 was just about combining the surveys. Now after 2014 we're looking at getting rid of some of redundancies. You told us, "Hey listen, you've asked me this already. Why am I answering it again?" It's like we're trying to trick you. We're not, but what we're doing this time is figuring out ways you don't have to do that. Just like Section A, the questions haven't changed. How you may answer them or how they may look may change.

Just to build on that, and thank you to FVAP and CSG for allowing us to partner on this. The improvements that are being made to Section B are going to be taken by Fors Marsh and applied across the entire survey. And so, as you mentioned earlier, improvements to the instructions to make very clear what exactly we're asking for, that's just not going to apply to Section B. That's going to apply to entire surveys we work through it. And so the work that CSG, FVAP and EAC were able to do, and I think a couple of Section B working group members are on the call, in clarifying language saying, hey that question just doesn't make sense. Tell me what you actually want. That's going to be applied across the survey so at least the survey, with the instructions in that regard, feels clear and not as difficult for election officials. We hope that across-- we hope election officials understand that. I think both Matt and I walked away from the Data Summit, hearing Keith Ingram's voice, who I think is on this call or is supposed to be, hearing his voice--

Loud and clear.

Yeah, I think loud and clear in our heads, "We can't do this the way you're asking it to us to," so we're committed to making Keith and this staff and the rest of the election officials, both state and local, make their job a little easier so the next data summit he's talking about improvements we've made to make his life a little easier.

If we don't get it right totally this time, we'll take the learning lesson from 2016 and keep applying them for the future. Thanks to everybody for your patience and more importantly thanks for your input.

Right. Just to build on that point about the input -- Just so you know, the section B working group consists of people who are state or local election officials who have gone through this survey, applied their own experiences, and then Fors Marsh Group has also taken the Supplemental Instruction Manual and actually done some scientific testing with people to go through the questions and to have them explain how they read the question, how they view it, and then also looking at the supplemental instructions and making sure it clarifies it. We're going through a very rigorous process of getting input from state and local election officials, so it's not just staff people or anything like that. It's actually getting all of you providing feedback into the questions.

You have a team here. You really do have the team at FVAP, you've got the experts - Deborah's and Fors Marsh's - as well as the EAC. It really is a team experience because we've heard you loud and clear that this section, which we're telling you is incredibly important to us, needs some help.

Deborah, since we've been talking a little bit about how difficult it is, can you talk a little bit as an election official the- - if there's some tricks and secrets to making this a little bit easier.

Yes, and thank you all - everyone at this table - for recognizing how complicated Section B does seem. Part of the complexity of it is the care that's required to track these ballots. First of all, it's really important to track these UOCAVA ballots separately from your regular domestic absentee ballots. Second, I think it's helpful just to recognize that there are basic categories and within those basic categories there are basic distinctions. For example, one of the basic categories is "what's the type of voter," and the basic distinction is military or non-military. Another one is the time of transmission-- is it before, on or before T-minus 45 or is it after T-minus 45. Again, very basic distinction. The mode of transmission - by mail, by email, other, maybe fax. Fairly straightforward actually. The status of the ballot also has to be tracked. That involves knowing how many come back that are received and counted, how many are returned as undeliverable, and how many come back and they're rejected. As always when the ballots are rejected, we have to have the categories for those rejected ballots. The key really is to have in place a process where you've identified each one of those categories and then as the ballots are sent out and returned you're recording those ballots in the correct category.

If the data are collected during the election preparation phase, the survey is going to be so much easier to complete than somehow again trying to go back and reconstruct those categories. It's also important to note, as both Matts have noted, there are separate sections within Section B that ask you for information regarding the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballots and the Federal Post Card Application. Be prepared for that and watch out for those separate categories within Section B as well.

Great. Thank you so much, Deborah. Someone was asking a question earlier about if they had the survey questions. We provided the survey questions to all the state points of contact, but they also should be on the EAVS portal website, which is-- and I'm going to check that. I'll have one of my colleagues check that right now. If it's not on there, we will have those up by the end of the day today. We'll have them on the portal so you'll be able to download them.

We'll put it up at EAC.gov as well. Again, the questions haven't changed, so the '14 survey instrument will be instructed for that as well.

Just move the dates - any dates that are in it - and it will work. Let's move on to Section C. Section C covers absentee voting, but this time it focus solely on domestic absentee voting. Like Section B, Section C also is going to ask you to track absentee ballots across various categories.

Let's take a look at Section C. Section C is going to ask you about four key items. First, it's going to ask you how many absentee ballots did you send to your voters? How many were returned by voters? How many absentee ballots were

returned as undeliverable? How many ballots that were returned by a voter were then rejected and not included in your final tabulation? And for the rejected ballots, you're going to be asked to categorize why they were rejected. For instance, were they received after the deadline, was there no signature on the envelope, or were there two ballots in the envelope, or no ballots in the envelope. And so this is one of the problems that we run into with absentee ballots, is that people make all sorts of small mistakes that lead to their ballots being rejected. Deborah, California was one of the first states to have, no-excuse absentee voting, and has a large percentage of voters who cast absentee ballots. What tips do you have for ensuring that the Section C data are collected effectively?

Yes, California's certainly awash in absentee ballots these days. But I think the key here is similar to what we talked about regarding UOCAVA ballots. And here again, I sound like a broken record, but there's really a need to plan ahead of time, to tag those absentee ballots in your election management system because if you have them categorized correctly, it's just going to be that much easier to pull the data.

And so Matt, I know that FVAP, obviously they're very interested in the Section B data, but you use the Section C data as well. Can you talk a little about why it's still important to FVAP?

We're asked all the time about comparisons, and so having good data in Section C is also incredibly important. Because of that comparison, how are our UOCAVA voters doing with rejections as opposed to domestic absentee ballots? So having really good, accurate data in both of those sections are really important.

Great. And let me just remind you, if you do have any questions or comments, please feel free to either email us or use the Q&A feature within Zoom, and we're happy to answer any questions you have.

We're going to move on to Section D. And for those of you who have completed the EAVS before, you know that Section D is a very straightforward section. This is the section where you're going to be asked to report the number of precincts you have and the number of physical polling locations that you have on Election Day. And if you have early voting, which the EAC defines as including in-person absentee voting - so if you're in Virginia or a state like, you know, where we are right here, where you can go to a polling place, and you avoid the election and you can vote - even if it's put in an absentee envelope, it's considered early voting for this process. And you'll need to be able to report the number of early voting locations you have.

Finally, Section D is going to ask you about the number of poll workers you have in November 2016 Election, and as Deborah referred to earlier, it's going to also ask you about the age of your poll workers. And these data are, you know, very valuable for understanding a little bit about poll worker recruitment and things like that.

And so Commissioner Masterson, Matt--

Matt's good.

Matt's good?

[chuckles] Yeah.

So [chuckles], Matt, I know that the EAC has been involved in a lot of efforts to improve poll worker recruitment across the country. Can you talk a little bit about how you use Section D data in this process?

Sure. Sure, yeah. The EAC,as part of our Be Ready '16 effort, has put a lot of time and attention into understanding best practices around recruiting, training, and retaining poll workers, and exploring the various demographics and, you know, how to get younger poll workers. And so if you, you know, promote our other site, if you go to Be Ready '16 section of our website, you'll see a lot of that information. And we started by looking at the EAVS data to understand what does our typical poll worker look like? What's kind of the projected age and structure across the country? Not surprisingly, it varies nationwide although skews older, which won't surprise any of the election officials on this call. And so we use that to help inform what jurisdictions we contacted for best practices, what techniques they're using to pull in younger poll workers, and actually tomorrow, our contest on poll worker recruitment, training, and retention closes, and so I think you'll see reflected in that some really incredible, innovative practices by election jurisdictions across the country in finding new sources of poll workers. I mean the work that LA County's doing - to use an algorithm to recruit new poll workers - on data, it's remarkable. And so that's, you know, that's all

anchored in EAVS-type data to figure that out.

Great. So the next section of the EAVS is Section E, and it discusses provisional balloting. And so I know that in Ohio, provisional balloting—[laughter] it's exciting.

And so, can you talk a little bit about provisional balloting, why the EAC asks about it, and also, what people can learn from using the EAVS data?

Sure. Yeah and in Ohio, we typically have quite a few provisional ballots. Although, I don't think quite too many as California had, at least of recent. So these are questions we are always asked in Ohio. And we were able to use the EAVS data to really improve our provisional process. We look at the reasons for rejection and actually made improvements to usability of the provisional form, where we saw tangible impact on our data on the counting of provisional ballots. So if we go back and look at Ohio's count rate over time, you'll see, I think, a statistically significant uptake in the count rate in Ohio, in part because we looked at the data we used to drive us to make improvements to the form, on the usability of the form. And so, as we look at what's asked in this section, provisional ballots, it's pretty simple. It's pretty simple. We asked, how many provisional ballots were casts, how many were counted and rejected, and then what were the reasons for rejection? And the most common, as most election officials know, is not registered. And perhaps, it was wrong jurisdiction or what not. So simple data, I think, election jurisdictions have gotten very good at reporting this data. It's become pretty accurate. And I think important to that, it helps show, for instance, to reflect back on the cleanliness of the registration rules. You have a lot of people with the old addresses that will show up on your provisional ballot numbers. And so you can start to figure out how is the NVRA process working, and how can we improve it.

So Section A and section E kind of link up very nicely.

Absolutely.

Alright, so hold on. We have a question here.

I get nervous with the questions because I know Bob Giles is on the phone, and he could just throw some sort of curveball our way.

Well, he may have thrown a curveball. Has the EAC considered asking states to define their own understanding of terms used to describe the categories of data prior to collecting EAVS data?

Yes. That's a great question. That's not a curveball at all, and that is in the longer term, so whoever asked that, kudos to you. That is in the longer term plan. We have heard loud and clear from election officials, particularly the state election directors, don't change the survey without lots of warning because our systems are designed this way. We've built our systems around collecting this data and any kind of change impacts that. Long term what we're looking to do is create a common data format within the registration systems - the voting systems - that will allow states to define it that way and then utilize the data formatting in the common terminology to report the data.

Absolutely, one of the efforts that's underway in the common data format effort is to create a lexicon. – to create a lexicon around this EAVS data and other elections data, so we understand in New Jersey we call it one thing, in California we call it another, but what we really mean is this. That'll create consistency in data, make the lift easier for election officials while at the same time recognizing that how they do things in California isn't the same way that they do them in Ohio. So, the answer is yes. Not this year, not short term because we didn't want to change the survey on you all but, absolutely, that's something we're looking to do.

Right.

I also noticed in the Statutory Overview, it also asked people to define terms and things like that. The states should be in a process of starting the review of the Statutory Overview. So, if there are questions there where you're defining a term differently, often it will ask you to provide what that alternate definition is or the meaning is. You should, please, make an effort when you're answering the Statutory Overview to address that as well at that point

because that will help as we work with the EAC to think about any future changes to the survey.

At least, identify where there are variations.

Finally, we're almost at the end. We're at Section F. So, Section F has three primary components. Let's review these quickly. The first part of Section F is going to ask you about the total turnout in the election. So, how many people participated? You should-- you're going to be asked to divide this participation into the mode of voting that they use. How many were in-person on election day? How many were in-person early voting? How many were absentee voting and provisional balloting, or from a permanent vote-by-mail precinct? Second, you're going to be asked about whether you used an electronic poll book or a printed poll book in the election. Finally, you're going to be asked about voting equipment you used in your jurisdiction. This will include the tabulators or scanners, electronic voting machines – including those for use for individuals with disabilities. Often, your jurisdiction will have-- will be using multiple types of technologies, especially even if you have a DRE in the polling place, you'll still have scanners for your absentee ballots. Matt, do you want to just take a minute to talk a little bit about the importance of this section?

Yeah, absolutely, so this is a timely one, because as many of you are already aware, a conversation around what types of voting equipment's being used, and where it's being used, has become very popular. And so this information's critically important to having accurate information about this. We realize in a lot of jurisdictions, the equipment is beginning to change. Jurisdictions are purchasing new equipment, and so updating this every two years and getting this information-- this is one where the EAC at one point, looked at, we really need to ask these questions, this is important. And many people came running to us saying, don't touch this section. We need this information so, yeah, this has become-- this is the trending topic currently, I think, for certain.

This also is very important now as people are moving to new types of ballot check-in, and with electronic poll books and things like that. Exchanging which jurisdictions are doing that-- people can use this data for their own research, too.

Absolutely. Absolutely.

[inaudible]

We have another question--

And I would like to thank my colleague, Leah, by the way, who has been the person who's handling all the questions today. I appreciate all her hard work on this. For states that submit data on behalf of their jurisdictions, will there be an option to submit the data in an alternate form. So let me answer how we're handing this. One of the things that we're looking at are ways that we can simplify the recording process. So as Matt was pointing out, we're striving to have this be a much more customer-friendly process. We're looking to determine, for states that capture all their data at the state level, how can we facilitate making that easier? The change to the Excel spreadsheet will be one of them. For instance, if you can pull all your data out of your system in a flat file and just paste it in, that'll be one way. We're going to be talking to some states to determine if there are ways to pull data directly from them as a flat file and then import it on our end and then validate it. We're going to be trying to test those things out between now and November so we can know what will potentially work. We're working with a couple of states to determine the best way we can do that. We're making it as simple as possible because obviously for 2018, we want this to be an even easier process. If more states can have more of their data in a centralized election management system, obviously that facilitates this sort of direct push of the data. You can imagine we tell you what headers to use, what to rename your different columns. In your database, you pull those data out, rename and just send it to us and then we can populate it and we can just run all the checks on it ourselves. That makes the EAVS that much easier for you. It's just a matter of you ensuring that your local jurisdictions are inputting the data into the election management system in the first place.

To put you all on the spot and the EAC staff, the goal-- the answer to the question is reach out to us about how you'd like to try to do that because we're interested in exploring the best ways to try to facilitate that. That doesn't mean it can absolutely happen, but I know Fors Marsh and the EAC staff are very interested in if a state has that good of data

ready, there shouldn't be a reason you have to hand key it into an Excel file. That's just silly and we recognize that that's silly. We're going to do everything we can to make that easier for you.

In fact, whoever sent this question, if you could just send an email to the EAVS@forsmarshgroup.com email, I'll get back in touch with you today or tomorrow and that we'll go ahead and get in touch with you directly.

Before we conclude, why don't I ask you all if you have like a final message for the people here.

Sure. Do you want to start with Deborah and then work our way there?

Again, I'm going to sound like a broken record. I think it's a matter of going back, reviewing that 2014 survey, taking a look at what problems you had before, making sure you've got your categories identified, and then get those identified upfront to the extent you possibly can and populate any information that you could do now, is going to make it so much easier on the back end.

Thanks to everybody for your assistance with the Section B UOCAVA section-- Accurate data as best as you can get. I know that some of the categories are hard to decipher for some of you the way that you collect the data. But the best data that you can give us means that we can continue to make really good decisions for our military members, their families, and our US citizens overseas. So thanks in advance, I appreciate it.

Yeah, I have two messages. One broader and then one personal and specific. So the first one is, this is an ongoing improvement process, so your feedback, your involvement is critical. Again, if you have issues, contact us, talk to us about what challenges you're facing. The goal here long term - so you know, this is not 2016, not even probably 2018 - is to get to the point where the systems themselves can create this data such that the EAVS data is simple and easy for you to produce.

I frequently joke that you could hit the big red candy-like button that says EAVS, and that was easy. It will pump out the EAVS data. But to get there we have to have a common data format, to get there we have to have to buy in from the PR vendors and the voting system vendors which we're working with. They've been fantastic in trying to work to get to this common data format.

So I think what you'll see is incremental improvement, and that starts this year with your experience this year. And so the EAC will be following up to make sure this process is easier for folks, at least the customer service end is better. And we'll be making sure that we serve you in that way. The personal note is to note that Karen Lynn Dyson, who's done this survey essentially since the EAC started, is leaving the EAC at the end of this week, which is a huge loss for us. Pretty-- I don't know that we know how to do this without her, so that will be very interesting. So one, I want to thank Karen for her years of service, for her incredibly hard work. This was her baby, right, for years, and so she will be sorely, sorely missed in this effort. And again, we're kind of reeling, trying to figure out exactly what it looks like to do this without Karen.

But at the same time, Sean Greene, who we brought on recently from Pew, is more than capable. He's drinking from a fire hose right now, and he will be the point of contact at EAC on the EAVS Project. So if you have questions, if you have answers beyond Friday, please contact Sean Greene at EAC, and please send a note to Karen, wishing her well, before Friday. I know we'll all miss her.

Great. And so let me just close with one more question, and then couple of key points. Okay, so, here's a question for you.

Uh-oh. That's the most dangerous kind of question.

I know. Well, -- Are there plans to move away from an Excel-based system and toward a more modern tool, such as an online Web-based application?

Yes. The answer is absolutely. We looked at it for this this year. The timing and the time frame wasn't doable, but let me make it even broader than that. The goal is to find a variety of different ways for states to report. What we heard from states and locals, many wanted a Web tool. We hear that. Many didn't want a tool at all. What they wanted to be able to do is simply just dump the data to us and allow us to work through and then validate it back. And so that

can be an option, too.

Some really like the spreadsheet, because it allows them to send it down to the counties, and so what we want to do is find a way to serve those needs. And so, Fors Marsh has already begun the process by talking to states about: How do you administer this survey? How do you get it to your locals? And so, yes. The goal is absolutely to find a variety of ways to collect this data in the most efficient manner from the states and locals.

And I can just say, you know, I was the person who talked to the 44 States, and they do-- Talking to the states was much like thinking about actually voting, in that some people like to vote in-person on Election Day. It's like their big day. But some people want to vote early, some people want to vote absentee, and the EAVS is the similar process. Some people just want to be able to pull the data out of their state election management system and literally just email us a flat file or have us upload – have it for us to upload. Some states do. They like sending out the old-school Excel sheet and having people enter in the data point by point. I know when I was talking to [name] from Ohio--

She likes being able to review those because she wants to be able to check their data, and she knows what's right and what's not right. It provides her with a little bit of comfort to actually review everything. I know in some states they do want an online tool. That is something that we're actually going to providing recommendations to the EAC about after the 2016 implementation.

I know that's something that Commissioner McCormick in particular has pushed hard because she has heard loud and clear from election officials about the need for those options. She's been a leader on that.

I can say in talking to states, some states definitely like the idea of an online option and some states actually don't like the idea of an online option because they don't think their locals would be able to do it.

Before we conclude, let me recap a couple of key points. First, you all should already have the EAVS questions. If you don't, you can download them and you can start planning to capture the EAVS data for 2016. In October, we're going to be sending you the revised Supplemental Instruction Manual and the revised EAVS data collection form. Fors Marsh Group would be providing technical support in January and February for completing the EAVS data collection. You'll be providing us with the final data at the end of February. Then, March we'll be working with you to validate and to certify the data are accurate. If you have any last questions or comments, please feel free to email us again at EAVS@forsmarshgroup.com and we'll be able to provide you with answers to any questions that you think of after this webinar is over. If you just wanted to just provide some basic contact information for the EAC.

Yeah, so the point for contact for EAVS now is going to be Sean Greene. So, it's s-g-r-e-e-n-e@eac.gov. So sgreene@eac.gov. He's the point of contact. You can also contact Brian Newby, executive director, at bnewby - N-E-W-B-Y -@eac.gov. You can contact me as well or anyone of the commissioners. We'd love to hear from you. Again, we very much want to hear the feedback of the groups.

We appreciate your taking the time today to watch the webinar or listen to the webinar, and we're hoping to make this as easy of a process as possible for 2016. Thank you very much.

Thanks everybody.

Thank you.

Thank you.