

Military OneSource Podcast - FVAP Trusted Information 2022

Intro Voiceover: Welcome to the Military OneSource Podcast. Military OneSource is an official program of the Defense Department, with tools, information and resources to help families navigate all aspects of military life. For more information, visit militaryonesource.mil.

Bruce Moody: Hi, and welcome to the Military OneSource Podcast. I'm Bruce Moody. Military OneSource is an official Department of Defense resource and we bring you a huge range of topics to help you navigate military life. Today, exercising your right to vote. There's an effort underway to make our election process as safe as it can be. Leaders across the country are working to inform Americans about safeguards at every step of the election process, from registration to voting to post-election procedures. It's a campaign called #TrustedInfo2022.

We're going to talk about that today with our two guests. My first guest is Ms. Tahesha Way, since 2018 has served in the position of secretary of state for New Jersey. And also with us today is Scott Wiedmann, and Scott is the principal deputy director for the Federal Voting Assistance Program. Ms. Way, we'll start with you by saying welcome, glad to have you with us.

Tahesha Way: Thanks for having me, Bruce.

Bruce Moody: Absolutely. Well, let's just begin with the position of secretary of state. What does a secretary of state do?

Tahesha Way: Yes. As secretary of state, there are about 40 of us throughout the country. It's part of the National Association of Secretaries of State, who serve as their states' chief election official. In this capacity, we routinely plan for all aspects of administering, and of course, securing our elections. In addition to that top priority, secretaries do have other portfolios. I can speak for my department of state in New Jersey, wherefore we oversee the cultural commission, travel and tourism, the arts. We also oversee various aspects of business in our state, called the Business Action Center.

Bruce Moody: That's very interesting. It's a lot to cover. You did mention election security. You and your colleagues, other secretaries of states, state and local election officials are working to ensure accurate information is available and ready for use to combat attempts to mislead voters. So basically, what I'd like to do is just give you an opportunity to speak to this and tell us what you and your colleagues are working on regarding this.

Tahesha Way: Sure, Bruce. We of course want to work to get the word out to our citizens about how to participate fully in elections. So there's everything from registering, how to vote, and post-election procedures, and of course, military members and their families are part of this important outreach as well. So, through NASS, we have the #TrustedInfo2022 campaign, which urges voters to get their specific voting information from their state and local election officials to ensure they are receiving timely, accurate election updates.

Bruce Moody: That's very, very interesting. And so, just to be clear though, we're talking about how to vote, where to vote, where to get information about voting. What we're not talking about is who people should vote for. We're not talking about politics. Are we clear about that?

Tahesha Way: We are definitely clear about that. It's significant and important through the #TrustedInfo2022 campaign that our voters have the most correct and up-to-date information. And also, the public can help in this effort by not only sharing election information from trusted sources, but by promoting this campaign within their networks and communities. Again, it's #TrustedInfo2022, and voters and everyone can learn more about this effort by visiting nass.org. And given Scott's here too in the podcast, I would just want to shout out him and FVAP, because they are valuable federal partners for us in getting this trusted election information to our military members and their families.

Bruce Moody: Excellent. Yes, Scott, great to have you on this episode today. So you are the principal deputy director of the Federal Voting Assistance Program, and this is a Department of Defense program. So, if you could tell us what the program is, we call it FVAP, but if you could tell us about what it is that the program does.

Scott Wiedmann: Absolutely. Thank you, Bruce. There's a federal law called the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act. The secretary of defense is the presidential designee for carrying out that act, and we sit in that office to ensure that service members and their eligible family members, as well as overseas citizens, are aware of their right to vote and that they have the tools and resources to successfully do so in their home state from wherever they are in the world.

Bruce Moody: Excellent. Now, if I could just ask a follow-up question. So it sounds like National Association of Secretary of States is really working closely with the Federal Voting Assistance Program. Can you give us an idea of how that works?

Scott Wiedmann: Absolutely. Well, states run the elections in the U.S. We at the Department of Defense are not part of that actual process of registering people to vote or sending them their ballots, or receiving their ballots or counting the ballots. We facilitate that process so that when a voter wants to request their ballot or register and request a ballot from their state, we provide the forms and the instructions so they can successfully do so. The basic process is that they register to vote and request a ballot from the state, with the Federal Post Card Application form, and that's a form that our office provides to them, as well as instructions on how to complete that form.

Performance materials and instructions on absentee voting, go to fvap.gov. We've had a decades-long cooperation with NASS and their membership, as well as other state chief officials to inform Americans about the safeguards at every step of that process, from the registration, the ballot requests, to actually voting.

Bruce Moody: So, the campaign again is #TrustedInfo2022. That's the hashtag, again, #TrustedInfo2022. Ms. Tahesha Way served since 2018 as the secretary of state for New Jersey, and Scott Wiedmann, principal deputy director for the Federal Voting Assistance Program. Thanks to the both of you for joining us today.

Tahesha Way: Thank you.

Scott Wiedmann: Thank you.

Bruce Moody: And I want to remind you all that Military OneSource is an official resource of the Department of Defense. We provide this to you. We provide information to help military families navigate military life. Check us out at militaryonesource.mil. Thank you very much.