

Should Soldiers Vote!

**A Special Report Based on a
Spot-Check Survey**



**NATIONAL OPINION RESEARCH CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER**

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This special report is based on a nation-wide spot-check survey made between December 31, 1943, and January 4, 1944. The cross-section consisted of a typical miniature of the population, with the proper proportion, in each geographical section, of rich and poor, young and old, men and women, Democrats, Republicans, and non-voters. A "spot-check survey" consists of fewer interviews than NORC's regular surveys. This survey includes 494 personal interviews. Statistically these are sufficient to be within 6 per cent correct, 99 times in 100, on all questions reported.

S U M M A R Y

More than nine out of ten Americans in all walks of life believe that men and women in the armed forces should be able to vote in the coming Presidential election.

A large majority --about three out of four-- think voting can be made possible for most men in the armed forces overseas and on shipboard.

And -- by a preference of two to one -- the public favors federal rather than state responsibility for getting ballots to service men and women for the Presidential election next November.

Of a series of questions on the subject of soldier voting, this one places the issue most squarely before the public:

"Which one of these two plans, to give men and women in the armed forces a chance to vote in the coming Presidential election, do you prefer?*

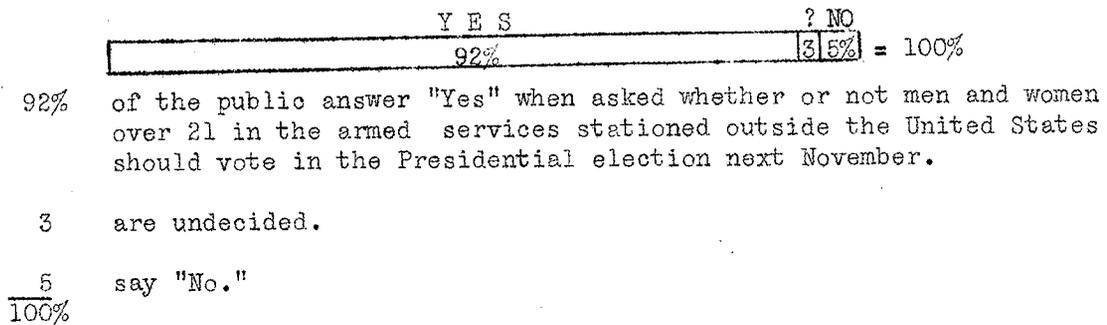
- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. "To pass a federal law providing for the Army and Navy to give ballots to all men and women over 21 in the armed forces. | 58% |
| 2. "To have each state send ballots to men and women over 21 in the armed forces who will be eligible to vote under the laws of their state." | 30 |
| Undecided | 7 |
| Armed forces overseas should not vote | 5 |
| | <u>100%</u> |

Nearly eight out of ten Americans think that Negroes in the armed services should be allowed to vote on the same basis as anyone else.

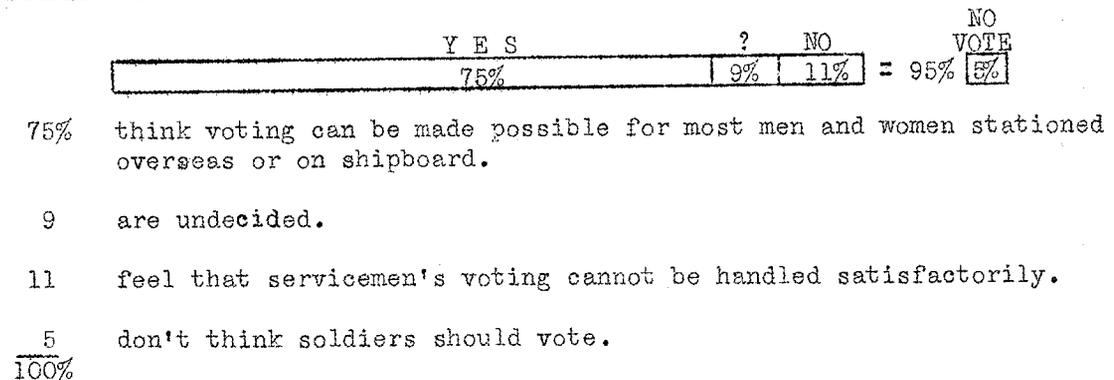
Only one person in five thinks that the military vote would give one party or the other the edge -- and opinion is divided as to which party might gain an advantage.

* This question was not only read aloud by the interviewer, but each respondent was handed a card with the question printed on it.

SHOULD SERVICEMEN STATIONED OVERSEAS VOTE?



CAN VOTING FOR SERVICEMEN BE MADE POSSIBLE?



The 5 per cent who think that soldiers should not vote at all were asked: "Why do you think soldiers should not vote?" The main reasons given are that servicemen cannot be reached or that they won't know the men who are running. Here are some typical comments:

Grocery clerk's wife, New York City -- "The soldiers aren't here and they don't know what is going on."

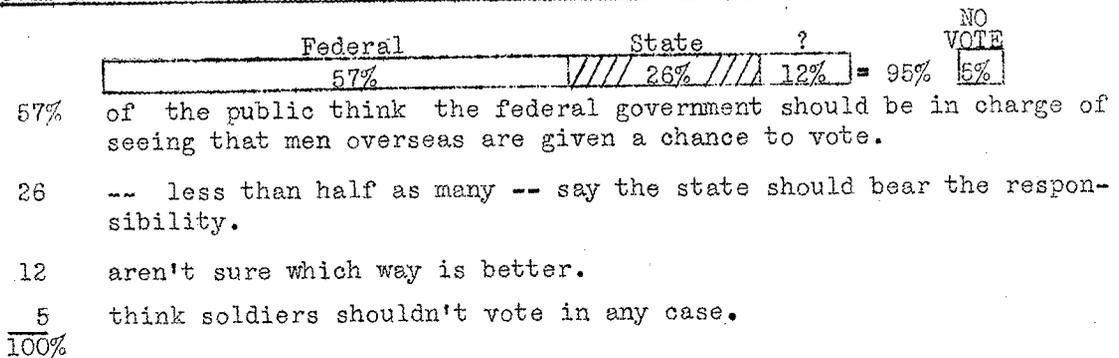
Lawyer, Chicago -- "I think political considerations should not be a part of army life ... and I think the mechanics of the thing are impractical."

Farmer's wife, Louisiana -- "The soldiers aren't here and can't keep up with what's going on, and for that reason shouldn't be allowed to vote."

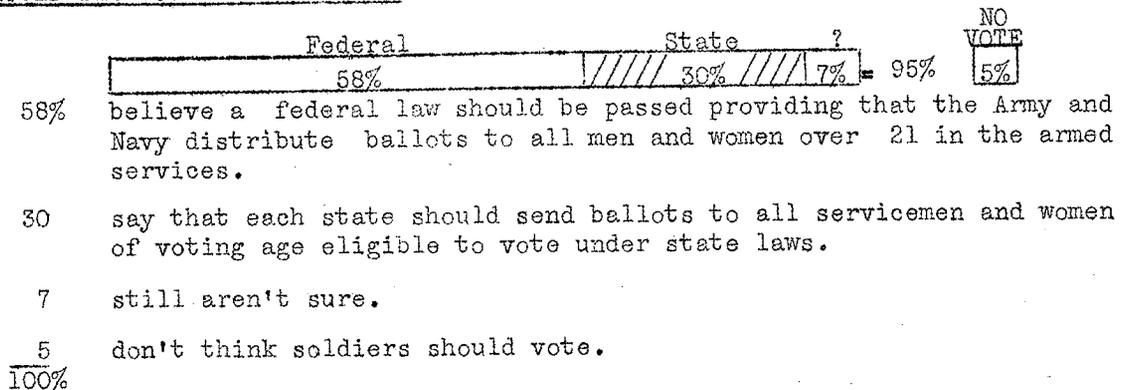
Carpenter, Colorado -- "They're too scattered. Many couldn't get their votes in."

Writer's wife, Ohio -- "It's just my own conviction. I don't think they would know enough about the candidates."

WHO SHOULD BE IN CHARGE: THE STATE OR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT?



HOW SHOULD THE VOTING BE HANDLED?



Persons who think the federal government should be responsible for getting the ballots to the soldiers give as some of their reasons:

Shipfitter, Brooklyn -- "To insure uniformity and equality of voting opportunity."

Elderly roominghouse keeper, Phoenix -- "There would be uniformity and less politics with national supervision -- theoretically, at least."

Rural mail carrier, Illinois -- "The federal government controls the army, navy, and marines. The commanding officer should have charge of making it possible for them to vote."

Executive secretary, St. Louis -- "They have the facilities for unifying it. Otherwise there would be 48 different ways of handling it."

Persons who favor state supervision of the soldier vote mention these points:

Woman school teacher, Pennsylvania -- "Each state knows how their election is run. It would be a more honest vote and would give the state advantage of an elector vote."

Draftsman, Detroit -- "It's within the state's rights."

SHOULD NEGRO SERVICEMEN VOTE?

	YES	"If...?"	NO	NO VOTE
77%	77%	24%	12%	5%
	= 95%			
2	say "If they are allowed to vote in their home states."			
4	aren't sure.			
12	say "No."			
5	think <u>no</u> soldiers should vote.			
100%				

COMMENTS FROM THE NORTH

Woman personnel research worker, New York City -- "Yes. The 14th Amendment says 'No discrimination.'"

Packing house clerk, Chicago -- "Yes. Some people are prejudiced, but if a man is good enough to fight for his country, he should be allowed to vote."

Fire chief, California -- "Yes. They shouldn't be deprived of voting just because of their color. It all depends upon their intelligence. That goes for white people, too. But there are more illiterate Negroes than whites."

Wife of clerk, Pennsylvania -- "Yes. They pay taxes."

Machine operator, Chicago -- "I don't know. The northern Negroes that go to our schools have got sense enough to vote. Those from the South are such an ignorant class they don't really know for what they are voting."

Contractor's wife, Illinois -- "Yes, if they are allowed to vote in their own state."

Shipworker's wife, Pennsylvania -- "No. I don't like them."

COMMENTS FROM THE SOUTH

Sales engineer's wife, Louisiana -- "Yes. If they are good enough to fight they are good enough to vote."

Retired army officer, Houston, Texas -- "Only if they are allowed to vote at home."

Chain store manager, Tennessee -- "No. The Negro in my opinion is not intelligent enough to vote."

Woman drug store clerk, Alabama -- "No. -- not down South."

Farmer's wife, Mississippi -- "No. They are too easily influenced."

Cabinet maker, Louisiana -- "No! Absolutely not!!"

WOULD DEMOCRATS OR REPUBLICANS GAIN FROM SOLDIER VOTES?

Y E S	N O	?	
21%	64%	15%	= 100%

ONLY 21% of the public think that soldiers' voting in the coming election would help one party more than the other.

64 say it would make no difference.

15 don't know.

100%

Of the 21 per cent who think the soldier vote might have political repercussions --

- 12 think it would help the Democrats.
 - 6 say it would help the Republicans.
 - 3 aren't sure which party would benefit.
- 21%

PEOPLE IN GENERAL ARE UNCERTAIN ABOUT ELECTION LAWS

Federal	State	?	
37%	33%	30%	= 100%

37% of the public think the federal government decides who can vote in Presidential elections.

33 believe the state decides.

30 frankly don't know.

100%

Of the 33 per cent who know that the states determine who votes --

- 5 think all state laws are the same.
 - 25 know that they're different (but only 14 of these can tell correctly how they differ).
 - 3 aren't sure.
- 33%

THEREFORE only one person in seven has really accurate knowledge regarding who can vote in federal elections and why -- one of the cornerstones of a political democracy.

BUT A LARGE MAJORITY THINK ELECTION LAWS SHOULD BE UNIFORM

Same	Different	?	
82%	12%	6%	= 100%

82% think the laws about who can vote in a Presidential election should be the same in all states.

12 think they should be different.

6 are undecided.

100%

HERE ARE THE ACTUAL QUESTIONS:

(In the order of their presentation in the report)

1. Do you think that men and women over 21 in the armed forces who are stationed outside of this country should be able to vote in the Presidential election next November, or don't you think they should?

Yes, Should	92%
No, Should not	5
Don't know	3
	<u>100%</u>

A. (If "Should not" to 1) Why do you think they should not vote? _____

(IF "SHOULD NOT", SKIP TO 6)

2. Do you think it can be made possible for most men in the armed forces overseas and on ships to vote in the Presidential election next November?

Yes	75%
No	11
Don't know	9
	<u>95%</u>

3. Which do you think should be in charge of seeing that men overseas are given a chance to vote in the coming Presidential election, the federal or the state government?

Federal	57%
State	26
Don't know	12
	<u>95%</u>

A. Why? _____

4. Which one of these two plans, to give men and women in the armed forces a chance to vote in the coming Presidential election, do you prefer? (HAND CARD TO RESPONDENT.)

A. To pass a federal law providing for the Army and Navy to give ballots to all men and women over 21 in the armed forces. 58%

B. To have each state send ballots to men and women over 21 in the armed forces who will be eligible to vote under the laws of their state. 30

Don't know 7
95%

5. Do you think Negroes over 21 in the armed forces should be allowed to vote or not?

Yes	77%
Yes, if qualified in home state	2
No	12
Don't know	4
	<u>95%</u>

6. If soldiers vote in the coming election, do you think it will help one party more than the other?

Yes	21%
No	64
Don't know	15
	<u>100%</u>

A. (If "Yes" to 6) Which one? _____

7. As you know, there's a Presidential election every four years. Do you happen to know whether federal or state governments make the laws about who can vote in a Presidential election?

Federal	37%
State	33
Don't know	30
	<u>100%</u>

A. (If "State" to 7) As far as you know, are the laws about voting in Presidential elections the same in every state or different in some states than in others?

Same	4%
Different	26
Don't know	3
	<u>33%</u>

B. (If "Different" to 7A) In what ways are they different?

Answers given were:

Correct	14%
Wrong or doubtful	5
Don't know	6
No answer	1
	<u>26%</u>

8. Do you think laws about who can vote in a Presidential election should be the same in all states or do you think they should be different?

Same	82%
Different	12
Don't know	6
	<u>100%</u>

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