

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about absentee voting:

Questions for all UOCAVA voters

Do I have to be registered to vote absentee?

Registration requirements vary from State to State. Most States and territories require registration to vote absentee. Voter registration and absentee ballot request can be done at the same time by submitting the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). If you are already registered to vote and only wish to request a ballot, you should submit your FPCA as soon as possible.

Where do I send my Voter Registration/Absentee Ballot Request?

Your request form must be completed, printed, signed, dated and mailed directly to your local election official. Some States allow your request to be faxed or emailed to your local election office. These officials will handle the processing and distribution of your absentee ballots and may need to contact you for further information or clarification. To facilitate this process, please provide a current email address, phone and fax number on your application.

When mailing election materials to my state or territory, do I have to pay postage?

When mailed from any U.S. post office, U.S. embassy or consulate, or APO/FPO mail facility, the hardcopy FPCA form is postage-paid. In order to receive free postage, the online version of the form must be mailed in an envelope printed with our postage-paid envelope template. You may mail the completed form in an envelope with proper postage affixed. Ensure that your form is postmarked and sent to arrive before your State's specific deadline. You must pay postage if the materials are mailed from a non-U.S. postal facility.

It is recommended that voted ballots be mailed from your location outside the U.S. rather than be given to another individual to be placed in the U.S. postal system. If the ballot is postmarked from any location inside the U.S. your local election official may not count your ballot.

What is a postmark and how do I make sure I get one?

A postmark is a postal marking made on a piece of mail indicating the date and time that the item was accepted by the postal service. Postmarks are used to determine if voting materials have been mailed by State deadlines. Due to varying mail pick up times, the day you 'mail' your election mail may not be the day the postal facility postmarks it.

You may ask the mail clerk to hand stamp the election material so that a date is clearly visible. In certain situations a handwritten postmark and signature from you or a notarizing official may be sufficient.

When is the best time to apply for an absentee ballot?

We recommend that you register to vote/request an absentee ballot in January of each year, or at least 90 days before Election Day.

Must I submit a separate application for each election?

A citizen usually does not need to submit a separate application for each election. To ensure that you receive absentee ballots for all The length of time an application is good for varies by State. Most accept the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) as a request for all Federal office elections for the

calendar year in which it was submitted. To ensure that you receive absentee ballots for all elections in which you are eligible to vote, we recommend that you submit a new FPCA in January of each year and whenever you have a new mailing address. If you are requesting an absentee ballot for a specific election, note in Block 9 the election for which you are requesting the ballot, i.e., "Primary (or Special, or General) election only".

Refer to the individual State Pages in Chapter 2 for additional information about State and territory requirements.

When should I receive my ballot? What happens if I do not receive a ballot from my local election office?

States and territories begin mailing ballots at least 45 days before an election. If you have not received your ballot 30 days before the election, contact your local election official.

If you have requested an absentee ballot from your State but have not received it, you can also vote by using the backup Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB). You may submit the FWAB at any time after you submit your FPCA.

In order to be eligible to use this backup ballot, you must:

- Be absent from your voting residence;
- Have applied for a regular ballot early enough so the request is received by the appropriate local election official not later than the State deadline; or the date that is 30 days before the general election; AND
- Have not received the requested regular absentee ballot from the State.

If you have not received your ballot one month before the election:

- Go to [FVAP.gov](https://www.fvap.gov) and see what online ballot delivery tools are available for your state.
- Use the FWAB assistant available at [FVAP.gov](https://www.fvap.gov) to complete a backup ballot and submit it to your local election official. If you cannot access [FVAP.gov](https://www.fvap.gov), you can obtain a hardcopy of the form from your Voting Assistance Officer at military installations or at U.S. embassies/consulates.
- Contact your local election official to determine the status of your ballot. Contact information is available at [FVAP.gov](https://www.fvap.gov).
- When you receive your regular absentee ballot, complete it and return it regardless of when you receive it. Your local election official will ensure that only one of the ballots is counted.

All FWABs must be completed, printed, signed, dated, and submitted to your local election official. Check out your State's instructions to determine your state specific instructions, witness requirements for voted ballots, deadlines, and mailing addresses.

Questions for Uniformed Services/Family Members

Can I vote absentee?

You can vote absentee in local, State and Federal elections if you are a U.S. citizen 18 years or older and are an active duty member of the Armed Forces, Merchant Marine, Public Health Service, NOAA, a family member of the above, or a U.S. citizen residing outside the United States.

Where is my "legal voting residence"?

For voting purposes, "legal voting residence" can be the State or territory where you last resided prior to entering military service OR the State or territory that you have since claimed as your legal residence.

Even though you may no longer maintain formal ties to that residence, the address determines your proper voting jurisdiction. To claim a new legal residence, you must have simultaneous physical presence and the intent to return to that location as your primary residence.

Military and their family members may change their legal residence every time they change permanent duty stations, or they may retain their legal residence without change. This may mean that the family's Uniformed Service member has a different legal voting residence than his/her family members. A Judge Advocate General officer or legal counsel should be consulted before legal residence is changed because there are usually other factors that should be considered besides voting.

My family members are not in the military; can they also vote absentee?

Yes. Eligible spouses and dependents (U.S. citizens, 18 years or older) of military personnel may vote absentee. Some States allow children of military personnel residing overseas who are U.S. citizens but who have never resided in the U.S. to claim one of their U.S. citizen parent's legal state of residence as their own.

How do I register to vote or request an absentee ballot?

You may register and request an absentee ballot with a single form: The Federal Post Card Application. This application form is accepted by all States and territories and is postage- paid in the U.S. mail, including the Military Postal System and State Department Pouch mail. Hard copies of the form can be obtained from your installation's Voting Assistance Officer or requested directly from the Federal Voting Assistance Program by contacting us.

An online version of the FPCA is also available. The online version of the form must be mailed in an envelope with proper postage, or mailed using our prepaid return envelope. Your request form must be completed, printed, signed, dated and mailed directly to your local election official.

Can I vote in-person where I am stationed?

Military members may vote in the U.S. State or territory where stationed if they change their legal residence to that State or territory, even if they live on a military installation. Be advised that there may be legal obligations, such as taxation, if you change your State of residence. Therefore, consult a Judge Advocate General officer or legal counsel before making such a decision.

Currently there are no provisions for personnel stationed outside the U.S. to vote in-person where stationed.

Questions for Overseas Citizens

Can I vote absentee?

You may vote absentee in any election for Federal office if you are a U.S. citizen 18 years or older and are a U.S. citizen residing outside the United States. Only certain States allows U.S. citizens who have never resided in the United States to vote. For more information, go to: FVAP.gov.

If I do not maintain a legal residence in the U.S., what is my "legal state of residence"?

Your "legal state of residence" for voting purposes is the State or territory where you last resided immediately prior to your departure from the United States. This applies to overseas citizens even though you may not have property or other ties in your last State of residence and your intent to return to that State may be uncertain.

When completing block 7 of the request form, be sure to enter the entire mailing address of your last residence, including rural route and number. That address determines your proper voting jurisdiction.

Some States allow children of U.S. citizens residing overseas who are U.S. citizens but who have never resided in the U.S., to claim one of their parent's legal State of residence as their own.

How do I register to vote, or apply for an absentee ballot?

You may register and request an absentee ballot with a single form: The Federal Post Card Application. This application form is accepted by all states and territories and is postage- paid in the U.S. mail, including the Military Postal System and State Department Pouch mail. Hard copies of the form can be obtained from a U.S. embassy or consulate or requested directly from the Federal Voting Assistance Program by contacting us.

An online version of the FPCA is also available. The online version of the form must be mailed in an envelope with proper postage, or mailed using our prepaid return envelope. Your request form must be completed, printed, signed, dated and mailed directly to your local election official.

Can I register or vote in-person at the embassy or consulate?

There are no provisions for in-person voting or onsite registration at U.S. embassies or consulates. U.S. embassy and consular officials can assist U.S. citizens in completing the Voter Registration/Absentee Ballot Request form or other election materials for their state, witness election materials (if required), and provide other absentee voting information.

You may mail election materials from U.S. embassies and consulates. Remember to make sure that all election material is postmarked.

Can my selection in Block 1 of the Federal Post Card Application or Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot affect my U.S. citizenship?

No, the U.S. Department of State confirms that residing abroad without a set date and intent to return to a particular State or to any State is not a potentially expatriating act that could result in loss of U.S. citizenship. Checking "I am a U.S. citizen residing

outside the United States, and my return is not certain" will not result in loss of your U.S. citizenship. Persons who wish to renounce U.S. citizenship abroad must take an oath of renunciation before a U.S. diplomatic or consular officer at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad.

Does voter registration affect my tax status?

Voting for candidates for federal offices does not affect your federal or State tax liability. Voting for candidates for State or local offices could affect your state income tax liability depending on the laws of your State. If you are concerned how your response may affect your State tax status, consult legal counsel, a U.S. tax advisor, or your State tax authorities.

Questions for Election Officials

Voter Information:

Can the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) be used by citizens within the United States?

Yes. Uniformed service members who are absent from their local voting jurisdiction due to their service and their dependents who are absent with them may use the FPCA and FWAB even if they are currently within the United States. All other citizens within the United States should follow traditional State voter registration and absentee ballot request procedures.

How can I look up a voter's address?

FVAP is able to look up active duty military members' addresses for election officials. Election officials should submit requests to FVAP via email (vote@fvap.gov) or fax (703-696-1352) and include the name of the requester, the voting jurisdiction, as well as the citizen's full name, date of birth, and the last four digits of his/her Social Security Number.

What if a voter from another State wants to apply for a ballot using an FPCA through our office?

If a UOCAVA voter that resides in another State wants to apply for an FPCA through your office, you can provide the voter with a blank form but should clarify that he/she will need to submit the form and cast a ballot in the voter's home State of residence. Voters who are not clear on this information can visit the www.FVAP.gov website which provides step-by-step instructions on filling out the FPCA for all 55 States and territories.

What assistance can we provide the voter that has not received a ballot?

If a voter has requested an absentee ballot but has not received one close to Election Day, the voter can fill out the back-up FWAB. This ballot can be found on the FVAP website under the voter's specific State of voter registration: www.FVAP.gov

Who is covered under UOCAVA?

U.S. Citizens, 18 years or older, and are an active duty member of the Armed Forces, Merchant Marine, Public Health Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Commissioned Corps, eligible family members (U.S. citizens, 18 years or older) of military personnel or a U.S. Citizen residing outside the United States are covered by UOCAVA.

Can a person who was born overseas to US parents, and has never lived in the US still participate in the election process?

Yes, some States allow children of military personnel or U.S. Citizens residing overseas, but who have never resided in the U.S., to claim one of their U.S. citizen parents' legal State of residence as their own. FVAP has a current list of States that allow these citizens to vote absentee: <http://www.fvap.gov/citizen-voter/reside>.

What is a "legal voting residence"?

For voting purposes, "legal voting residence" can be the State or territory where the voter last resided prior to entering military service OR the State or territory that the voter claims as legal residence. Even though the voter may no longer maintain formal ties to that residence, the address determines the voter's proper voting jurisdiction. Military personnel and their family members may change their legal residence every time they change permanent duty stations, or they may retain their legal residence without change. This may mean that the family's Uniformed Service member has a different legal voting residence than his/her family members.

Can a voter cast a ballot in-person where he/she is stationed?

Military members may vote in the U.S. State or territory where stationed if they change their legal residence to that State or territory, even if they live on a military installation. Those voters are not entitled to the legal protections provided by UOCAVA because they are not absent.

How does FVAP provide UOCAVA voters with information on upcoming elections in their States?

FVAP offers electronic *Voter Alerts* that are timely emails that keep local election officials and voters informed about election dates, important deadlines throughout the absentee voting process, changes to State laws that affect how voters may request and cast their ballots, and other crucial absentee voting information.

To receive these *Voter Alerts*, contact FVAP at vote@fvap.gov and request to be added. Please provide your full name in the body of the email message.

Processing Forms:

Should I process FPCAs received after the MOVE Act's 45-day deadline for sending UOCAVA ballots?

Yes. You should process all FPCAs submitted before your State's absentee ballot request deadline for *UOCAVA* voters and send out a ballot as quickly as possible.

Which should I count if a voter submitted both a State absentee ballot and a FWAB?

When both a State absentee ballot and a FWAB are submitted prior to the State ballot-receipt deadline, the State absentee ballot should be counted.

Why did a voter write in candidates for State and local offices on the FWAB?

In addition to voting in Federal elections, some States allow *UOCAVA* voters to use the FWAB to vote in State and local elections. Check your State's guidelines for information on which elections military, their eligible family members and overseas voters may participate.

Can the postage indicia be used for non-UOCAVA Ballots?

No.

Ballot Transmission:

Can the MOVE Act's 45-day deadline be moved from Saturday to Monday?

No. The 45-day deadline for a Tuesday election will fall on a Saturday, but there is no provision in Federal law for that deadline to slip to the next business day, even though that may be allowed in State law.

Can the postage-paid indicia be used for international mail?

UOCAVA balloting materials can be sent as free postage paid via First-Class Mail as authorized by 39 USC 3406 by election officials to all *UOCAVA* citizens. These balloting materials include the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB), and State balloting materials, including letters acknowledging registration and State absentee ballots.

NOTE: It is important to remind *UOCAVA* citizens when returning balloting materials to you, the free postage-paid indicia can only be used if mailing from a U.S. Post Office, the Military Postal Service Agency (APO/FPO), or U.S. Diplomatic Pouch Mail. Materials sent by voters deposited in a foreign mail system or via common carrier (such as FedEx, DHL or UPS) must pay the rate for that service themselves.

How can I use the Electronic Transmission Service (ETS)?

FVAP's ETS service enables election officials to transmit and receive election materials via fax to and from *UOCAVA* citizens at no cost. Election officials fax the materials to FVAP's toll-free fax number and FVAP will fax the election materials to the *UOCAVA* citizen. FVAP also provides a fax-to-email conversion if the voter does not have a fax machine available.

The contact information for this service is:

ETS Toll-Free Fax Number: 1-800-368-8683

ETS Email Address: ets@fvap.gov

ETS Technical Support: 1-800-966-8683

How can I get a ballot to a voter that has an email address that removes PDFs and hyperlinks?

Some governmental email servers remove hyperlinks and attachments. Try getting an alternative email address from the voter as a backup. The Department of Defense has a file transfer service that can be used to save a file securely to someone with a (.mil) or (.gov) email address. Contact FVAP for more information.

Does FVAP have any information for processing UOCAVA voting materials including the FPCA and the FWAB forms?

Yes, FVAP offers an on-line Election Official Guided Training course and a Quick Reference Guide for processing FPCA or FWAB forms, and resources for sending UOCAVA Ballots. They can be found on our website here: <http://www.fvap.gov/eo>.

Which States received a grant from FVAP to improve the voting process for military and overseas citizens?

All information about FVAP's grant program can be found here: <http://www.fvap.gov/eo/grants>.

When will your next round of grants be?

We do not anticipate additional grants at this time.