

Voting Overseas

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) guarantees the voting rights of members of the Uniformed Services, their family members and members of the Merchant Marine and their family members, and U.S. citizens 18 years or older who reside outside the United States. The procedures and deadlines to vote absentee, however, vary from state to state.

In What Elections May I Vote? Generally, all U.S. citizens 18 years or older who are or will be residing outside the United States during an election period are eligible to vote absentee in any election for Federal office. In addition, all members of the Uniformed Services, their family members and members of the Merchant Marine and their family members, who are U.S. citizens, may vote absentee in Federal, state and local elections.

How do I register to vote, or apply for an absentee ballot? The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) is accepted by all states and territories as an application for registration and for absentee ballot. An [online version](#) of the FPCA is available at www.fvap.gov. The online form must be completed, printed, signed, dated and mailed to your Local Election Official. The online form must be mailed in an envelope with proper postage. All States and Territories except American Samoa and Guam accept the online FPCA. You may also send a written request for a ballot to your county, city, town or parish clerk.

I would like to vote but don't know how. Where can I find assistance? Information on applying for absentee registration and a ballot is available in the [Voting Assistance Guide](#). Voting Assistance Officers assigned to units at military installations and at each U.S. embassy or consulate have a copy of the Guide to assist you in completing the FPCA. You may also contact the Northern Law Center-SHAPE (NLC-SHAPE) for assistance.

Do I have to be registered to vote absentee? Registration requirements vary from state to state. States and territories allow voters to register and request an absentee ballot by submitting a single FPCA during the election year.

How do I complete the FPCA and where do I send it? [Chapter 3](#) of the Guide outlines absentee voting procedures for each state and territory. Complete the FPCA according to the requirements for your state or territory of legal voting residence. In section IV under the heading of "Where to Send It" you will find a list of addresses for county and local election officials.

Must I submit a separate application for each election? One FPCA will



allow you to receive all ballots for Federal offices for two regularly scheduled general elections for federal office. Due to the transient nature of many military members, however, FVAP recommends that each voter submit an FPCA to their state of legal residence in January of each year and again each time there is a change in the voters' mailing address.

When is the best time to apply for an absentee ballot? Generally, the FPCA used only to request a ballot should be received by election officials at least forty-five days before election day to allow ample time to process the request and mail the ballot. Consult Chapter 3 of the Guide for further information on specific state or territorial registration deadlines.

If I am required to have my FPCA or ballot notarized, how do I do it? Some election materials may be required to be witnessed or sworn to before a notary, U.S. Commissioned Officer, embassy or consular officer, or other officials authorized to administer oaths. Most states and territories do not require notarization of the FPCA or ballot; therefore, consult Chapter 3 of the Guide to determine your state or territory's requirements. The Northern Law Center-SHAPE provides notary services.

When should I receive my ballot? Under normal circumstances, most states and territories begin mailing ballots to citizens 30-45 days before an election. If you have not received your ballot two weeks before the election, contact FVAP's Ombudsman Service. They will assist you in determining the status of your ballot. Always execute and return your absentee ballot regardless of when you receive it.

What is the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)? Voters may be able to use a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) available through Voting Assistance Officers at military installations, at U.S. embassies/consulates, or [online](#). Generally, an absent uniformed services member or citizen outside the United States can only use the FWAB if the voter is absent from his/her voting residence; applied for a regular ballot early enough so the request is received by the appropriate local election official not later than the State deadline; and has not received the requested regular absentee ballot from the state. The FWAB must be mailed to the local election official to meet the state or territorial deadline for counting. Refer to [Chapter 3](#) of the Guide to determine your state or territory's witness or notary requirements for voted ballots. Additionally, eleven states have expanded the use of the FWAB: Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

Where would I obtain information on issues, positions and candidates? Information about candidates, issues, and local news are available on the internet. In addition to reading U.S. news magazines and newspapers, both Democrats Abroad and Republicans Abroad maintain overseas offices and have information about the candidates and issues. They can be contacted as follows:

Democrats Abroad 430 South Capitol Street, S.E. Washington, DC 20003 Phone: (202) 863-8177 Fax: (202) 863-8063 World Wide Web: www.democratsabroad.org; Email: info@democratsabroad.org.

Republicans Abroad International 1275 K Street, NW, Suite 102 Washington, D.C. 20005; Phone: (202) 608-1423, Fax: (202) 608-1431; World Wide Web: www.republicansabroad.org or www.republicansabroad.com General Information

Email: chairman@republicansabroad.org.

Where is my "legal voting residence?" For voting purposes, your "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 district, ward, precinct or parish for voting purposes. Family members may have a different legal voting residence from the member. NLC-SHAPE can answer questions about your legal residence.

Can I vote in person where I am stationed? At the present time, there are no provisions for personnel stationed outside the United States to vote, in person, where stationed.

My family members are not in the military; can they also vote absentee? The law entitles eligible family members of military personnel to vote absentee. Family members are considered to be in the same category of absentee voter as military members and generally should follow the same procedures.

The information in this fact sheet is taken from Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) website and is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/faqmilhandout.pdf>.

Voting Overseas is distributed by the Northern Law Center, located in Building 318 on SHAPE. Our office hours are 0900 to 1700 Monday through Friday. You may call us for an appointment at DSN 423-4868/civilian (32) 65 44 48 68. Check out our web site at <http://www.usagbenelux.eur.army.mil/sites/installation/legal.asp> for helpful information on other legal topics.