



Voter Info

Military and Overseas Voters Bill of Rights

Your rights and responsibilities as an absent military or overseas civilian voter

What You Need to Know

According to federal law, you have the following rights when electing the President, Vice President, U.S. Senators and Representatives:

- To vote by absentee ballot in all special, primary, general, and runoff elections (as long as you are registered to vote in your last state of residence).
- To use the two-in-one “federal voter registration and absentee ballot request form” for both voter registration and absentee ballot request.
- To register to vote and request your ballot electronically.
- To specify whether you would like to have future registration and ballot materials sent to you electronically or by mail.

NOTE: If you do not specify a preferred method, your ballot will be sent to you according to the law of your last state of residence, which may be by regular mail.

- To have your absentee ballot sent to you at least forty-five (45) days before Election Day (if you have registered to vote by that date).
- To submit a federal write-in absentee ballot (FWAB) for all federal elections (including a secrecy envelope and mailing envelope), if you have made a timely request for your State’s absentee ballot but have not received it.

FYI: When using this ballot, you can “write in” either the political party you support OR the candidate you support. Additionally, misspellings and abbreviations are acceptable if the election official can ascertain for whom you intended to vote.

- To submit a state-issued absentee ballot AFTER submitting the federal write-in absentee ballot as long as you inform the election official that you already submitted the federal write-in ballot.

For example: You believe that you will not get your ballot returned in time to be counted because you have not yet received your State’s absentee ballot. To be safe, you print and send in the federal write-in ballot (FWAB). Two days later, you receive your state’s official absentee ballot. At this point, you can either let the FWAB you already sent in record your vote or you can send in the state’s ballot form and make a note for the election official that you submitted the FWAB a few days earlier.

- To return your ballot via expedited postal service, for free, if you are a member of the Armed Forces.

To ensure that your absentee ballot will be accepted and counted by the State, it is your responsibility:

- To register to vote as an absentee voter in your last state of residence.
- To keep your address and contact information current and up-to-date with the election officials in your last state of residence.
- To specify whether you want to receive registration and ballot materials electronically or by mail.
- To use the state-issued absentee ballot (even if you submitted an early federal write-in absentee ballot) if it was available to you at least sixty (60) days before the State’s deadline for receiving absentee ballots.
- To know your State’s deadline for registering to vote as an absentee voter and for submitting ballots as an absentee voter.



Voting Basics

1. There are just two (2) basic eligibility requirements for voting from overseas:

- You must be at least 18 years old on Election Day.
- You must be a U.S. citizen (by birth or naturalization).

2. Practical tools for registering and requesting your ballot:

Essential Items

- Address of last U.S. residence address (or that of your U.S. citizen parent(s) if you were born overseas).
- Some form of U.S. identification (such as a passport).

Helpful Items

Printer: it's good to have access to a printer. You will need it to print your registration/ballot request form and possibly your ballot.

E-mail Address: when you register to vote from overseas, it is helpful to have an e-mail address. Many States will now communicate with you by e-mail.

You'll find on-line voter registration is easy at www.overseasvotefoundation.org

Did You Know?

- The U.S. Constitution does not explicitly provide for universal voting rights. Instead, constitutional amendments prevent U.S. citizens from being denied the right to vote for specific reasons that include race and ethnicity (15th Amendment), sex (19th Amendment), and age (for those over the age of 18 pursuant to the 26th Amendment).
- The federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) seeks to ensure that U.S. citizens living abroad and members of the Armed Forces (living outside of their home state as a result of their military service), as well as their spouses and dependents, can vote in federal

elections by absentee ballot. In 2009, Congress strengthened the rights of these voters by enacting the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act.

- The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) is the agency within the Department of Defense that is responsible for assisting overseas voters, both civilian and military, and for implementing UOCAVA.
- It is estimated that four to six million U.S. citizens currently live outside the United States.

FastFACT

The right to vote varies from state to state. For example, some states prohibit convicted felons from voting. Other states will not let U.S. citizens born abroad register to vote unless they return stateside to establish residency for voting purposes.

"Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters in this country."

Franklin D. Roosevelt (32nd U.S. President)

Where You Can Learn More

- www.overseasvotefoundation.org
- www.fvap.gov
- <http://www.fvap.gov/resources/media/uocavalaw.pdf>



Overseas Vote Foundation

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