



STEP 1: REQUEST YOUR BALLOT USING THE FEDERAL POST CARD APPLICATION

There are three ways to access the FPCA:

1. Use the online assistant at www.fvap.gov to complete your FPCA. You will need the address of your last residence in the US in order to [determine your voting residence](#).
2. Print out a [paper FPCA form](#) and fill it out. You can find your [state's guidelines](#) for filling out this form on FVAP. You will need to mail it to the election official for your county. [Search for your election official here](#).
3. If you live near a U.S. Embassy or Consulate, you may be able to request a paper FPCA from them. Contact their Citizen Services department for information. You can find your [state's guidelines](#) for filling out this form on FVAP. You will need to mail it to the election official for your county. [Search for your election official here](#).

Try to request your ballot before August 1, 2020 to allow sufficient time for your state to mail you your ballot. However, you may register to vote up until your state's voter registration deadline. You can check for that [deadline and find forms](#) (including postage paid envelopes for US domestic mail only) here.

STEP 2: RECEIVE AND FILL OUT YOUR BALLOT

- Your election official will process your FPCA to determine the appropriate ballot to send to you.
- Your local election official will contact you if your application is denied or if they need additional information from you to process your form.
- Election officials are required to send absentee ballots no later than 45 days before an election. If you submit your FPCA within 45 days of the election, they will send you your ballot as soon as possible.

STEP 3A: RETURN YOUR VOTED BALLOT

- Vote and return your State absentee ballot following the instructions included with your ballot. Your state may allow you to return your ballot via postal mail, fax, app or online.

Air mail (as of July 2020) is suspended between many countries and the USA. If you need to return your ballot via mail, you can try to send it via courier or via diplomatic mail at your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate. You will need to check with Citizen Services at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are able to mail your ballot via the U.S. Embassy/Consulate, you will need to either attach U.S. stamps or postage or print and use the [free envelope from FVAP](#) (please scroll to the bottom of the linked page for the envelopes).

If you are able to return your ballot via FAX, [please use this cover sheet](#). If you need to send your election materials to your election official by fax but do not have access to a fax machine, you can email them to fax@fvap.gov and FVAP will fax your election materials for you. [You can read more at FVAP](#).

STEP 3B: WHAT TO DO IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE YOUR BALLOT

- If you do not receive an absentee ballot in time to return it to your state, you can use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) as a backup ballot to vote for federal offices. If your official absentee ballot arrives after you send in the FWAB, then you can fill out and send in the official ballot as well. Your state will count only one.
- You can [download the forms](#) or use the [online FWAB assistant](#) at FVAP. If you download and print the form without using the online assistant, please be sure to follow your [state's guidelines](#).
- Return your ballot as noted in Step 3A.



APPENDICES – USEFUL INFORMATION FROM FVAP.GOV

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about absentee voting:

Questions for all UOCAVA voters

What is UOCAVA?

The *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* extends federal absentee voting rights to Service members, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens.

Who is covered under UOCAVA?

UOCAVA covers U.S. citizens who are 18 or older AND active duty members of the Uniformed Services, Merchant Marine, or commissioned corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; their eligible family members; and U.S. citizens residing outside the United States.

What is the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)?

UOCAVA citizens can use the FPCA to register to vote and request an absentee ballot simultaneously. They can also use the FPCA to update their contact information.

What is the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)?

The FWAB is an emergency backup ballot for UOCAVA citizens who did not receive an absentee ballot from their state in time to participate in the election.

Do I have to register to vote?

Most states and territories require you to register to vote. Fill out an FPCA to register and request an absentee ballot at the same time.

When should I request an absentee ballot?

You should send in a new FPCA every January and each time you move. We recommend that you send in an FPCA at least 90 days before the election in which you want to vote.

Do I have to send in a separate application for each election?

The FPCA allows you to request an absentee ballot for all federal elections in the calendar year. Depending on your state, you may receive a ballot with local or state offices and initiatives as well (e.g., Governor, City Council). We recommend that you send in a new FPCA every January and each time you move.

Can I vote at the embassy or consulate?

No. Elections are run at the state level. You must communicate directly with your state to register, request a ballot, and vote. Most embassies and consulates will help you to fill out the FPCA and FWAB, but they are not polling places.

When will I get my ballot?

Election offices are required to send absentee ballots at least 45 days before a federal election. If you requested your ballot by email, then the ballot should arrive right away. Mailed ballots will take longer to arrive depending on the postal system in the country where you are located.

FAQs

What if I do not get a ballot?

If you do not receive an absentee ballot in time to return it to your state, you can use the FWAB as a backup ballot to vote for federal offices. If your official absentee ballot arrives after you send in the FWAB, then you can fill out and send in the official ballot as well. Your state will count only one.

FAQs for the FPCA and FWAB

Do I have to choose a classification?

Yes. This is how you tell the election office that you are eligible to vote absentee under *UOCAVA*.

What if none of these classifications apply to me?

Military Members: If you are an active duty military member (or family member) stationed within your voting jurisdiction, you are not covered under *UOCAVA* and should follow your state's regular voting procedures. You can use either the National Mail Voter Registration Form (NVRF) or your state's voter registration form.

Non-Military: If you do not reside outside of the United States but want to vote absentee, you must follow the standard absentee voting procedures for your state. You can look up your election office at <https://www.fvap.gov/search-offices> and contact them about obtaining an absentee ballot.

Can my immediate family members vote absentee?

Spouses and children who live away from their voting residence can request an absentee ballot using the FPCA. However, if they currently live where they are registered to vote, then they are not covered by *UOCAVA* and should vote at the local polls, or request an absentee ballot according to state guidelines.

I am the spouse of a Service member. Can I use the same residence or domicile as my Service member for my voting residence address?

Yes, you are allowed to retain the same residence or domicile that your Service member has established, even if you have not physically been present at that address. If you choose, you may instead elect to retain your established residency or domicile (if different from your sponsor).

You are not permitted to choose any state; you or your service member must have established residency in a state. Ways to do this may include voting, paying taxes, owning property, holding a driver's license, and registering a vehicle. Residency requirements vary by state. Please consult legal counsel to discuss tax implications and other effects of the Military Spouse Residency Relief Act (MSRRA).

Will it affect my citizenship if I select "my return is uncertain"?

No.

Can a U.S. citizen who has never lived in the country register to vote and request an absentee ballot?

Some states allow citizens who have never resided in the U.S. to use a parent's voting residence as their own. A list of these states is available online at <https://www.fvap.gov/citizen-voter/reside>.

What if I don't have a social security number or a state-issued ID?

In Section 6 of the form, under "Additional Information," write that you do not have a Social Security Number or a state-issued ID.

Does voter registration affect my tax status?

You can vote for federal offices without a change to your tax status, but voting for non-federal offices may result in state and local taxation. There may also be tax implications when changing your residence from one state to another. We recommend that you seek legal advice when changing your voting residence.

What is my U.S. voting residence address?

Your U.S. voting residence address is used to determine where you are eligible to vote. For military voters, it is usually the last address you lived at in your state of legal residence. For overseas citizens, it is usually the last place you lived at in the U.S. before moving overseas. You do not need to have any current ties with this address.

What if someone else lives there now or the house was torn down?

Your election office only uses your voting residence address to determine if you are eligible to vote in that jurisdiction and which ballot to send you. Your election office will not send any voting materials to this address.

What if I do not know my voting residence address?

If you cannot remember the U.S. address where you last resided, we recommend asking family members and checking old records. Your election office may also be able to help you further.

Can my voting residence and current address be the same?

No. In order to vote absentee, you must be living outside of your voting district.

Do I have to give my current address if I am asking for my absentee ballot by email or fax?

Yes. The election office needs your current address to confirm that you are eligible to vote absentee under UOCAVA. This is especially important for citizens residing outside of the U.S.

What if I don't know my overseas address or duty station?

If you do not know your overseas address or duty station, provide as much information as you can regarding your overseas address or duty station (e.g., country, city, etc.) in Section 3 of the FPCA and the FWAB. Use Section 6 of the forms to explain why you do not have an address overseas yet. Make sure you provide your email and phone number so the election office can contact you with any follow-up questions.

Do I have to put my political party?

Most states require you to specify a political party in order to vote in primary elections. This information may be used to register you with a party.

Do I have to give additional information?

Some states require additional information to process your application. Go to FVAP.gov to find out what your state specifically requires.

Can I sign my FPCA or FWAB electronically?

Only the states of Nevada and Montana currently accept electronic signatures from the DoD Common Access Card. All overseas citizens and military voters in all other states must print the form, sign it and send it to your election office.

FAQs

Does it matter what size paper I use?

No. Any paper size is acceptable as long as the information is legible.

How can I send my form?

All states will accept your form by mail, but they vary on email and fax. Check your state's requirements/guidelines at FVAP.gov.

Do I have to pay for postage?

You must pay for postage only if you are using a foreign postal service or a commercial courier service. If you are using U.S. mail including APO/FPO and diplomatic pouches, then you can use the postage-paid template available on FVAP.gov.

Can I use any envelope to mail my form?

Yes. Print the postage-paid template from FVAP.gov onto any available blank envelope.

Please note that some states require you to place ballots and FWABs inside an anonymous security/secret envelope. When sending your voting materials, make sure you have two envelopes; one for the ballot or FWAB and one for actual mailing. Place the security envelope along with the other balloting materials inside the mailing envelope. Once this is complete, you can address and send your voting materials to your election office.

What is a postmark?

A postmark is an official imprint applied on the address side of a stamped piece of mail by the post office. It shows when and where the post office accepted your mail.

How do I email my form?

Only email your form if your state will accept it this way. After printing and signing your form, scan and attach it to an email addressed to your election office. Do NOT send your form to [FVAP](http://FVAP.gov).

What is the DoD Fax Service?

The DoD Fax Service is for those voters who cannot send their election materials directly to their election officials. To fax your election materials, use the FVAP Transmission Cover Sheet and fax to: (703) 693-5527, DSN 223-5527 or toll-free from the U.S., Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to 1-800-368-8683. If you need to send your election materials to your election official by fax but do not have access to a fax machine, you can email them to fax@fvap.gov and FVAP will fax your election materials for you. **This service is fax only.** If your state accepts your election materials by email, you should email them directly to your election official. FVAP will not transmit email-to-email transactions.

How do I check the status of my application?

Contact your election office directly to confirm that your form was processed successfully. FVAP does not have access to your registration information.



**Wherever U.S. citizens go,
FVAP ensures their voices are heard.**

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) works to ensure Service members, their eligible family members and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so – from anywhere in the world.

**Citizens Born
Outside the United States**

A growing number of states now allow U.S. citizens who were born abroad but never resided in the United States to vote using the address where a parent or other relative is eligible to vote. Visit FVAP.gov to see a current list of states that allow these U.S. citizens to vote.

If neither of your parents is from one of these states, it is possible that you do not currently have voting rights. However, additional states are working on passing legislation to allow citizens born overseas who have never established residency in the United States to vote in the state in which their parents are eligible. Visit FVAP.gov for state information.

**What is a voting
residence and why is it
important?**

You need a voting residence to vote via absentee ballot—even if you are only voting for federal offices. **Your election office needs your exact voting residence address to send you the correct ballot for your voting precinct.**

Your residence is in the state or territory where you last resided, immediately before leaving the United States. It is the address that you considered your permanent home and where you had a physical presence. It's important to note that the voting residence address you use must be an address in the United States. Forms that list a P.O. box may be automatically disqualified.

This residence may remain valid even if:

- You no longer own property or have other ties to that state.
- Your intent to return to that state is uncertain.
- Your previous address is no longer a recognized residential address.





Students Studying Abroad

If you are living overseas for an extended period during an election season and will need to vote absentee, complete an FPCA at FVAP.gov to request your absentee ballot. Your voting residency will continue to be your last legal residence prior to leaving the United States to study abroad.

Voting in an election for federal office often may not be used as the sole basis of determining residency for the purpose of imposing state and local taxes. When claiming a new legal residence or domicile, legal counsel should be consulted because there may be other factors to consider, such as tax implications.

If you cannot remember the address where you last physically resided, then FVAP recommends checking old tax records, passports, or family correspondence. Sometimes local election officials can help identify your address if you were previously registered. To claim a new legal residence or domicile, consult legal counsel as there may be other factors to consider, such as tax implications.

Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET | Go to FVAP.gov and click on "contact" to find where to send your election materials. Media inquiries: media@fvap.gov



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