



*Voting assistance for Service members,  
their families and overseas citizens*

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about absentee voting:

### Questions for all UOCAVA voters

#### What is UOCAVA?

The *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* is the law that 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)?

The FPCA is the form for UOCAVA citizens to simultaneously register to vote and request an absentee ballot. It also updates their contact information.

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

The FWAB is an emergency backup ballot for UOCAVA citizens who didn't 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. 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 you want to vote in.

#### 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 aren't 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 asked to receive your ballot by email, it should arrive right away. Mailed ballots will take longer depending on the postal system in the country where you're located.

## What if I don't get a ballot?

If you don't 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 sending in the FWAB, 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're 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 by absentee ballot, you must follow the standard absentee voting procedures for your State. You can look up your election office at [www.fvap.gov/search-offices](http://www.fvap.gov/search-offices).

### 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. If they currently live where they're registered, they aren't covered by UOCAVA and should vote at the polls or request an absentee ballot according to State guidelines.

### 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 States that allow these "never-resided citizens" to vote absentee is available online at [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov).

## What if I don't have a social security number or a State issued ID?

In the section of the form that asks for additional information, write that you don't 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 absentee. For military voters, it's usually your last address in your State of legal residence. For overseas citizens, it's usually the last place you lived 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're eligible to vote in their jurisdiction and which ballot to send you. They won't send anything to that address.

## What if I don't know my voting residence address?

If you can't remember the 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're 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 yet, 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. Also, use the Additional Information section to explain why you don't have an address 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 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](http://FVAP.gov) to find out what your State needs.

## Can I sign my FPCA or FWAB electronically?

No. You must print and sign your form before sending it to your election office.

## Does it matter what size paper I use?

No. Any paper is acceptable as long 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 at [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov).

## Do I have to pay for postage?

Only if you're using a foreign postal service or a commercial courier service. If you're using U.S. mail, including APO/FPO and diplomatic pouches, then you can use the postage-paid template available on our website.

## Can I use any envelope to mail my form?

Yes. Just print the postage-paid template from [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) onto whatever blank envelope you have on hand.

## 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 Transmission Cover Sheet found in Chapter 1 or online at [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) 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](mailto: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 accepted. FVAP doesn't have access to your registration information.