



Absentee Voting Myths & Realities

FACT SHEET

**Wherever Americans go,
FVAP ensures their voice is heard.**

The Federal Voting Assistance Program — FVAP for short — 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.

Myth

I have heard that absentee ballots only count in close elections.

Reality

No — in fact, absentee ballots submitted in accordance with State laws are counted for every election. The difference is that in a close election, the media reports that the outcome cannot be announced until after the absentee ballots are counted. However, all ballots are counted in the final totals for every election — and every vote (absentee or in-person) counts the same.

The rights of absentee voters are protected by law

The *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act* — *UOCAVA* for short — protects the rights of Service members and their eligible family members to vote in Federal elections regardless of where they are stationed. It also protects the Federal voting rights of U.S. citizens residing outside the United States. FVAP works to administer the Department of Defense's responsibility for *UOCAVA*.



Myth

I can vote in person at a local embassy/consulate or on a military installation.

Reality

No — actually, U.S. elections are run at the State level and citizens must communicate directly with their election official to register, request a ballot and vote. Voting Assistance is available at most embassies and consulates and in all military units to help in the completion of necessary forms. Be sure to account for submission and mail delivery time to ensure your forms are received by the State deadline.



Myth

States all have the same election rules and deadlines for military and overseas voters.

Reality

False. States have different rules in regard to how and when the forms are returned. Visit FVAP.gov for your State-specific guidelines.

★ Myth

Military spouses and dependents cannot use military absentee voting forms.

★ Reality

No — in fact, military family members who will be 18 years old by election day should use the same Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) that members of the Uniformed Services and overseas citizens do, even when voting absentee Stateside. Dependents attending college overseas should also use those forms.



★ Myth

I am a U.S. citizen who was born overseas and has never lived in the U.S. — I pay taxes but cannot exercise my right to vote.

★ Reality

It depends. A growing number of States now allow U.S. citizens who were born abroad but never resided in the U.S. 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.

★ Myth

Voting will affect the tax status of overseas citizens.

★ Reality

It depends. Voting for Federal office candidates will not affect your Federal or State tax liability. Depending on the laws of your State, voting for State or local offices may affect your State income tax liability. If you are concerned about your State tax status, consult legal counsel.

★ Myth

Absentee ballots are not secret.

★ Reality

Not true. State absentee ballots and the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot are designed with a “Secrecy Envelope” allowing for the separation of the voter’s identity from the cast ballot. Voting Assistance Officers also ensure voters casting absentee ballots on Department of Defense (DoD) facilities are able to do so in a private and independent manner. Local election officials are professionals who go to great lengths in their ballot handling procedures to ensure your vote, and personal information, are kept private.

★ Myth

I can't vote if I'm deployed.

★ Reality

False — you absolutely can vote while deployed. If you're registered to vote while deployed and you don't get your State ballot in time to vote from your location, you can use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) found at FVAP.gov. Remember to submit the form at least 30 days before the scheduled election.

CONTACT FVAP

Monday–Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET Phone: 1-800-438-VOTE (8683) | DSN: 425-1584 | Email: vote@fvap.gov
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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