

SEIZE THE POWER: VOTE ABSENTEE

Provided by the
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Can I vote absentee?

All members of the Armed Forces and their family members who are U.S. citizens may vote absentee in state and local elections.

Caution: Voting and paying state income taxes go hand-in-hand. Active duty military members should not register to vote in a state unless that state is their state of domicile, and they pay income taxes to that state on their active duty pay -- if that state taxes their active duty domiciliaries. Voter registration in a state that is not the domicile of the service member will generate an income tax bill on active duty military pay. By registering to vote, the active duty service member is declaring that (s)he is domiciliary of that state and subject to taxation by that state. Always consult a legal assistance attorney if you have questions regarding income taxes, Soldiers' and Sailor's Civil Relief Act or any other legal issue, and read below, "What is my state of legal residence?"

How do I apply for an absentee ballot?

The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA or SF-76) is accepted by all states and territories as an application either for a registration form or for registration, or as an application for absentee ballot. You may also send a written request for a ballot to your county, city, town, or parish clerk.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) developed the Federal Post Card Application, which is accepted by all 55 U.S. states and territories. The post card application may be obtained from the FVAP. The FVAP may be reached at World Wide Web address www.fvap.gov or toll-free in the United States at (800)438-8683.

What is my state of "legal residence"?

For voting purposes, your state of legal residence (state of domicile) can be the state or territory where you last resided prior to entering military service or the state or territory which you have since claimed as your legal residence, again state of domicile. It is the responsibility of election officials within each state to determine the eligibility of an individual to vote under the laws of the state.

Be sure to enter as complete an address as possible for your legal residence when completing the FPCA. Although you may no longer maintain formal ties to that residence such as property ownership, the address is needed to place you in a proper voting district, ward, precinct or parish.

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 should follow the same procedures.

Do I have to be registered to vote absentee?

Registration requirements vary from state to state. Many states and territories allow the citizen to register and request an absentee ballot by submitting a single FPCA. However, other states may require the use of two separate FPCA forms: one to register, and a second FPCA to request an absentee ballot.

Where do I send my FPCA?

Chapter 3 of the *Voting Assistance Guide* outlines absentee voting procedures for each state and territory. In your state or territory of legal voting residence under the heading of "Where to Send It" you will find a list of addresses for county and local election officials. At present, there are no provisions to allow for the submission of the FPCA through the Internet.

Must I submit a separate application for each election?

In some states and territories you must submit a separate FPCA for each election. Many states and territories accept a single FPCA for all ballots issued during an election year. When in doubt, send a separate application for each election.

When mailing an FPCA or other election materials to my state or territory, do I have to pay postage?

Generally, all election-related materials are mailed postage paid from any post office in the United States. You must pay postage if the materials are mailed from a non-U.S. postal facility.

When is the best time to apply for an absentee ballot?

Generally, election officials should receive a request for an absentee ballot at least forty-five days before election day to allow ample time to process the request and mail the ballot. If applying for both registration and an absentee ballot, your application may have to be mailed earlier. Chapter 3 of the *Voting Assistance Guide* provides further information on state or territorial deadlines. Be sure to advise your election official of any change to your address.

Additionally, Chapter 16.B. of the PERSMAN directs commanding officers to designate a voting officer. The voting officer must issue all personnel Federal Post Card Applications for absentee ballots and registration by September 15 of each year.

When should I receive my ballot?

Under normal circumstances, most states and territories begin mailing ballots to citizens 30-45 days before an election. Always execute and return your absentee ballot as soon as possible, regardless of when you receive it.

Note: This general information is not a substitute for consulting an attorney. If you have questions regarding any domicile or voting related issues you should call the number listed above to schedule an appointment.

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