



Federal Voting Assistance Program

ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION SERVICE MANUAL

This document describes the procedures for preparing election materials for electronic transmission (fax/email).

Questions or comments concerning any aspect of these instructions may be directed to:

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Washington, DC 20301-1155

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Document Reviewed/Updated: 11/03/2008

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Chapter 1: Overview

A. THE FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM'S ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION SERVICE

The Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP's) Electronic Transmission Service (ETS) enables local election officials to transmit and receive election materials via fax or email to/from Uniformed Services members and overseas citizens at no cost.

The ETS can forward the documents as either a fax or email as permitted by state law. You may also fax materials to ETS for conversion to email if the voter does not have a fax machine available (fax to email conversion).

B. WHEN TO USE THIS DELIVERY ALTERNATIVE

Local election officials should use the ETS any time he/she believes the regular absentee ballot cannot be received, voted, and returned by mail in time to be counted, provided that fax and/or email are permitted by state law or regulatory authority. Refer to your State election laws and procedures.

The ETS enables you to:

Receive:

- Registration And Absentee Ballot Request - Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)
- Other state-required registration materials
- A voted ballot
- A general information request

Send:

- Request for additional information to enable voting registration or ballot request
- Responses to a voter's request for information
- Blank absentee ballot to the voter
- Blank absentee ballot to be stored by the ETS for future transmission to voters.
- Other election materials.

C. HOW IT WORKS

Election officials transmit election materials to Uniformed Services members, their family members and overseas citizens via fax through the ETS toll-free number or via email as an attached Portable Document Format (PDF) document. The ETS forwards materials via fax or email directly to citizens. If the material is to be emailed, ETS delivers the material as a read-only file. If the materials are received by fax but are to be emailed to the citizen, ETS will convert the entire package to a PDF document and email as an attachment to the citizen.

D. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This manual is available in both Adobe Acrobat (PDF) and Rich-Text Format (RTF). The PDF version is read-only, however, the RTF can be used by you to add local processes to the manual.

Chapter 2:

How to Transmit Election Materials

ETS provides two options for transmitting materials to the citizen. The first is a transmission of election materials to a specific citizen. The second allows you to store your ballots on the ETS system and then later inform ETS where to direct each specific ballot. A single stored ballot can be sent to multiple citizens as you direct.

OPTION 1 - TRANSMITTING A DOCUMENT TO A CITIZEN

Voting materials can be forwarded immediately to the citizen via fax or email. See “Creating the Transmission Package” for the contents of a transmission package.

Fax to one of the following numbers: 1-800-368-8683 or (703) 693-5527.

Email to the following address: ets@fvap.ncr.gov

The use of the fax numbers and email address above provides an audit trail for all documents. If a transmission is interrupted before completion, please resend the entire package.

Should you experience any technical difficulty, please contact the ETS at 1-800-966-8683 between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday – Friday. The ETS can receive faxes or emails 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You will be notified if any irregularities occur during the transmission.

Creating the Transmission Package

Each transmission package should contain information for only one citizen. ETS is not authorized to take bundles of election materials and split it for different citizens.

When transmitting election materials by fax or email through the ETS, you should use the Electronic Transmission Sheet provided in Appendix C. This sheet serves as the cover sheet and is always the first item in a packet. It should be reproduced as needed for transmission.

The Electronic Transmission Sheet must be completed as follows:

1. Type or print all information in dark ink so that it is fully legible.
2. Complete the “To and “From” sections legibly.
3. In the “To” section, indicate the voter’s fax number, email address, or mailing address.
4. Be sure to include the number of pages being transmitted so that the recipient will know when the transmission is complete.

After completing the Electronic Transmission Sheet attach the ballot transmission package. The ballot transmission package should include all instructions on how to vote the ballot, signature/oath requirements and how to return the ballot (mail, fax or email). All documents should be formatted to fit on 8 ½" by 11" paper.

Once complete, fax or email it to one of the following: 1-800-368-8683 or (703) 693-5527, ets@fvap.ncr.gov

OPTION 2 - STORED BALLOT PROCESS

Storing ballots is an additional service provided by the ETS. You can have the ETS transmit ballots to citizens after you complete and transmit an Electronic Transmission Sheet. This process saves you time that you would normally use to individually prepare and fax ballots to citizens, and is especially recommended if large quantities of ballots will be sent to citizens by fax.

Step 1: Transmitting PDF Ballot Files to the ETS for storage

To have your ballots electronically stored, they may be emailed as a PDF to ets@fvap.ncr.gov, mailed in hardcopy or mailed on a CD ROM or DVD (in PDF format). Call ETS technical support, 1-800-966-8683, to get the proper mailing address.

Multiple ballot packages can be emailed in one message, however, please make sure that all attachments when combined are not larger than 1.5 megabytes.

Each ballot package sent to the ETS should contain:

- a. The ballot.
- b. The number or name of the ballot. If the number or name of the ballot is not the same as the file name, please indicate that in the email message or on a separate piece of paper if a CD ROM/DVD is being mailed.
- c. The file name must not contain any spaces and should be all lowercase.
- d. Voting instructions.
- e. How to return the ballot.

Provide ETS with the name of a contact person or person(s) authorized to approve transmission of stored ballots. Include a mailing address, email address, phone and fax number.

Step 2: Forwarding Ballots to Citizens

- a. Complete an Electronic Transmission Sheet for each citizen and transmit to ETS via fax, 1-800-368-8683 or (703) 693-5527, or email, ets@fvap.ncr.gov. The ETS can receive faxes or emails 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Designate the ballot number or name and indicate whether the recipient should receive the ballot package via fax or email.
- b. Upon receipt of the Electronic Transmission Sheet, the ETS will attach the proper instructions with the corresponding ballot, log the transaction and transmit the entire packet of materials to the citizen using the fax number or email address for the citizen provided by the local election official.

Note: Stored blank absentee ballots and instructions will be retained for 30 days following the election and then deleted from the system, unless otherwise specified in writing by the jurisdiction.

Chapter 3

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

QUESTION: Do I have to transmit a separate fax transmission or email for each ballot?

ANSWER: Yes. For security and audit purposes, the transmission that you send cannot be altered. This means that several ballots sent in one transmission cannot be separated to be routed to different voters.

QUESTION: I have a special oath on the envelope. What should I do?

ANSWER: If there is any information, such as a special oath on the envelope, the oath should be copied and included in the transmission. The instructions should explain how this oath is to be signed and returned.

QUESTION: If I have the voter's fax number, why shouldn't I just fax it myself?

ANSWER: The ETS can fax to any number worldwide at no cost to you. Also, some Uniformed Services members may provide you with a Defense Switched Network (DSN) number. The ETS can route faxes to these numbers. Additionally, the ETS provides an audit trail of all transmissions.

QUESTION: When can I fax and email?

ANSWER: The ETS accepts faxes and emails 24-hours a day 7 days a week. Technical assistance is available between 6:00a.m. and 10:00p.m. Eastern Time Monday – Friday with extended hours as needed at 1-800-966-8683.

Appendices

- A Glossary of Terms

- B Absentee Voter Transmittal Log

- C Electronic Transmission Sheet

Appendix A:

Glossary of Terms

APO/FPO - Essentially a military “zip-code,” this portion of the address must be included on the transmission sheet to ensure delivery to the proper location.

Ballot ID Number or Name - The number or letters used by local election officials to identify a ballot and its instructions that have been stored at the Electronic Transmission Service.

Ballot Pages - The 8½" by 11" format in which the ballot is electronically transmitted.

Federal Post Card Application (FPCA, SF 76) - Form used by Uniformed Services member and overseas citizens to register to vote and request a ballot. State laws differ in the extent of use for the FPCA.

Electronic Transmission Service - The processing and customer service center where transmissions are routed between absentee voters and state and local government officials.

Read-Only - Documents that may be seen on a computer display but not altered in any way. All transmission routed through the Electronic Transmission Service are handled in this manner.

Stored Ballot - A ballot (or set of ballots) that is (are) marked with ID numbers or letters and sent to the Electronic Transmission Service prior to an election so that the absentee ballot does not have to be transmitted with each transmission cover sheet.

Electronic Transmission Sheet - Cover sheet that must be used as the first page of any transmission sent to the voter.

Appendix C: Electronic Transmission Sheet

This form can be saved and completed online, then printed and faxed. It can also be printed as a blank form. Copies should be made of the transmission sheet for actual use.

Always be sure to have a few blank copies on hand, and do not write on the original.

Official Election Materials — Electronic Transmission Sheet
Transmission (Cover) Sheet from Election Official to Absentee Voter

From:	
City/County Board of Elections	
State	
Telephone Number	
Fax Number	
Street Address	
Address 2	
City	
State	
Zip Code	
Please forward attached document by	<input type="checkbox"/> FAX <input type="checkbox"/> EMAIL
To:	
Last Name	
First Name	
Middle Name	
Telephone Number	
Fax Number	
Mailing Address	
Address Line 2	
Address Line 3	
City	
State and/or Country	
Unit/Ship	
Postal Code/APO/FPO	
Email Address	
Number of pages being transmitted, including this sheet:	
Choose one: <input type="checkbox"/> Army <input type="checkbox"/> Navy <input type="checkbox"/> Air Force <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Corps <input type="checkbox"/> Coast Guard Other: _____	
Contents of Transmission: <input type="checkbox"/> Ballot <input type="checkbox"/> Stored Ballot (Number _____) Other Election Materials (specify): _____	
Authorizing Signature (if required): _____	
Date: _____	

Fax to one of these numbers: 703-693-5527 or 1-800-368-8683 or Email to ets@fvap.ncr.gov

Federal Voting Assistance Program Use Only – DO NOT Complete this Section:

Date Received: _____ Time Received: _____
Date Sent: _____ Time Sent: _____
Transaction Number: _____ Processed by: _____