



Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot

FACT SHEET

**Wherever U.S. citizens go,
FVAP ensures their voice is 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.

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB, SF 186) is for use by Service members, their eligible family members living outside their voting jurisdiction and U.S. citizens residing overseas. This write-in absentee ballot can be used as a backup when you are living outside your voting residence, have applied for a regular State ballot through the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA, SF 76) and have not received the requested State ballot in time to vote by the election deadline.

When to submit your FWAB

If you have registered to vote and requested your absentee ballot by the State's deadline but have not received your regular State ballot within 30 days of the election, or longer if you are living in an area where mail delivery is not reliable, FVAP recommends submitting the FWAB as a backup. If you receive your State ballot after submitting the FWAB, vote and return it as well. If both your State ballot and your FWAB are received by the deadline, only your State ballot will be counted.

NOTE: Some States allow you to use the FWAB for registration if you did not submit an FPCA. For information about your State's requirements, visit FVAP.gov/FWAB.

Where to get a FWAB

FVAP provides an online FWAB assistant to walk you through the form and provide you with applicable candidate names for Federal offices. Simply select your State from the drop-down and choose "Get My Ballot Now" or "Get My Backup Ballot" to begin. Once completed, do not forget to print and sign the form before submitting it to your local election office.

For your convenience, the most current FWAB available may be printed out at FVAP.gov. Forms are also available in hardcopy at military installations, U.S. embassies and consulates. If you only have an older hardcopy version of the form, please use it in conjunction with your current State guidelines.





Will my FWAB be counted?



All FWABs submitted according to State rules will be processed. However, here are the most common reasons for rejection:

- **Illegible handwriting.** If you prefer to type your information, you may complete the FWAB form online and print it out.
- **No signature.** Don't forget to sign and date your completed FWAB before mailing to your local election office.
- **No ballot request on file.** Ballot requests can be made using an FPCA. Not all States require you to first submit an FPCA.*
- **Transmitted in a manner not allowed by State law.** Some States accept an emailed or faxed FWAB, while others require a hardcopy.*
- **Received after the deadline.** Deadlines vary by State.*
- **Not witnessed.** Some States require witness signatures.*
- **Voter signatures on file don't match the submitted ballot.**
- **Not filled out completely or accurately.** Look over your completed FWAB to ensure you have provided all the information required by your State, including a complete voting residence address (P.O. Box addresses are not valid).

*Specific State requirements at FVAP.gov/FWAB.

Cast your ballot by submitting a completed FWAB

The FWAB has two distinct sections: (1) the Voter's Declaration/Affirmation, which serves to identify and authenticate you with the local election official processing the form and (2) the ballot and security envelope, which allow you to make your selections and keep those choices secret. For the hardcopy or online version of the FWAB, both the Declaration/Affirmation and security envelope (with voted ballot inside) are mailed to your election official.

Step 1: Complete and Sign



- Complete one of two versions of the official Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot: (1) hardcopy or (2) PDF version from the online FWAB assistant or fillable form.*



- Complete and sign the attached Voter's Declaration/Affirmation form.

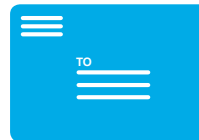
Step 2: Seal



- Place the ballot portion of the FWAB in a sealed security envelope. This comes attached to the hardcopy version, but if you are using a PDF version you must find a blank envelope and label it "Security Envelope."

- Place the Voter's Declaration/Affirmation form and the sealed security envelope in a larger mailing envelope. This comes attached to the hardcopy version, but you must provide one yourself if using a PDF version.

Step 3: Fill Out Envelope



- In the upper left corner, enter your current mailing address and the date of the election in which you just voted.
- Under "To," enter the name and mailing address of the local election office* to which you are sending the packet.

Step 4: Postage

- **Within the U.S.:** The form is postage paid in U.S. mail. This information is included on the hardcopy version's mailing envelope and an envelope template can be downloaded at FVAP.gov if you are using a PDF version.
- **Outside of the U.S.:** The form is postage paid in U.S. mail, including APO/FPO and diplomatic pouches. If using foreign postal systems, put the correct amount of local postage on the front of the envelope, in the top right corner.

*For information about your State's requirements, how to transmit the form and how to contact your election official, visit FVAP.gov/FWAB.

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
[Facebook.com/DoDFVAP](https://www.facebook.com/DoDFVAP) and [Twitter @FVAP](https://twitter.com/FVAP)