



March 9, 2017



Contact: 800-438-VOTE

Email: [Vote@FVAP.gov](mailto:Vote@FVAP.gov)

## **FVAP is Updating the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot – We Need Your Input!**

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ALEXANDRIA, Va. – The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) (SF 186) is being updated for the 2018 election cycle. The draft form is available for your review via the Federal Register at [Regulations.gov](http://Regulations.gov), along with the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA).

The *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* requires that the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) prescribe two standard federal forms. Both forms require review and public comment every three years. The FWAB serves as a backup ballot if the voter doesn't receive a requested ballot in time. The other prescribed form, the FPCA (SF-76), can be used to register to vote, request an absentee ballot and update contact information.

To develop the current draft of the FWAB, FVAP leveraged an iterative process of expert design input, information gathering and testing with election officials, stakeholders and voters. The form should reflect plain language standards (wherever possible), have simplified instructions, and be structured coherently. The general design utilizes intuitive “who I am,” “where I am from,” and “where I am now” information sections to be completed before signing. A listing of significant changes and rationale are provided below.

FVAP's work with design experts and usability testing led to these draft changes:

- Redesigned the printed FWAB structure to eliminate the Security Envelope. The draft ballot portion folds in half and seals using self-adhesive strips.
- Removed Witness Signature box. When necessary, witnesses should sign in the space provided for additional information.
- Updated section headings that reflect intuitive descriptions to help the voter complete the forms (i.e., “classification” changed to “Who are you?”; “voting residence address” changed to “What is your address in the State or territory where you are registering to vote or requesting a ballot?”).
- Added list of States that accept the FWAB as an absentee ballot request and require full SSN or additional information. This change is based on usability findings that showed voters do not look up State-specific information unless directed to do so.
- Removed the request for Race, as it is not a *UOCAVA* or State requirement.
- Removed the request for Sex, as it is not a *UOCAVA* or State requirement.
- Simplified the choice for blank ballot receipt transmission by changing the rank-order preference to checkboxes; test groups found the ranking option confusing.
- Implemented visual cues, including larger text and color, to clarify form completion and submission process.

Form usability is an essential part of the redesign process. To help ensure the form is easy and intuitive from a voter's perspective, please download and complete it as if you were registering to vote or requesting an absentee ballot. Provide usability comments via the links below.



**To view the Federal Register Notice:**

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/03/08/2017-04521/proposed-collection-comment-request>

**To view the Draft Form:**

<https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=DOD-2017-OS-0011-0001>

**To submit comments and suggestions online:** Comments and usability feedback should be submitted on the Federal eRulemaking Portal using the links above or <http://www.regulations.gov> by May 8, 2017.

**Submit comments and usability feedback by mail at the address below by May 8, 2017:**

Department of Defense  
Office of the Deputy Chief Management Officer  
Directorate for Oversight and Compliance  
Regulatory and Advisory Committee Division  
4800 Mark Center Drive  
Mailbox #24, Suite 08D09B  
Alexandria, VA 22350-1700.

The FPCA is available for public comment until May 1; more information is available at <https://www.fvap.gov/info/news/2017/3/1/fvap-is-updating-the-fpca-and-wants-your-input>.

Please do not send comments directly to FVAP.

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For more information on FVAP or assistance with the absentee voting process, visit [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov), call 1-800-438-VOTE or DSN 425-1584 (CONUS)/312-425-1584 (OCONUS) or email [vote@fvap.gov](mailto:vote@fvap.gov).

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) is a Department of Defense (DoD) organization that 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.

FVAP assists voters through partnerships with the Military Services, Department of State, Department of Justice, and election officials from the 50 States, U.S. territories and the District of Columbia. State and local governments administer U.S. elections, including those for federal offices. FVAP supports State and local election officials by providing absentee voting information, materials, training and guidance.