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FVAP Releases Improved Absentee Voting Forms

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – In preparation for the 2018 election cycle, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) updated the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB). Service members, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens may use the FPCA to register to vote, request absentee ballots, and update contact information. If they do not receive their requested absentee ballot from their State, they can vote using the FWAB as a backup ballot.

The *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* requires FVAP to prescribe both standard forms, which are accepted by all States and territories in elections for federal office. Both forms require review and public comment every three years. The forms are available at FVAP.gov, and through an online assistant for completing them. While voters also have the option of using other types of absentee ballot request forms, these forms may not grant the same protections that *UOCAVA* ensures, such as the option to receive their blank ballot electronically and the requirement for election offices to send ballots to voters at least 45 days before elections for federal office.

To develop the new forms, FVAP leveraged an iterative process of expert design input, information gathering and testing with election officials, voters, and other stakeholders. Thanks to these efforts and the feedback received during public comment periods through the Federal Register, the forms have been improved with easier-to-understand instructions and visual cues, including larger text and color, to simplify form completion and clarify the submission process.

“This was by no means a solitary effort – the improved forms are products of stakeholder collaboration, usability testing, and valuable input from the public. I thank everyone who took the time to provide insight, and I hope you can see your efforts reflected in the updated forms,” FVAP Director David Beirne said. “These forms represent the latest example of FVAP’s dedication to continuous process improvement and applied research to increase the opportunity for our military, their families, and overseas citizens to successfully cast an absentee ballot.”

FVAP recommends voters submit a new FPCA in January of every year and each time they move, and to use the FWAB if they haven’t received their ballot from their State in time to return it by the election deadline.

- The FPCA and FWAB can be completed using an online assistant at www.fvap.gov/military-voter/registration-ballots.
- Download the fillable FPCA at www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Forms/fpca.pdf
- Download the fillable FWAB at www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Forms/fwab.pdf



Summary of Changes

- 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?”).
- Removed Witness Signature box. On the FPCA, no State requires a witness; on the FWAB, the “additional information” section is used for the four States requiring witness signature(s).
- Added list of States that require additional information. This change was 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* 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 simplify form completion and clarify the submission process.
- Redesigned the printed FWAB structure to eliminate the Security Envelope. The ballot portion folds in half and seals using self-adhesive strips.

Important Information for Voting Assistance Officers

Voting Assistance Officers should send voters to FVAP.gov whenever possible to use the online assistant or access the fillable-PDF forms. Hardcopy forms will NOT be available until later this year. Please wait until you receive additional guidance to order the hardcopy forms through your proper Service channels.

Please update your communications and materials with links to the new forms (as applicable).

Do not distribute old versions of the forms to voters; however, if a voter has obtained an older form, he or she may still use it, based on current State requirements and contact information.

Overseas citizen groups should encourage voters to use the online assistant, but can contact FVAP directly to acquire hardcopy forms later this year.

Important Information for Election Officials

Election officials should begin accepting the new forms while continuing to accept previous editions of the forms. While the forms include the statement, “Previous editions are obsolete,” it is in reference to Federal printing requirements through the General Services Administration (GSA) only and not related to voter use, or election official processing, of the forms.

Please update your communications and materials with links to the new forms (as applicable).

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Federal Voting Assistance Program

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.

Voters can contact FVAP's call center at 703-588-1584 (toll free 1-800-438-VOTE or DSN 425-1584) or at vote@fvap.gov. Toll-free phone numbers from 67 countries are listed at FVAP.gov. Find FVAP on Facebook at www.facebook.com/DoDFVAP and follow [@FVAP](https://twitter.com/FVAP) on Twitter.