

AN FVAP UPDATE

OCTOBER 2017



OUR NEW FORMS ARE READY

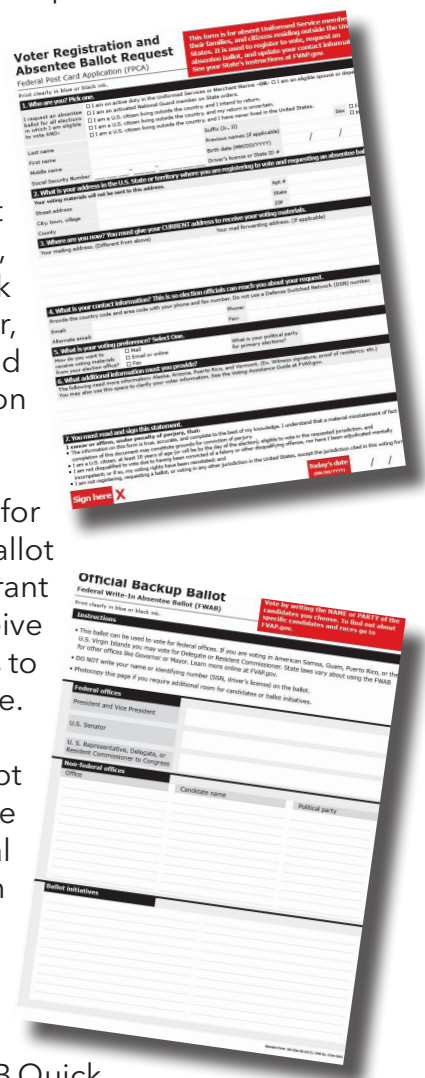
In preparation for the 2018 election cycle, we have updated the [Federal Post Card Application \(FPCA, SF-76\)](#) and [Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot \(FWAB, SF-186\)](#). Service members, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens may use the FPCA to register to vote, request absentee ballots, 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 the federal 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. 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.

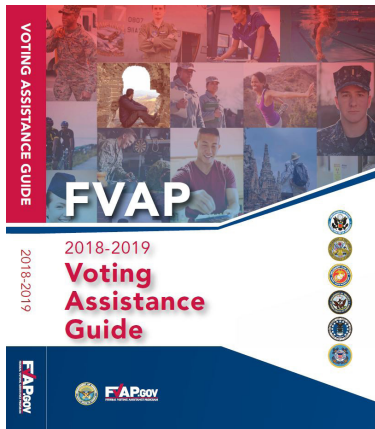
The forms are available at FVAP.gov, and through an online assistant for completing them. While voters have the option of using absentee ballot request forms from States or other sources, these forms may not grant the same protections that *UOCAVA* ensures, such as the option to receive their blank ballot electronically and the requirement for election offices to send ballots to voters at least 45 days before elections for federal office.

Election officials should accept the new forms while continuing to accept and process 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 be sure your links to the forms in your communications and materials are up-to-date. We have also posted updated FPCA and FWAB Quick Reference Guides for your use at <https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/FPCA-FWAB-qrq.pdf>.



VOTING ASSISTANCE GUIDE COMPLETION



The 2018-2019 Voting Assistance Guide, which incorporates the new form designs, is at the printer and will be distributed to Voting Assistance Officers in December. The Guide features specific absentee voting information for each State and territory, making it a critical resource for Voting Assistance Officers worldwide to help voters complete the absentee voting process. Additionally, we've incorporated all the new information collected during the coordination process into FVAP.gov, making it another invaluable resource for voters, election officials, and Voting Assistance Officers. Post-election data continue to show that the Guide is a valuable resource for Voting Assistance Officers who provide direct support to our military and overseas voters.

Thank you for working with FVAP staff during the development and coordination processes to ensure your State rules and guidelines are accurate and up-to-date for UOCAVA voters. We understand it is often hard to condense your State's absentee voting guidelines into the standardized, plain language; but the result is well worth the effort as voters and those who assist them can better understand the process to successfully cast an absentee ballot.

Your State's updated Guide information is now available at FVAP.gov.

2018 UOCAVA ADDRESS MAINTENANCE

Did you know FVAP.gov provides mailing guidelines, tips for creating election mail, and postage-paid indicia templates? Take advantage of these resources FVAP creates specifically for you! We've also added new recommendations for UOCAVA address maintenance! You can access it from the [Sending Ballots page](#) or directly at www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/EO/UOCAVAAddressMaintenance_20171016_final.pdf

2018 VOTING ASSISTANCE OFFICER TRAINING

Per UOCAVA, FVAP conducts trainings for Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) at military installations, consulates, and embassies worldwide every federal election year. As we did in 2016, FVAP will invite local election officials from the surrounding areas where we'll be hosting a training so that VAOs can hear directly from election officials and those election officials can see and hear firsthand the obstacles and concerns of our uniformed voters. This is also a great opportunity for any new election staff, either at a State or local level, to learn more about the UOCAVA absentee voting process. Be on the lookout for your State Analyst, either Nate Bacchus or Meghan Kelly, to email you with locations and dates.

BEST PRACTICE TIP

At the Texas Annual Elections seminar in Austin, TX, a great discussion took place about supporting UOCAVA voters by using a generic email box instead of an address linked to an individual staff member.

When creating a generic UOCAVA email box, add an automatic reply so the voter knows right away that their election materials were received for processing and not sent to a spam folder. Also, be sure to schedule a regular check of your spam folders to catch any emails from military voters with a .mil email address or from an overseas Internet Service Provider that were flagged as spam.