

# Chapter 1

## HOW TO VOTE ABSENTEE



### Can You Vote Absentee?

In order to vote in U.S. elections, you must be:

- a citizen of the United States on the date of the election in which you wish to vote, and
- at least 18 years old on Election Day. (Some States allow 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections if they will be 18 on or before the general election.)

The absentee voting process in this book applies to you if you are:

- an active duty member of the U.S. Uniformed Services or Merchant Marine,
- a family member (spouse or dependent)
- a U.S. citizen residing outside the U.S.

States that have adopted the *Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act (UMOVA)* has expanded the definition of Uniformed Services to include members of the National Guard. It also included U.S. citizens born abroad who have not established a voting residency in the United States. This is in addition to other States that provide this coverage. UMOVA and State information confirming the eligibility of National Guard members, U.S. citizens born abroad who have not established a voting residency in the United States and other U.S. citizens traveling abroad or temporarily living overseas, is available in the State pages in Chapter 2.

If you are not one of the above but will be away from your polling place on Election Day, you may still be able to vote absentee according to your State's absentee voting guidelines. Contact your election office or check your State election website for more information. State websites and local election office addresses are available in your State's pages in Chapter 2.

### How Do You Vote Absentee?

#### Step 1: Register and Request Your Absentee Ballot

You must register and request an absentee ballot in your State of legal residence by completing a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) according to your State or territory's

specific instructions and submitting it to your local election office.

In most States and territories, one FPCA can be used to request ballots for primary and general elections for Federal offices (President/Vice President, U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, Delegate or Resident Commissioner). You should submit a new FPCA each year and whenever you change your mailing address.

The FPCA:

- can be completed using our automated assistant at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov), along with a pre-paid envelope template for submitting by mail.
- is available at military bases, U.S. embassies and consulates, election organizations, and corporations worldwide.
- is postage-paid within the U.S. postal system, including APO and FPO addresses, and through diplomatic pouches at some U.S. embassies and consulates. If submitting the FPCA from outside the United States using a foreign mail service, you must affix proper postage and include "USA" in the mailing address.
- may be sent using private courier services. However, they may not deliver to Post Office Boxes and may require the physical address of your local election office.

Many States and territories allow you to return your FPCA by email or fax. Consult your State's pages in Chapter 2 to see what your State allows.

The FPCA and mailing instructions are illustrated on pages 4-5.

#### Step 2: Your Election Official Processes Your Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and Sends You a Blank Ballot

Your local election official will process your FPCA to determine if you meet the jurisdiction's residency requirements and will decide which ballot to send you. Your local election official will contact you if there are any questions or if your application has been denied. Therefore, it is important to provide your complete contact information, including your email address, on your FPCA.

You should contact your local election office with questions on the status of your FPCA. Some States have voter registration verification websites where you can find your voter registration status. Links to these sites and contact information for local election officials can be found at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

### Step 3: Vote Your State Ballot or Use the Back-Up Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)

Vote and return your State ballot as soon as you receive it. If you have registered and requested your ballot by your State's request deadline (or at least 30 days before the election, whichever is later), you may use the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB) any time before the election.

Your completed FWAB must be received by your local election office by the deadline for receipt of State absentee ballots for that election.

In most cases you can only use the FWAB to vote for Federal offices. Some States have expanded the use of the FWAB to include voting for offices other than Federal offices. Some States have also expanded the use of the FWAB for registration and ballot request. Consult your State's pages in Chapter 2 to see what your State allows.

The FWAB consists of:

- Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot Instructions
- Voter's Declaration/Affirmation
- Official Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot with Security Envelope attached
- Mailing Envelope

To complete your FWAB, follow your State's instructions in Chapter 2. Once finished, place your voted ballot inside the security envelope and seal it. Do not write on the outside of the security envelope. Place the security envelope, along with the Voter's Declaration/Affirmation, inside the mailing envelope.

The FWAB:

- can be completed using our automated assistant at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov), along with a pre-paid envelope template for submitting by mail.
- is available in a fillable PDF form at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). This version of the FWAB does not contain the security or the mailing envelope; however, you may use two plain envelopes: mark one as the security envelope and use the other as a mailing envelope. You may use the online prepaid envelope template as the mailing envelope.
- is available at military bases, U.S. embassies and consulates, election organizations, and corporations worldwide.

- is postage-paid within the U.S. postal system, including APO and FPO addresses and through diplomatic pouches at some U.S. embassies and consulates. If submitting the FWAB from outside the United States using a foreign mail service, you must affix proper postage and include "USA" in the mailing address.
- may be sent using private courier services. However, they may not deliver to Post Office Boxes and may require the physical address of your local election office.

Many States and territories allow you to return your FWAB by email or fax. Consult your State's pages in Chapter 2 to see what your State allows.

If you receive your State absentee ballot after you have submitted the FWAB, you should vote and return that ballot immediately. If the State absentee ballot arrives by your State's deadline, the State will count that ballot instead of the FWAB.

The FWAB and mailing instructions are illustrated on pages 6-9.

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## Can You Email or Fax Your Voting Materials?

All States allow you to receive the blank absentee ballot by email, fax, or other electronic means. Some States also allow other methods of electronic transmission, including:

- sending the FPCA for registration and/or absentee ballot request by email or fax,
- receive the blank absentee ballot by email or fax,
- a combination of the above.

Any other written correspondence involving voter registration or elections may be emailed or faxed to local election officials in any State.

### Sending the FPCA by Email or Fax

Where allowed by State law, you may email or fax the FPCA to your local election official. Follow the steps below:

- Complete and sign the FPCA according to your State's requirements in Chapter 2.
- Complete the Electronic Transmission Sheet included at the end of this chapter (or an alternate cover sheet containing similar information).
- Emailing: Scan the FPCA and save as a PDF file. Email the file as an attachment, along with a scanned copy of the Electronic Transmission Sheet. Email directly to the local election office. Email addresses can be found on the State's election website, available in the State's pages in Chapter 2 or at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

You may also use the Electronic Transmission Service to email your FPCA by sending it to [ets@fvap.gov](mailto:ets@fvap.gov).

- Faxing: Use a separate transmittal sheet for each FPCA and send each form separately to ensure that each form is received by the proper election official. It is recommended that you fax the FPCA directly to your local election office. Fax numbers can be found on the State's election website, available in the State's pages in Chapter 2. You may also use the Electronic Transmission Service to fax your FPCA toll-free. To use the Electronic Transmission Service, use the cover sheet at the end of this chapter or at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov), and fax to: (703) 693-5527, DSN 223-5527, or toll-free from the U.S., Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands to 1-800-368-8683. International toll-free numbers can be found on the inside back cover or at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).
- After emailing or faxing, your State may require that you also mail the completed FPCA to your local election office. Consult your State's pages in Chapter 2 under "How and Where to Submit Your FPCA" to see what your State requires.

### Receiving the Blank Ballot by Email or Fax

The State must provide the blank ballot by electronic means when requested. Check [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) or Chapter Two of this Guide to see blank ballot transmission methods are available from your state (online, email or fax).

### Returning the Voted Absentee Ballot by Email or Fax

Where allowed by State law, the voted ballot may be emailed or faxed. Follow the steps below:

- Follow the instructions provided by the local election official in marking and executing your ballot.
- By emailing or faxing the voted ballot, you are waiving the right to secrecy of the ballot. You must sign and date a statement on the Electronic Transmission Sheet indicating, "I understand that by faxing or emailing my voted ballot I am voluntarily waiving my right to a secret ballot."
- Complete the Electronic Transmission Sheet included at the end of this chapter (or an alternate cover sheet containing similar information). Include the number of pages being transmitted for each voted ballot. Retain a receipt of the date and time the voted ballot was successfully transmitted.
- Emailing: Scan all pages of the ballot and save as a PDF file. Email the file as an attachment along with a scanned copy of the Electronic Transmission Sheet.

Email directly to the local election office. Email addresses can be found on the State's election website, available in the State's pages in Chapter 2 or at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). You may also use the Electronic Transmission Service to email your FPCA by sending it to [ets@fvap.gov](mailto:ets@fvap.gov).

- Faxing: Fax all pages of the voted ballot. Use a separate transmittal sheet for each ballot and send each ballot separately to ensure that each ballot is received by the proper election official. It is recommended that you fax the ballot directly to your local election office. Fax numbers can be found on the State's election website, available in the State's pages in Chapter 2. You may also use the Electronic Transmission Service to fax your ballot toll-free. To use the Electronic Transmission Service, use the cover sheet at the end of this chapter or at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov), and fax to: (703) 693-5527, DSN 223-5527, or toll-free from the U.S., Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands to 1-800-368-8683. International toll-free numbers can be found on the inside back cover or at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).
- After emailing or faxing, your State may require that you also mail the completed ballot to your local election office. Consult your State's pages in Chapter 2 under "How and Where to Submit Your FWAB" to see what your State requires.

### Received Your Ballot Electronically, but Need to Return it by Mail?

If your State does not allow you to return your voted ballot by email or fax, you may mail it using the security envelope and ballot transmittal envelope from the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB). Detach the envelopes from the rest of the form. (See FWAB Mailing Instructions on the previous page.) You may also use two plain envelopes: mark one as the security envelope and use the other as the mailing envelope. You may use the prepaid envelope template at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov) as the mailing envelope.

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## Recommended Mailing Dates for the November 2012 General Election

Send your FPCA by August 15, 2012 to ensure that you receive your ballot in time to vote and return it to be counted.

- Voters in Iraq, Afghanistan, ships at sea, and other overseas locations without access to the military postal system should send voted ballots by October 6, 2012

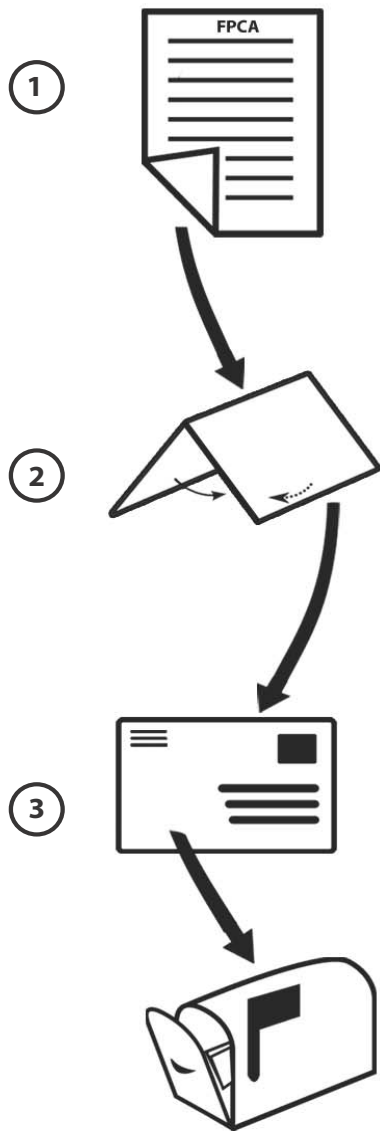
- Voters in other overseas military installations should send voted ballots by October 13, 2012
- Stateside Uniformed Service members and their families should send voted ballots by October 29, 2012.

If you do not receive your State absentee ballot by October 2, 2012, use the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot. If you receive your State absentee ballot, vote and return it. If both ballots are received by the deadline, only the State ballot will be counted.

On the following pages, you will find the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB), and the Electronic Transmission Sheet.

You can also find the automated versions of FPCA and the FWAB at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

# FPCA Mailing Instructions



## Step 1

Complete and sign the FPCA using your State's instruction in Chapter 2.

## Step 2

Fold and seal your FPCA.

If using the online FPCA, print, sign and put it in an envelope. You may print postage-paid insignia on your envelope by using the envelope template available at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

## Step 3

Address and mail the FPCA to your local election official. Be sure to include your return address, and affix postage if using a foreign postal service.

***Notify Your Local Election Official About Your Current Mailing Address***

# Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) Voter Registration and Absentee Ballot Request

A quicker, easier to complete, electronic version of this form is also available on **FVAP.gov**. For any questions about this form, consult your Voting Assistance Officer or the Voting Assistance Guide available in hard copy or on **FVAP.gov**. Please print in black ink.

<p><b>Classification</b> Make only 1 selection.  (In most States, you must be absent from your voting district to use this form).</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>I request an absentee ballot for all elections in which I am eligible to vote <b>AND</b>:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am a member of the Uniformed Services or Merchant Marine on active duty <b>OR</b> <input type="checkbox"/> I am their spouse or dependent.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am a U.S. citizen residing outside the U.S., and I intend to return.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am a U.S. citizen residing outside the U.S., and I do not intend to return.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am a U.S. citizen otherwise granted military/overseas voting rights under State law (check the Voting Assistance Guide).</p>
<p><b>Political Party</b></p>	<p>2</p>	<p>To vote in primary elections, your State may require you to specify a political party: _____</p>
<p><b>Your legal name</b></p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Last name _____ Suffix _____</p> <p>First name _____ Middle name _____</p> <p>Previous name (if applicable) _____</p>
<p><b>Identification</b> Some States require your full SSN. Check your State's pages in the Voting Assistance Guide on <b>FVAP.gov</b>.</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>Sex <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F Race See instructions on back Birth date M M / D D / Y Y Y Y</p> <p>State Driver's License or ID _____</p> <p><b>OR</b> Social Security Number _____</p>
<p><b>Contact information</b> Include international prefixes. No DSN number.</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>Telephone _____</p> <p>Fax _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p>Alternate Email _____</p>
<p><b>Ballot receipt</b></p>	<p>6</p>	<p>I prefer to receive my ballot, as permitted by my State, by: <input type="checkbox"/> Email/Online <input type="checkbox"/> Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Fax (rank from 1 -3 in order of preference; be sure appropriate contact information is provided above)</p>
<p><b>U.S. address for voting purposes</b> Usually your last U.S. residence or your legal U.S. residence. See instructions.</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>Street Address (not P.O. Box) _____ Apt. # _____</p> <p>City/Town/Village _____</p> <p>County _____ State _____ Zip Code _____</p>
<p><b>Address where you live now</b>  This is different from above. Your voting materials will be sent here, unless you specify a forwarding address in Box 9.</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>Additional requirements for your State</b>  Such as: mail forwarding address, additional phone, or other State required information. See your State's pages in the Voting Assistance Guide on <b>FVAP.gov</b>.</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

**Affirmation (REQUIRED):** I swear or affirm, under penalty of perjury, that:

- I am a member of the Uniformed Services or Merchant Marine on active duty or an eligible spouse or dependent of such a member, or a U.S. citizen temporarily residing outside the U.S., or other U.S. citizen residing outside the U.S.
- I am a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years of age (or will be by the day of the election), eligible to vote in the requested jurisdiction.
- I have not been convicted of a felony or other disqualifying offense or been adjudicated mentally incompetent, or if so, my voting rights have been reinstated.
- I am not registering, requesting a ballot, or voting in any other jurisdiction in the U.S.
- My signature and date herein indicate when I completed this document.
- The information on this form is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that a material misstatement of fact in completion of this document may constitute grounds for conviction of perjury.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Print this form, sign, and send in.

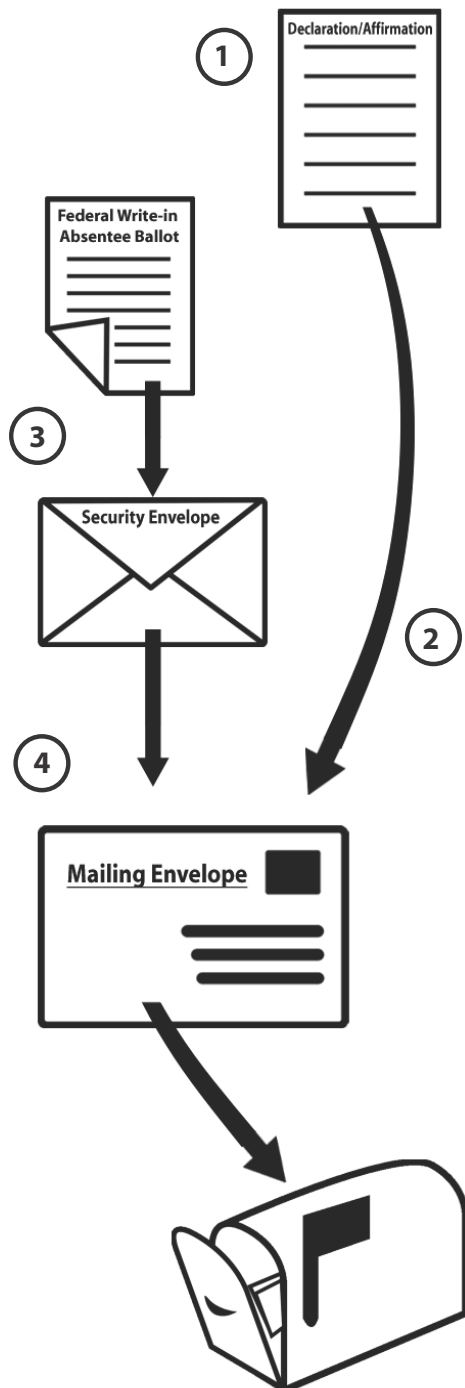
Today's date M M / D D / Y Y Y Y

Witness signature / date if required by your State.  
See the Voting Assistance Guide on FVAP.gov.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# FWAB Mailing Instructions



## Step 1

Complete and sign the FWAB's Voter Declaration/Affirmation using your State's instructions in Chapter 2.

## Step 2

Fold the Voter Declaration/Affirmation and put it in the accompanying Mailing Envelope. Do not seal the envelope yet.

If using the online FWAB, use your own envelope as the Mailing Envelope. You may print postage-paid insignia on your envelope by using the envelope template available at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

## Step 3

Vote the ballot by writing in a candidate or party name. Detach the ballot from the Security Envelope, fold it, insert it into the Security Envelope, and seal.

If using the online FWAB, use a separate blank envelope and write "Security Envelope" on it.

## Step 4

Put the Security Envelope into the Mailing Envelope, seal, and address it to your local election official. Be sure to include your return address, and affix postage if using a foreign postal service.

# Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB) Voter's Declaration/Affirmation

A quicker, easier to complete, electronic version of this form is also available on **FVAP.gov**. For any questions about this form, consult your Voting Assistance Officer or the Voting Assistance Guide available in hard copy or on **FVAP.gov**.  
Please print in black ink.

<b>Qualifications &amp; Voter Registration</b> Many States require that you be registered and request an absentee ballot before using this form.	1	Have you already registered and requested an absentee ballot? <span style="float:right;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</span> If you answer No, you can do this via the Federal Post Card Application on <b>FVAP.gov</b> , or in a few States, by marking the box below. Check your State's pages in the Voting Assistance Guide on <b>FVAP.gov</b> to see if your State allows registration via this form. <input type="checkbox"/> I also want to register to vote and/or request an absentee ballot for all elections in which I am eligible to vote.
<b>Classification</b> Make only 1 selection.	2	<input type="checkbox"/> I am a member of the Uniformed Services or Merchant Marine on active duty <b>OR</b> <input type="checkbox"/> I am their spouse or dependent. <input type="checkbox"/> I am a U.S. citizen residing outside the U.S., and I intend to return. <input type="checkbox"/> I am a U.S. citizen residing outside the U.S., and I do not intend to return. <input type="checkbox"/> I am a U.S. citizen otherwise granted military/overseas voting rights under State law (check the Voting Assistance Guide).
<b>Your legal name</b>	3	Last name _____ Suffix _____ First name _____ Middle name _____ Previous name (if applicable) _____
<b>Identification</b> Some States require your full SSN. Check your State's pages in the Voting Assistance Guide on <b>FVAP.gov</b>	4	Sex <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F      Race <u>                    </u> See Instructions      Birth date <u>  M  </u> <u>  M  </u> / <u>  D  </u> <u>  D  </u> / <u>  Y  </u> <u>  Y  </u> <u>  Y  </u> <u>  Y  </u> State Driver's License or I.D. _____ <b>OR</b> Social Security Number <u>  </u> <u>  </u> - <u>  </u> <u>  </u> - <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u>
<b>Contact information</b> Include international prefixes. No DSN number.	5	Telephone _____ Fax _____ Email _____ Alternate Email _____
<b>Political party</b>	6	To vote in primary elections, your State may require you to specify a political party. _____
<b>U.S. address for voting purposes</b> Usually your last U.S. residence or your legal U.S. residence. See instructions.	7	Street Address (not P.O. Box) _____ Apt. # _____ City/Town/Village _____ County _____ State <u>  </u> <u>  </u> Zip Code <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u> - <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u>
<b>Address where you live now</b> This is different from above. Your voting materials will be sent here, unless you specify a forwarding address in Box 9.	8	_____ _____ _____ _____
<b>Additional requirements from your State</b> Such as: mail forwarding address, additional phone, or other State required information. See your State's pages in the Voting Assistance Guide on <b>FVAP.gov</b>	9	_____ _____ _____ _____

**Affirmation (REQUIRED):** I swear or affirm, under penalty of perjury, that:

• I am a member of the Uniformed Services or Merchant Marine on active duty or an eligible spouse or dependent of such a member, or a U.S. citizen temporarily residing outside the U.S., or other U.S. citizen residing outside the U.S., and • I am a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years of age (or will be by the day of the election), eligible to vote in the requested jurisdiction, and • I have not been convicted of a felony or other disqualifying offense or been adjudicated mentally incompetent, or if so, my voting rights have been reinstated, and • I am not registering, requesting a ballot, or voting in any other jurisdiction in the U.S., and • My application for a regular absentee ballot was mailed in time to be received by the local election official 30 days prior to this election, or the State deadline, whichever is later, and • I have not received the requested ballot, and • I understand that if my regular absentee ballot is received by the local election official in time to be counted, that ballot will be counted and this write-in ballot will be voided, and • I have voted and sealed this ballot in private and have not allowed any person to observe the marking of this ballot, except for those authorized to assist voters under State or Federal law and I have not been influenced, and • I am a Uniformed Services member, or dependent, who is absent from my voting jurisdiction, or I am an overseas citizen and have submitted this ballot from outside the U.S., or my State has made special provisions to allow me to mail this ballot inside the U.S., and • My signature and date herein indicate when I completed this document, and • The information on this form is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that a material misstatement of fact in completion of this document may constitute grounds for conviction of perjury.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Print this form, sign, and send in.  
 Today's Date   M     M   /   D     D   /   Y     Y     Y     Y  

Witness signature / date if required by your State.  
See Voting Assistance Guide on FVAP.gov

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_







**Changes in the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)**

<b><u>2005 Version</u></b>	<b><u>Information</u></b>	<b><u>2011 Version</u></b>
Block 1	Voter Classification	Block 1
Block 2	My Information	Blocks 3, 4, and 5
Block 3	Voting Address	Block 7
Block 4	Mailing Address	Block 8
Block 5	Political Party Affiliation	Block 2
Block 6	Additional Requirements	Block 9
Block 7	Affirmation	Affirmation Section
N/A	How to Receive Your Ballot	Block 6

**Changes in the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB)**

<b><u>2005 Version</u></b>	<b><u>Information</u></b>	<b><u>2011 Version</u></b>
Block 1	Voter Classification	Blocks 1, 2
Block 2	My Information	Blocks 3, 4, and 5
Block 3	Voting Address	Block 7
Block 4	Mailing Address	Block 8
Block 5	Political Party Affiliation	Block 6
Block 6	Additional Requirements	Block 9
Block 7	Affirmation	Affirmation Section

The version date of a form is located next to its Standard Form number. The 2005 forms are still valid. If you have any version of any forms other than the 2005 or 2011 versions, they are obsolete and should be discarded. If you need to order new forms, please refer to the instructions beginning on page 360.



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

<b>To:</b>	
City/County Board of Elections	
Fax Number	
City	
State	

<b>From:</b>	
Last Name	
First Name	
Middle Name	
Telephone Number	
Fax Number	
Email Address	

<b>Additional Information:</b>	

<p>If a <b>VOTED BALLOT</b> is being faxed or emailed, sign below:                  “I understand that by faxing or emailing my voted ballot I am voluntarily waiving my right to a secret ballot”</p> <p>Signature: _____ Date: _____</p>
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**Number of pages being transmitted, including this sheet:** \_\_\_\_\_

Fax to one of these numbers: 703-693-5527/DSN 223-5527 or 1-800-368-8683 or  
 Check [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov) for international fax numbers  
 Email to [ets@fvap.gov](mailto:ets@fvap.gov)