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**Defense Department's annual Absentee-Ballot Awareness Week runs this week**

Fort Knox, Ky. — This week marks absentee-voting week, a week when the U.S. Army and the Defense Department encourage all absentee voters to mail their ballots to the states they consider their home states or states of residency. National Absentee-Ballot Awareness Week is technically more than a week to account for a weekend. It runs Sept. 27 through Oct. 4.

If voters haven't received that their states' absentee ballots, they should complete federal write-in absentee ballots so they can arrive in time to be counted, according to Lt. Col. Michael Bell, chief of the Soldier Programs Branch at the U.S. Army Human Resources Command.

"Historically, the Army voting program has done well on IG [Inspector General] inspections and [other inspections]," Bell said. "The program is supposed to educate, inform and provide resources necessary for Soldiers, family members and civilians to exercise their right to vote. Efforts have been ongoing since the spring to ensure we have [VAOs \[voting assistance officers\]](#) trained and they have the forms necessary to assist their Soldiers.

"VAOs should have the 2010 voting guide from the [Federal Voting Assistance Program \(FVAP\)](#)," Bell continued, "which has extensive information about each state's absentee mailing deadlines. This is a DoD program, not Army specific.

"All states are different; all have state laws governing the execution of elections for that state," Bell said. "All states must accept the federal absentee ballot. All absentee voters are to mail their ballots to their states [of legal residency]. If voters have not received their states' absentee ballot, they should complete the FWAB [Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot] so it can arrive in time to be counted. If, subsequently, both ballots are received, local election officials have provisions in place to ensure only one ballot is counted.

"Eligible voters should contact their unit VAO to ensure they know when their ballots must be received by their states," he said.

All Army units have voting assistance officers. There are more than 67,000 VAOs in the Army. For more information, contact [Rachel Gilman](#) of the HRC Voting Assistance Office at (502) 613-8468.

For more information about U.S. Army Human Resources Command, visit: [www.hrc.army.mil](http://www.hrc.army.mil)

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