



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

UNITED STATES
OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, DC 20415-1000

October 27, 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM: KAY COLES JAMES
Director

SUBJECT: Excused Absence for Voting

As the Office of Personnel Management has done traditionally, this memorandum is to provide agencies with information on the Federal Government's longstanding policy of granting employees limited time off from work (i.e., excused absence) to vote in Federal, State, county, or municipal elections or in referendums on any civic matter in their community. Agencies have discretionary authority to grant excused absence to the extent that such time off does not interfere with agency operations. **Typically, polling places throughout the United States are open for extended periods of time. Therefore, excused absence should rarely be needed.** Agencies should consider the following guidelines when granting excused absence for voting in the Presidential election on November 2, 2004:

Granting Excused Absence for Voting

Generally, where the polls are not open at least 3 hours either before or after an employee's regular work hours, an agency may grant a limited amount of excused absence that will permit the employee to report for work 3 hours after the polls open or leave from work 3 hours before the polls close, **whichever requires the lesser amount of time off.** An employee's "regular work hours" should be determined by reference to the time of day the employee normally arrives at and departs from work.

For example, if an employee is scheduled to work from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and the employee's polling place is open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., the employee should not be granted excused absence for voting, since the employee would still have at least 3 hours after the end of his or her work schedule to vote. However, if an employee is scheduled to work from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and the employee's polling place is open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., the employee may be granted ½ hour of excused absence from 4:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., if requested.

Extended Commuting Distance

If an employee's voting place is beyond normal commuting distance and vote by absentee ballot is not permitted, the employing agency may grant excused absence (not to exceed 1 day) to allow the

employee to make the trip to the voting place to cast a ballot. If more than 1 day is needed, the employee may request annual leave or leave without pay for the additional period of absence.

For More Information

Agency Chief Human Capital Officers and/or Human Resources (HR) Directors may contact their assigned OPM Human Capital Officers. For additional information on Federal pay and leave programs and policies, including work scheduling policies, please visit <http://www.opm.gov/oca/index.asp>. Employees should contact their agency human resources offices for assistance.

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers
Human Resources Directors