

Your Vote Counts

Just in time for election year 2008, it has never been easier to vote in the United States while stationed away from your home state.

By Jennifer G. Williams

The DoD's Federal Voting Assistance Program makes it possible to service members to save completed Online Federal Post Card Application (OFPCA) and Online Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (OFWAB) forms on a computer for future use. This will help those who may move frequently between now and the November 4, 2008 election to be prepared for sending mailing address updates to their local election official. Service members who have questions can reach the FVAP toll-free at 800-438-8683. If calling from outside the U.S., Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, members can call one of the international toll-free numbers listed on the FVAP website www.fvap.gov. Or by email at: vote@fvap.ncr.gov.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program website, www.fvap.gov, offers everything from online voter registration and absentee ballot request forms to state-by-state instructions and links to each state's election sites.

The FVAP also offers 10 tips to ensure your absentee ballot is counted. They are:

- 1 Start by contacting your Unit/Embassy/Organization Voting Assistance Officer for help in absentee registration and voting.
- 2 Visit the Federal Voting Assistance Program's website at www.fvap.gov for information on the absentee registration and voting process.
- 3 Ensure that you have applied for your absentee ballot using the hard copy or on-line versions of the FPCA.
- 4 Make sure your local election official has your current mailing address.
- 5 Sign and date all election materials.
- 6 Fulfill your state's witness/notary requirements (if required).
- 7 Ensure that your ballot or FPCA is postmarked.
- 8 Register to vote and request your ballot in a timely manner - no later than September.
- 9 VOTE - mail your ballot not later than October 15th of the election year.
- 10 Use the Federal Write In Absentee Ballot if you are overseas and your state absentee ballot does not arrive in time to be mailed back by the state's deadline.