

DEBRA BOWEN

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE NEWS RELEASE

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First June Primary Ballots on Way to Voters Friday

SACRAMENTO – As early as Friday, county elections officials will begin mailing ballots to California voters serving in the armed forces or living abroad. Secretary of State Debra Bowen today highlighted state and federal resources that can make participating in elections easier than ever for Californians.

“Whether you live across town or across the globe, if you are an eligible voter, I want to make sure you cast your ballot in the June election,” said Secretary Bowen, the state’s chief elections officer. “My website offers California voters serving in the military or living abroad the resources they need to make their voices heard from a distance.”

To qualify as a military or overseas voter in California elections, a person must be:

- An active member of the United States armed forces or an auxiliary branch;
- A U.S. citizen temporarily living outside U.S. territorial limits or the District of Columbia;
- A person living on a merchant vessel documented under U.S. law; or
- A spouse or dependent of a member of the U.S. military or an auxiliary branch.

California military and overseas voters – known federally as “special absentee voters” – may use a Federal Post Card Application to register to vote and request a ballot simultaneously. California law also allows special absentee voters to request ballots from and return them to county elections officials by fax. Military and overseas voters generally vote on a simplified ballot that allows them to write in their preferred candidates and offices sought, and yes or no votes on propositions.

According to the U. S. Election Assistance Commission, nearly 103,000 special absentee ballots were transmitted to California military and overseas voters for the November 2008 presidential election.

To download a copy of the Federal Post Card Application and access a wide variety of information and resources, go to www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_mov.htm. This one-stop shop for military and overseas voters includes a portal to county elections offices, a step-by-step guide on how to register and vote, and links to common questions and answers from the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

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The California Secretary of State's office also offers a dedicated email address that links military and overseas voters to staff who can offer additional assistance: mov@sos.ca.gov.

The millions of Americans who live overseas or serve in the military have historically faced unique challenges when voting because rules for registering to vote and casting ballots vary by jurisdiction. The federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act, which President Obama signed into law in 2009, unified some rules from state to state. California county elections officials begin mailing ballots to military and overseas voters 60 days ahead of Election Day, while the federal MOVE Act requires such ballots be mailed 45 days before the election.

The last day to register to vote in the June 5 primary election is May 21. The last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot is May 29. For the full calendar, lists of candidates, ballot measures, voter registration data, primary election rules and more, go to www.sos.ca.gov/elections/2012-elections/june-primary.

Keep up with the latest California election news, trivia and tips by following [@CASOSvote](https://twitter.com/CASOSvote) on Twitter.

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