

DEBRA BOWEN

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE NEWS RELEASE

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Secretary of State Debra Bowen Announces First Ballots Ready for Military and Overseas Voters 60 Days Before California Presidential Primary Election

SACRAMENTO – With two months until the February 5, 2008, Presidential Primary Election, Secretary of State Debra Bowen today reminded military and overseas voters that county elections officials are preparing their vote-by-mail ballots for mailing.

County elections officials may begin mailing ballots to the more than 60,000 registered California voters serving in the armed forces or living abroad 60 days before any statewide election.

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

- A 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.

“Thousands of Californians will be far from home on Election Day – whether they’re serving their country in Iraq or Afghanistan or conducting business in London or Tokyo,” said Secretary Bowen, the state’s chief elections officer. “It is critical that their voices are heard this February, when the Golden State has a opportunity to shape the outcome of the presidential race. More than 70 percent of the military and overseas voters registered in California voted in the last presidential election, a particularly high turnout rate in comparison to the overall voting population.”

Some 62,469 Californians serving in the military or living abroad registered to vote in the November 6, 2004, General Election for U.S. president. More than 44,000 of them cast ballots.

Over six million Americans who live overseas or serve in the military face unique challenges when voting due to an assortment of state and federal voter rules for registering to vote and casting ballots by mail, according to the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Overseas Vote Foundation.

California military and overseas voters may use a Federal Post Card Application to simultaneously register to vote and request a vote-by-mail ballot. California law also allows voters to request vote-by-mail ballots from, and return them to, county elections officials by fax.

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They generally vote on a user-friendly ballot that allows them to simply write in their preferred candidates and offices sought, and their yes or no votes on propositions.

The Secretary of State's office has a dedicated email address that links military and overseas voters from across the globe to staffers who can offer additional assistance at mov@sos.ca.gov. More resources are available from the Overseas Vote Foundation at www.overseasvotefoundation.org.

To download a copy of the Federal Post Card Application or for more information about military and overseas voting, go to www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_mov.htm.

The last day to register to vote in the presidential primary is January 22. The last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot is January 29.

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