



DEBRA BOWEN

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**CONTACT: Shannan Velayas
(916) 653-6575**

County Elections Officials Begin Shipping June Statewide Primary Election Ballots to Military and Overseas Voters

SACRAMENTO – On the day county elections officials can begin mailing ballots to California voters serving in the armed forces or living abroad, Secretary of State Debra Bowen reminded these voters of their rights and noted Californian’s early compliance with the federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE).

“Our men and women in the military, no matter where they are stationed, have the opportunity to vote in this, and every election in California,” said Secretary Bowen, the state’s chief elections officer. “Military and overseas voters get their ballots early to ensure they have time to review, vote and return them by the 8:00 p.m. Election Day deadline.”

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.

More than six million Americans who live overseas or serve in the military have historically faced unique challenges when voting because states and the federal government have had a variety of rules for registering to vote and casting ballots by mail.

The MOVE Act was signed into law by President Obama on October 28, 2009, to increase voter participation among military and overseas voters. While states are not required to comply with it until November 2010, California already meets or exceeds the provisions of the MOVE Act.

“California has always strived to make voting as seamless as possible for military and overseas voters,” added Bowen. “Hopefully this year, California will follow the lead of 18 other states and the District of Columbia, and allow ballots from military and overseas voters that are postmarked by Election Day but arrive a few days later to be counted.”

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Recognizing the logistical hurdles confronted by military and overseas voters, Secretary Bowen is sponsoring AB 1340 (B. Lowenthal/M. Perez). It would allow military and overseas ballots postmarked on or before Election Day to be counted if they arrive up to six days after Election Day. Under current California law, such ballots received after 8:00 p.m. on Election Day cannot be counted. The bill is pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

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

These voters generally vote on a simplified ballot that allows them to 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 staff that can offer additional assistance at mov@sos.ca.gov.

To download a copy of the Federal Post Card Application or to access a wide variety of information and resources, go to the Secretary of State's one-stop shop for military and overseas voters at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_mov.htm.

To sign up for regular election updates via email, RSS feed or Twitter, go to www.sos.ca.gov/multimedia.

The last day to register to vote in the June 8, 2010, Statewide Direct Primary Election is May 24. The last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot is June 1.

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