



DEBRA BOWEN

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE NEWS RELEASE

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Secretary of State Debra Bowen Points to Military and Overseas Voter Resources as November 2 Balloting Starts

SACRAMENTO – Tomorrow county elections officials can begin mailing ballots to California voters serving in the armed forces or living abroad, and Secretary of State Debra Bowen is encouraging these voters to take advantage of state and federal resources that can make participating in elections easier.

“For most of us, voting means heading down the street to the neighborhood polling place or putting a vote-by-mail ballot in our mailbox a few days before Election Day but, for Californians living abroad or stationed overseas, voting takes more advanced planning,” said Secretary Bowen, the state’s chief elections officer. “That is why it is imperative that 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.

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

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. The Secretary of State’s office also 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.

The federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act of 2009 requires all states and U.S. territories to mail ballots to military and overseas voters at least 45 days before Election Day.

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While compliance is required by November 2010, California already meets or exceeds the provisions of the MOVE Act.

Secretary Bowen sponsored Assembly Bill 1340 (B. Lowenthal), which would have allowed military and overseas ballots postmarked on or before Election Day to be counted if they arrived at county elections offices up to six days after Election Day. Under current California law, any ballot received after 8:00 p.m. on Election Day cannot be counted. The bill died last month in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The deadline to register to vote in the November 2 General Election is October 18. To request a vote-by-mail ballot, a voter can use the application printed on the sample ballot booklet mailed by his or her county elections official or go to www.sos.ca.gov/elections/vote-by-mail/pdf/fill-in-vote-by-mail-app-instruct.pdf.

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

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