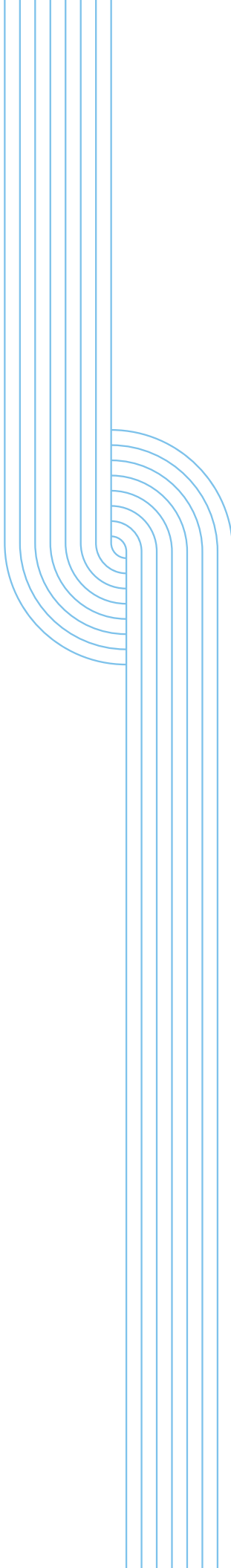


Connecting with Overseas Citizen Voters

OUTREACH TOOLKIT



Overseas Voting Initiative
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS



Introduction

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) is focused on improving voting access for Service members, their families and other U.S. citizens residing overseas who may face many challenges when obtaining and casting their ballots in U.S. elections. To exercise their right to vote, service members deployed to remote areas or at sea, students studying abroad, or government workers living abroad in difficult-to-access locations often must overcome hurdles not faced by most domestic voters. Mail operations and access to the internet can be intermittent or nonexistent in some locations. Access to technology hardware, such as printers and fax machines, can be equally challenging to find, yet may be critical to cast a ballot successfully.

FVAP's Overseas Citizen Population Analysis classifies overseas citizens into three main categories: members of the Uniformed Services, their eligible family members and U.S. citizens residing outside the United States. This toolkit focuses on the third category: U.S. citizens residing outside the United States.

In 2024, voter turnout among eligible overseas U.S. citizens was **at a record high** but remained substantially lower than that of U.S. citizens voting domestically. There are many reasons for this, including voting information gaps, procedural difficulties and access to the necessary infrastructure for voting (e.g., the mail system, the internet). This toolkit aims to identify actions election officials can take to reduce voting information gaps and ease procedural difficulties for U.S. citizens living abroad.

The strategies defined in this toolkit focus on general outreach to civilian overseas voters, while also including strategies to target specific populations: students studying abroad, Peace Corps volunteers and missionaries. These categories were identified through conversations with election officials who identified challenges in connecting with these groups.

Background

Election officials often face unique challenges when trying to effectively engage with overseas voters due to factors such as geographic location, communication infrastructure and access to accurate voting information. [The Overseas Voting Initiative](#) is a partnership between the [Federal Voting Assistance Program \(FVAP\)](#) and [The Council of State Governments](#) that brings together state and local elections officials to identify voting barriers faced by UOCAVA voters. One issue that has been identified is that overseas voter outreach efforts have often centered on uniformed service members and their dependents, leaving other overseas citizen populations comparatively underserved.

[FVAP's 2024 State of the Overseas Voter Report](#) found that among the estimated 2.2 million eligible overseas voters, only 11% voted in 2024. Domestic voters were seven times more likely to vote than those U.S. citizens living and working abroad. Unreliable mail systems, ballot transmission limitations, inconsistent access to reliable election information and ballot curing timelines are just a few of the hurdles that overseas voters face when trying to cast their ballot. These challenges contribute to lower election participation rates among overseas citizens.

To better understand these hurdles, it's important to understand the different categories of overseas citizens. Outside of active-duty service members, a significant portion of overseas citizens are abroad for employment or volunteer service. [FVAP's 2022 Overseas Citizen Population Analysis](#) found that 38% of U.S. citizens living overseas were there for work or volunteer activities. While many overseas citizens are federal employees, other significant voter groups to consider include [Peace Corps Volunteers](#), missionaries of faith-based and non-faith-based organizations and students studying abroad.

Peace Corps volunteers work in partnership with host global communities, typically for a two-year assignment. Volunteers can serve in more than 60 different countries, however, access to technology, reliable mail streams and voting information varies greatly by post. Missionaries face similar variability when serving abroad. Missionaries typically serve abroad for several weeks to several years as part of a church or religious organization to evangelize. Non-faith-based mission organizations also recruit volunteers to provide charitable work, such as education and healthcare, to countries in need. Both Peace Corps Volunteers and missionaries often find themselves in remote locations with inconsistent communication access.

Education also contributes to the number of U.S. citizens living overseas. In 2022, [14%](#) of overseas citizens were pursuing educational or research opportunities. Colleges and universities across the U.S. offer study abroad programs that range from a few weeks to a full academic year. Study abroad students may be less aware of U.S. elections and deadlines, as their shorter period overseas and intensive academic and cultural commitments can limit their attention to election-related timelines. Additionally, unlike longer-term overseas citizens, students studying abroad may not realize they qualify as an overseas voter and are protected under the [Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act](#) while away from home.

These distinct overseas populations highlight the need for targeted engagement strategies that account for varying lengths of time overseas, access to technology and levels of U.S. civic engagement. This toolkit examines both general outreach strategies and population-specific strategies that election officials can use to better communicate and engage with overseas citizens.

General Outreach and Engagement Strategies

1. Encourage voters to subscribe to FVAP Voting Alerts and Google Calendar Alerts to receive absentee voting info, election deadline reminders and more.
2. Encourage voters to subscribe to the U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP).
3. Keep all election related information up to date with timely updates to the FVAP Voting Assistance Guide.
4. Publish UOCAVA voting information on public-facing websites early in the election cycle.
5. Utilize existing FVAP resources for overseas citizen voter outreach and engagement.
6. When engaging with UOCAVA voters via email, consider strategies and practices that help mitigate potential security threats associated with using the internet and ensure that voters receive emails in their entirety.
7. Update voters throughout all steps of the voting process, including updates regarding the status of their registration, ballot request and voted ballot.
8. Develop clear, standardized instructions for your state's ballot curing process that can be communicated to voters quickly and effectively.
9. Clearly communicate approved ballot return methods to voters in all communication.
10. If your state or jurisdiction doesn't already do so, provide a voter guide for any upcoming elections for voters to learn more about candidates and/or ballot measures.

Strategy 1: Encourage voters to subscribe to FVAP Voting Alerts to receive absentee voting info, deadline reminders and more.

Overseas voters are often disconnected from their local communities and therefore do not encounter reminders about upcoming elections in their everyday lives. Third-party organizations often try to fill this gap by conducting direct outreach to these voters. However, this information can be incomplete, inaccurate or out-of-date. As such, targeted outreach by election officials with timely and accurate election information can be critical for overseas voters to successfully meet election deadlines and follow the correct voting procedures for their state.

To receive targeted, timely and accurate voting information, election officials can encourage overseas voters to subscribe to voting alerts from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP). Voters

can easily subscribe to text or email alerts from FVAP by visiting <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFVAP/subscribers/new>. These alerts include information about absentee voting, deadline reminders and more. Voters can easily unsubscribe from these alerts at any time.

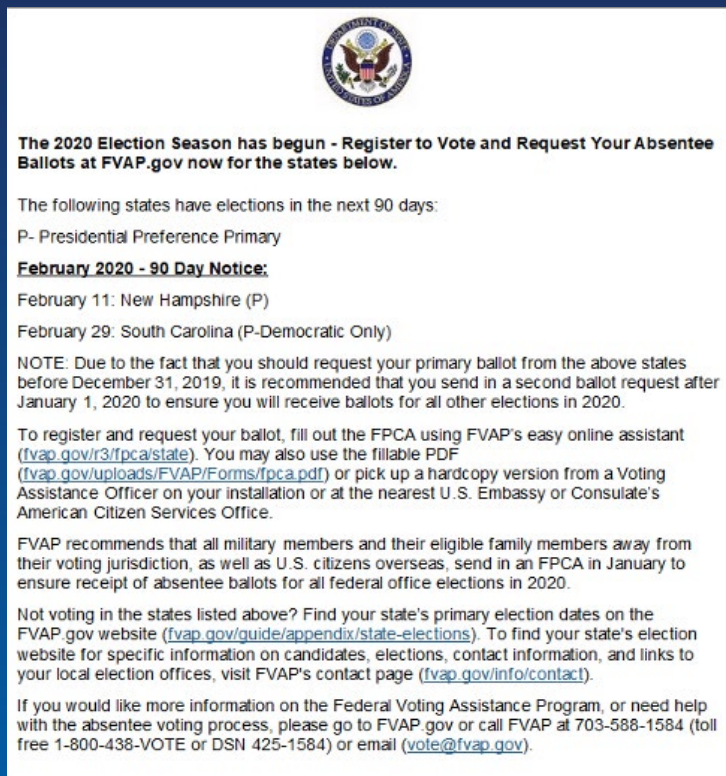
FVAP voting alerts provide the additional benefit of transparent data privacy practices to voters. Unlike third-party organizations, any information provided to FVAP through voting alert subscriptions is protected by the Federal Privacy Act, meaning that the agency will not disclose the information provided to any third party unless voters have given written authority to do so.

Strategy 2: Encourage voters to subscribe to the U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP).

Election officials can also encourage voters to subscribe to the [U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP). While STEP primarily provides safety and travel information to U.S. citizens traveling overseas, the U.S. Department of State has partnered with FVAP to provide general information to subscribers about upcoming state and federal elections. This program is a free service provided by the U.S. government. STEP notifications are provided by email, and voters can easily unsubscribe at any time.

Voting information provided in STEP notifications is not tailored to the voter but presents an additional avenue through which voters can access timely and accurate election information. As depicted in *Figure 1* below, STEP notifications not only identify upcoming election dates but also provide voter registration and ballot mailing recommendations to voters based on FVAP guidance. STEP notifications also encourage voters to contact FVAP for answers to common voting issues or questions. Voters can enroll in STEP in under 20-minutes at <https://mytravel.state.gov/s/step>.

Figure 1: STEP Notification for the 2020 General Election



As with FVAP voting alerts, STEP provides the additional benefit of transparent data privacy practices to voters. Any information provided to the U.S. Department of State through STEP enrollment is also protected by the Federal Privacy Act, meaning that the agency will not disclose the information provided to any third party unless voters have given written authority to do so.

Strategy 3: Keep all election-related information up to date with updates to the FVAP Electronic Voting Assistance Guide.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program collects information related to voter registration and election policies, including deadlines, election dates, requirements and addresses of local election offices. This information is then compiled into the

[FVAP Voting Assistance Guide](#), which is available both electronically and in a printed format. By providing any updates and changes to FVAP, you ensure that the FVAP Voting Alerts and STEP notifications are timely and accurate. Send any changes

to vote@fvap.gov to ensure that FVAP is aware of these changes and can update their information accordingly.

If changes occur after the information collection period, such as an office address change or email contact change, please reach out to FVAP to ensure

the change is updated in their electronic Voting Assistance Guide. These changes could occur after the hard copy is printed; however, changes can still be updated in the electronic version, helping ensure that any alerts pushed out are accurate.

Strategy 4: Publish UOCAVA voting information on public-facing websites early in the election cycle.

Many UOCAVA voters access the internet through low-bandwidth connections. Posting voting information on accessible, easy-to-use, public-facing websites makes it easier for these voters to find the information they need. It is recommended that websites providing information about deadlines, requirements, etc., be optimized for these low-bandwidth internet connections. It is advisable to post UOCAVA voting information early in the election cycle, ideally 90 days prior to the election. This is because the UOCAVA process is lengthy, with ballots provided 45 days ahead of the election and many UOCAVA voters having to navigate extended

international mail processing timelines to cast their ballots.

The [best practices in this report](#) are intended for state election websites, but they can also be applied to local election websites. Local election websites should contain information that links to or is based on state law and publicly provided information to ensure continuity in how processes are carried out within a state. The 2020 report, [Assessing State UOCAVA Web Pages](#) from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), also highlights many of these best practices.

Strategy 5: Utilize existing FVAP resources for overseas citizen voter outreach and engagement.

FVAP has many resources for elections officials aimed at providing information for UOCAVA voters and ensuring election officials understand the protections provided to UOCAVA voters. The following list of resources may be helpful as election officials develop and consider outreach strategies for reaching UOCAVA voters.

1. Online voter assistance guide: <https://www.fvap.gov/guide>
2. Outreach materials, including downloadable handouts, fact sheets, forms, posters, digital graphics, videos to embed in social media posts, media content toolkits, service ads, and more: <https://www.fvap.gov/info/outreach>
3. Information on how election officials serve UOCAVA voters: <https://www.fvap.gov/eo/overview>
4. Online trainings: <https://www.fvap.gov/eo/training>
5. Policy briefs: <https://www.fvap.gov/eo/policy-briefs>
6. FAQ about absentee voting: <https://www.fvap.gov/guide/appendix/faq>

FVAP is also available to answer any questions that arise as election officials conduct outreach to UOCAVA voters. Reach out to FVAP at: vote@FVAP.gov.

Strategy 6: When engaging with UOCAVA voters via email, consider strategies and practices that help mitigate potential security threats associated with using the internet and ensure that voters receive emails in their entirety.

Military and overseas citizens are often stationed or live in remote areas abroad with limited access to reliable mail service. Election officials commonly rely on email to provide these voters with timely election information, updates and ballot materials. When communicating with overseas voters via email,

election officials should consider several best practices to mitigate potential security threats associated with internet use, improve download performance for low bandwidth internet connections and ensure that voters receive emails in their entirety. These include:

- 1. Sending links rather than attachments when possible.**
 - a. If sending an attachment is the only option, take care to ensure the attachment's file name does not contain spaces or special characters, only hyphens (-) and underscores (_).**
- 2. Formatting links so they are written out rather than embedded.**
- 3. Sending text only emails that do not include graphics to improve download speeds.**
- 4. When sending an email with links or attachments, follow up with a second, text-only email telling the voter to look for the first email and contact you if it is not received.**
- 5. Setting aside a separate "sandbox computer" in your office for opening attachments to reduce security risks.**
- 6. Ensuring emails are authenticated using DomainKeys Identified Mail (DKIM) and servers are authorized using Sender Policy Framework (SPF).**
 - a. Setting up Domain-based Message Authentication Reporting and Conformance (DMARC) will give other mail servers a way to handle messages that fail the previous authentication checks.**

[This document](#) reiterates best practices for election officials to consider when emailing UOCAVA voters to help mitigate potential security threats associated with internet use and ensure that voters receive emails in their entirety.

Strategy 7: Update voters throughout all steps of the voting process, including updates on the status of their registration, ballot request and voted ballot.

Common feedback from overseas citizens, such as students studying abroad and Peace Corps volunteers, is that they often do not receive confirmation that their ballot was included in the final count and do not know whether their ballot was received by an election office. Thus, many have expressed skepticism that their ballot has been counted. By notifying voters of the status of their registration request,

ballot request and voted ballot, election officials can help increase overseas citizens' confidence in the voting process. Moreover, these communities are often tightly connected to other expats. Instilling confidence in one voter can begin to create a network of strong, knowledgeable supporters of the voting process.

For the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) specifically, FVAP provides a physical postcard format that election officials can use to let UOCAVA voters know their FPCA has been processed and received. The postcard is available [here](#) in PDF.

Given the unreliability of international mail systems, email is an increasingly effective way to

communicate with voters regarding the status of their registration, ballot request and voted ballot. These emails can be simple and standardized to reduce the time and effort spent by an election official while likewise improving the voter experience for UOCAVA voters. An example email template is provided below.

Email Template - Notification of Ballot Receipt and Acceptance

Dear [INSERT VOTER NAME],

We have received your ballot for the [TYPE OF ELECTION] election on [DATE OF ELECTION]. Everything was completed correctly, and your vote will be counted.

Thank you for participating in this election, and please remember to keep your voter registration information updated. Go to [STATE WEBSITE LINK] to check the status of your registration and your recent voting activity.

Thank you,

[ELECTION OFFICIAL]

Strategy 8: Develop clear, standardized instructions for your state's ballot curing process that can be communicated to voters quickly and effectively.

Ballot cure processes can be particularly cumbersome, especially for overseas voters who may have limited access to communications from Election Offices. In many states, the primary reason for a ballot curing process is when a ballot is missing a voter signature or if the voter signature on file does not match the signature on the envelope. To ensure UOCAVA voters can successfully cast their ballot, election officials can develop standardized language for the cure process to include in follow-up communication with voters. In addition to standardized follow-up communication, it's essential that

ballot-curing communication occur as quickly as possible. If possible, voters should be notified within 24 hours of identifying a deficiency and, where possible, this notification should occur electronically – phone call, email, text message, or an update to a ballot tracking portal – to avoid potentially long mailing timelines. Particularly in states that do not allow for electronic return methods, overseas voters need more time than domestic voters to cure their ballot in a timely manner.

Below are two sample email templates for notifying voters of the need to cure their ballot.

Email Template - Notification of Ballot Receipt, Need to Cure

King County, Washington

Take action to make sure your vote counts!

Dear Voter,

We received your ballot for the February 2026 Special election. However, the signature on your return envelope does not match closely enough with the signature we have on your voter registration record.

To resolve this issue, complete the form included with this letter, or go to the website www.kce.wiki/SigCure where you can fill out the form online. The form you fill out must:

- include a signature that matches the signature on your returned ballot envelope, OR
- confirm that the ballot is yours by providing another proof of your identity, which can include one of the following:
 1. The last four digits of your Social Security number
 2. Your full Washington state driver's license number, driver's permit number or state identity card number
 3. Any of the alternate forms of identification listed at www.kce.wiki/SigCure

Please complete and return the included form no later than 4:30 p.m. Pacific Time, Thursday, February 19, 2026. Please sign the form as close as possible to the way you signed your ballot envelope to resolve the issue.

You can check the status of your ballot on our online ballot tracker at kingcounty.gov/elections/ballot-tracker. Please allow 3-5 business days for processing.

If you have questions about this letter, please contact King County Elections at 206-205-5686.

Email Template - Notification of Ballot Receipt, Need to Cure

State of Colorado

Subject:

Your ballot has been rejected - action required

Content:

Your 2026 Primary Election mail ballot was rejected due to an issue with your signature or identification. You must resolve this issue by July 8, 2026 to ensure your ballot is counted.

Denver Elections Division is sending you a letter with instructions on how to resolve the issue. You can also fix it right now by using your mobile device and Colorado's BallotCure system.

To access the BallotCure system:

1. Go to: <https://myballot.coloradosos.gov/ecure/app/home>
2. Click the "Cure My Ballot" button
3. Enter your Voter ID. Your Voter ID is: 601681375
4. When prompted, sign and upload or take a picture of your Colorado drivers license, state ID card, or other acceptable form of ID
5. Click submit

Please contact Denver Elections Division at (720) 913-8683 or elections@denvergov.org if you have any questions.

Strategy 9: Clearly communicate accepted ballot return methods to voters in all communication.

While ballot return methods might be clearly communicated to some voters, there is a common misconception among UOCAVA voters about which return methods they can utilize. It is essential that election officials communicate the authorized ballot return options available to UOCAVA voters in your state. For example, if your state allows electronic ballot return by email ([25 states](#)) or a web portal ([11 states](#)), UOCAVA voters should be informed that

they can return their ballot via a secure web portal or email in addition to mailing it.

Based on feedback the OVI received from returned Peace Corps volunteers, authorized ballot return methods are often not clearly communicated to overseas citizens. Knowing which return methods are available to UOCAVA voters ensures they can plan and use the most accessible and secure method.

Effective ways to clearly communicate authorized ballot return methods to UOCAVA voters include:

- When communicating with UOCAVA voters via email, be sure to reiterate the ballot return methods available to them.
- Include step-by-step instructions for each authorized return method in plain language and bold font alongside ballots and absentee voting materials.
- Dedicate a clear and easy-to-find UOCAVA section on your state's election website that includes authorized return methods, instructions for each method and deadlines.
 - OVI created a Best Practices for State UOCAVA Web Pages toolkit which can be accessed here: https://ovi.csg.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/OVI_Best_Practices_Web_2024_Digital.pdf
 - Repetition and consistency are essential. Ensure that the ballot return methods listed alongside physical voting materials include the same language and authorized return methods as your state's elections website and UOCAVA webpage.
- Coordinate with U.S. embassies and consulates and other overseas organizations to provide them with updated voting materials that includes information about authorized ballot return methods.
- Direct overseas voters to utilize [FVAP's Voting Assistance Guide](#) for the most up-to-date information about what return methods UOCAVA voters are authorized to use in their state.
 - For consistency, ensure that the information provided from election offices matches the information listed on [FVAP's Local Election Office Search](#).

Strategy 10: If your state or jurisdiction doesn't already do so, provide a voter guide for any upcoming elections for voters to learn more about candidates and/or ballot measures.

A voter guide is a physical pamphlet or electronic resource that provides information about candidates running for state or local office, such as their qualifications and political stances. Voter guides also provide an overview of statewide ballot measures. In some states, an analysis of arguments for and

against ballot measures are also included. Voter guides can be a valuable resource for overseas voters as they offer an opportunity to make more informed decisions, even for those without access to local news and other civic outlets.

Voter guides can be accessed electronically or printed and sent alongside an absentee ballot. In the state of Washington, for example, voter guides

are available electronically, and each jurisdiction's voter guide can be accessed from the state's main webpage.

Washington's 2025 Primary Election's Voter Guide



WASHINGTON
Secretary of State

2025 Primary Election Voters' Guide

[OSOS Home](#) / [Elections](#) / [Data & Research](#) / [Election Results and Voters' Pamphlets](#) / [2025 Primary Election Voters' Guide](#)

Select a format to learn more about the candidates and measures on your ballot.

VoteWA

View a voters' guide customized to the measures and races on your ballot.

State Online Voters' Guide

Provides an overview of all state measures and information provided by statewide candidates. Use a mobile device or Chrome/Firefox browser to load this dynamic searchable guide.

Your County Elections Website

Find local information about what will appear on your ballot.

Local voters' guides:

• Adams	• Douglas	• King	• Pacific	• Stevens
• Asotin	• Ferry	• Kitsap	• Pend Oreille	• Thurston
• Benton	• Franklin	• Kittitas	• Pierce	• Wahkiakum
• Chelan	• Garfield: No Primary	• Klickitat	• San Juan	• Walla Walla
• Clallam	• Grant	• Lewis	• Skagit	• Whatcom
• Clark	• Grays Harbor	• Lincoln	• Skamania	• Whitman
• Columbia: No Primary	• Island	• Mason	• Snohomish	• Yakima
• Cowlitz	• Jefferson	• Okanogan	• Spokane	

For information on creating a voter guide, the Center for Civic Design offers a toolkit for designing a voter guide for an upcoming election, available [here](#).

Outreach Strategies for Study Abroad Students

Students who study abroad tend to be highly motivated individuals, interested in deepening their understanding of other cultures. To study abroad, these students often must apply to the program, navigate housing in a foreign country, register and schedule coursework with an unfamiliar institution, learn a foreign language and navigate visa and travel requirements. For many study abroad students, this work is tackled perhaps one semester in advance of their study abroad experience. The student is unlikely to be thinking about upcoming elections during this time. This could result in students missing UOCAVA registration deadlines in many states, leaving them ineligible to vote in their upcoming election.

As such, the strategies we outline can inform students well in advance of their departure for their

program and serve as evergreen information should they wish to participate in elections during their time overseas.

1. Share and develop voting resources tailored to study abroad students.
2. Build and maintain strong relationships with local universities to get accurate voting information in the hands of students in a timely manner.
3. Provide tailored content on UOCAVA webpages and social media.
4. **When communicating with study abroad students and/or their parents, clearly delineate an outline of appropriate parental involvement.**

Strategy 1: Share and develop voting resources tailored to study abroad students.

For many students abroad, this may be the first federal election in which they are eligible to participate. While they may be aware of general absentee voting procedures, it is unlikely they know they are afforded additional federal protections by

registering as a UOCAVA voter. And they're probably not familiar with the resources available through FVAP and their home state that may help reduce barriers to casting their ballot successfully.

It may be necessary to develop voting resources tailored to study abroad students and the challenges they may face. Resources tailored to study abroad students should:

- Briefly explain what UOCAVA is, who qualifies for protections and the benefits it provides.
- Provide a timeline, outlining the steps in the UOCAVA voting process and emphasizing the need to register as a UOCAVA voter with the Federal Post Card Application, ways to receive a blank ballot, ballot return methods with estimated mailing timeframes for countries outside the U.S., and ballot tracking information, if available.
- Be sure to make it clear that "intent to return" means that voter intends to return to the jurisdiction at some point. This does not require that they have the exact date and time of their return.
- Explain signature requirements and that the signature provided on their ballot will be compared with the signature on their voter registration file (i.e., their DMV signature).

Strategy 2. Build and maintain strong relationships with local universities to get accurate voting information in the hands of students in a timely manner.

Because study abroad students are likely navigating a complex process, it is important that local universities are actively reminding students that they are still allowed to vote while abroad. We recommend Election Officials get accurate voting information into the hands of students in a timely manner by building relationships with universities, their study abroad programs, national scholarship programs and on-campus organizations focused on voting and voter registration engagement. A list of universities sending the largest number of students abroad can be accessed [here](#).

While it is inevitable that some students studying at the local university are not registered to vote in that jurisdiction, this does not mean that these partnerships are futile. In fact, the benefit of UOCAVA is that the baseline federal protections are in place regardless of their registration location. As such, we recommend providing general information about UOCAVA protections and access to FVAP resources as well as information tailored for the local voting jurisdiction. Getting accurate voting information into the hands of students in a timely manner can help facilitate voting success among those studying abroad.

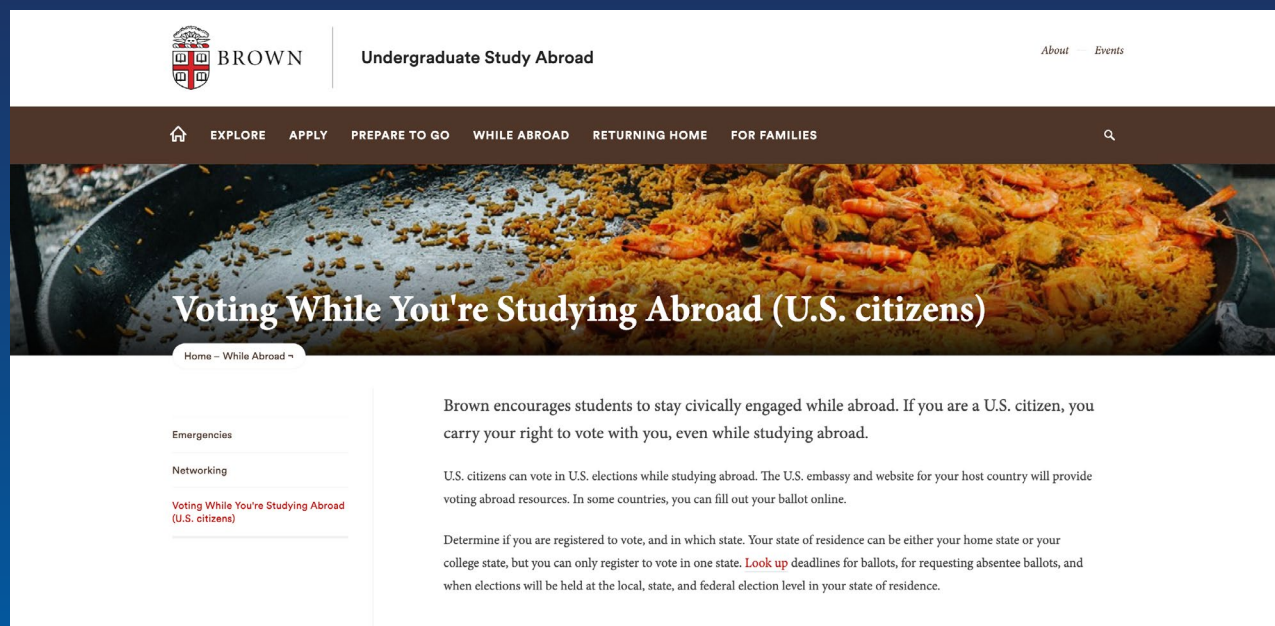
Election officials can also work with existing organizations that students studying abroad interact with on social media to ensure accurate information is shared with students about upcoming elections. For example, common student organizations focused on voting include the College Democrats of

America (CDA) and the College Republican National Committee (CRNC). CDA maintains a list of active chapters, including their contact information and social media accounts. This list is linked [here](#). CRNC has an online contact form that individuals can complete to connect with their local chapter, linked [here](#).

Election officials should consider participating in study abroad fairs or collaborating on social media campaigns with local universities, students who are or have studied abroad, and other organizations dedicated to increasing voter turnout in this age group. For example, a mini-series on “student takeovers” whereby a student walks their followers through the voting process while abroad can help students better understand the process and increase participation. Another example is a permanent profile highlight or pinned post during the election season to explain the voting process for students. Election officials can also provide student organizations with tailored voting information (handouts, FAQs, etc.) that they can also disseminate at campus events and meetings.

As a part of this work, election officials could also partner with local universities to develop informational pages on study abroad websites related to voting abroad (see Figure 1 below), linked [here](#). Once connected, universities will likely be able to identify the most beneficial avenues for outreach and collaboration.

Figure 1: Voting While You're Studying Abroad (U.S. Citizens), Brown University



Source: <https://studyabroad.brown.edu/while-abroad/voting>

Below are examples of potential resources election officials can share with local university study abroad programs:

- Outreach email templates
 - Include voting information such as registration deadlines, ballot return methods and deadlines and links to your state's UOCAVA webpage.
- Study abroad voting webpage for students
 - The [study abroad voting webpage](#) should outline eligibility for UOCAVA and basic voting steps, list contact information and webpages for local election officials, links to websites/ social media for on-campus civic engagement organizations and [FVAP.gov](#).
- UOCAVA voting excerpt
 - Include an excerpt about voting abroad in the welcoming paperwork, given to both the student and the parents.

Strategy 3: Provide tailored content on UOCAVA webpages and social media for study abroad students.

As access to technology and digital media grows, a significant part of the population receives voting and election information online or from social media.

[Research indicates that Americans in the 18-24 age range get their news from social media weekly](#)

[about 91% of the time and daily 71% of the time.](#)

For students studying abroad, it is important that election officials utilize social media to get accurate information to these voters.

UOCAVA voting information is often referenced in terms of “military voters and overseas citizens.” This can be confusing for students studying abroad because they may not consider themselves an overseas citizen since they are often only living abroad for a few months. It can be helpful to clarify and explicitly state that this group includes study abroad students. For example, Semester at Sea students may not conceptualize themselves as overseas citizens. They are constantly moving throughout the

This content should:

- Explain what UOCAVA is and that students studying abroad qualify to vote under the act.
- Identify basic steps in the voting process for study abroad students.
- Identify upcoming election deadlines.
- Explain what the FPCA and FWAB are, how students can access them and how they can be returned in your state.
- Refer voters to the FVAP website for information about UOCAVA voting in other states.

We also recommend adapting UOCAVA webpages to explicitly mention study abroad students and provide student-specific resources on the voting process. For example, many UOCAVA webpages break down the definition of UOCAVA to include

semester and thus have no ties to a specific country or international mailing address. These students, however, still qualify to vote under UOCAVA.

We recommend creating online and social media content that clarify students’ eligibility for UOCAVA protections. This content can be templated and updated for use in future election cycles. Several social media posts are provided below as examples which may be adapted for your local context.

active-duty members of the armed forces, their spouses and dependents; members of the merchant marine, their spouses and dependents; and U.S. citizens residing overseas. While study abroad students fall under the last “U.S. citizens residing overseas” category, the word “residing” may not be interpreted to include those temporarily overseas. Election offices can modify language on these websites to explicitly identify study abroad students as part of this group and provide student-specific resources – whether in-house or those provided by FVAP.

FVAP offers several outreach materials, including digital media content toolkits, infographics, fact sheets, videos and other media resources that are available here. These resources can serve as a good starting point for election officials developing in-house outreach and social media content for study abroad students.

Resources:

Here are some FVAP resources for you to refer to and share out. The FVAP Study Abroad FAQ is something schools can provide to students and could be linked on your website. As you are building out your

social media, please refer to FVAP’s Digital Media Outreach Toolkit and the templates that we have created. Be sure to follow FVAP on Instagram, X, and Facebook. See the links below.

Social media engagement strategies for study abroad students

- [FVAP’s Study Abroad FAQ](#)
- [FVAP’s Digital Media Outreach Toolkit](#)
- [Follow and share social media from FVAP](#)



Strategy 4: When communicating with study abroad students and/or their parents, clearly delineate an outline of appropriate parental involvement.

State and local election officials have noted that parents are increasingly involved in the voting process for voting age children, whether living within or outside the home. While this involvement can help foster a civic mindset, it can also cause issues when parents move beyond providing information to children and completing parts of the voting process themselves. This trend aligns with the experiences of the study abroad counselors, who note growing parental involvement in the study abroad process.

For example, when students get to “crunch time” scenarios around registration and ballot request deadlines, they often reach out to their parents for help. These parents, while well-intentioned, may inadvertently violate laws as they try to help their

child vote by signing paperwork for the student or even marking a ballot with their child’s selections and submitting it to the local election office for them.

By connecting with students and their parents during the pre-departure window, election officials can provide accurate information to students regarding voting, while also taking the opportunity to clearly delineate the acceptable bounds of parental involvement in the voting process. This helps ensure students’ parents are involved in the voting process in a constructive manner, while also noting potential areas where a parent can unintentionally overstep their bounds. This can include highlighting constructive and counterproductive bounds of parental involvement – a do’s and don’ts for parents:

- **DO** ask your student if they are considering voting from abroad and what their plan is to navigate the process.
- **DO** point students toward helpful resources, such as [FVAP.gov](https://www.fvap.gov) or your local election official’s website.
- **DO NOT** request ballot materials for your student.
- **DO NOT** mark and return their voted ballot even if they give you permission. This is a violation of federal law.
- **DO NOT** tell your child to mail their ballot to you to drop off at their local election office.

Outreach Strategies for Peace Corps Volunteers

Peace Corps Volunteers constitute a modest but often overlooked portion of the UOCAVA voting population. Approximately 3,500 to 4,000 Americans serve in the Peace Corps each year. In 2024, there were **2,435 Peace Corps volunteers** serving in 54 countries. Of these, 80% were under 30 years old, and 80% had a college degree. Election officials can improve outreach to and communication with Peace Corps Volunteers by:

1. Identifying and conducting outreach to universities within your jurisdiction that produce a significant number of Peace Corps Volunteers.
2. Providing clarification to voters regarding postage requirements for international election mail.
3. Working with local Peace Corps associations to increase awareness about voting during one's Peace Corps service.

Strategy 1: Identify and conduct outreach to universities within your jurisdiction that produce a significant number of Peace Corps Volunteers.

It can be difficult to identify Peace Corps Volunteers given that they are often not associated with any organizations in your local community (unlike missionaries). However, one common organization PCVs are associated with are universities. Each year, the Peace Corps Association publishes a list of the top volunteer-producing schools in the U.S. Often these universities offer Peace Corps preparatory or

certificate programs that offer centralized resources and programming to future Peace Corps Volunteers. It may be beneficial for local election officials who have one of these schools in their jurisdiction to reach out to these programs to discuss ways to provide prospective volunteers with information about the voting process.

2025 Ranking	University
1	University of Wisconsin-Madison
2	University of Colorado Boulder
3	University of Florida
4	University of Maryland, College Park
5	University of Virginia
6	Virginia Tech
7	George Washington University
8	American University
9	William and Mary
10	Emory University

List for table: <https://www.peacecorps.gov/about-the-agency/media-center/news/peace-corps-announces-2025-top-volunteer-producing-schools/>

Election offices can work with these organizations to assemble information packets about voting for those going into the Peace Corps.

Many schools have a Peace Corps Campus Recruiting Office that has office hours and hosts information sessions. Making a connection with this office and sponsoring an info session could help expand students' awareness of how to vote in the Peace Corps.



Source: <https://peacecorps.wisc.edu/>

A full list of university Peace Corps prep programs is available on the Peace Corps website [here](#).

Example - FAQ for Peace Corps Volunteers

(Reference: https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Outreach-Materials/OutreachToolkit_OC_2024.pdf)

Q: Can I vote online? Or sign my Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)/Ballot/Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB) electronically?

A: Ask your state and local election official about this. Some states allow overseas voters to return ballots by email or via a web portal.

Q: I'm already registered to vote in my home state. Can my family just mail my ballot to me from the United States?

A: Your parents cannot mail your ballot to you from the U.S. To receive the benefits under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), such as receiving your ballot 45 days before an election, you must fill out an FPCA with your overseas address and send it to your election official. You can request your ballot be sent to you electronically, which will be the fastest way to receive it. You must send your ballot to your election official from overseas. If not, it could be rejected.

Q: I will be volunteering in the Peace Corps in more than one location, what should I put down as my overseas address?

A: Use the address where you think you will be living at the time of the election. If you are not sure of the address, put down as much as you know, even if it's just the city and country. You can always request your ballot be sent to you electronically. Your election office mainly needs to know that you are currently overseas. If you put down a U.S.-based address, your FPCA will be rejected.

Q: Can I send in my FPCA before I go abroad?

A: No, you must be outside the U.S. at the time when you send your FPCA to your election office.

Q: I already know who I want to vote for, can I send in a FWAB now just in case I don't get my ballot in time?

A: Yes. As long as you are overseas, you can send your FWAB at any time. Then if you receive your official ballot later, you can send it in as well. Your election office will count only your most recent ballot or FWAB.

Q: What are the ways to return your ballot from abroad via mail?

A: Contact the U.S. embassy or consulate closest to you. Most embassies and consulates will have a drop box for diplomatic mail, including election mail. If your ballot is in an election mail envelope with a postage-paid indicia, you can return it through an embassy or consulate.

The best way to locate an election mail envelope with a postage-paid indicia is to use the one your election official mailed to you. If you did not receive your ballot via the mail, there are two options. First, you may request an envelope from an embassy, consulate, or directly from FVAP. Alternatively, a student may [print the envelope](#) from FVAP's website. This does require the voter to fold and

secure the paper into an envelope shape, which may be complicated.

As a last resort, you can use international mail such as DHL, FedEx, UPS, etc. You will need to pay for the postage in this case, which can be costly. And it is recommended to account for the extra time mail might need to go through customs.

Strategy 2: Provide clarification to voters regarding postage requirements for international election mail.

One common misconception among Peace Corps volunteers is the postage required to mail their ballot. For example, one Peace Corps volunteer was told by U.S. embassy staff that U.S. postage was required to return their ballot via diplomatic pouch, which is untrue. Given that this postage is hard to

acquire abroad, the voter opted not to return their ballot.

Provided below are common talking points that election officials can use when communicating with voters about the postage required to return their ballot.

Talking points - Postage requirements for Peace Corps Volunteers

- U.S. postage is NOT required to return your ballot via diplomatic pouch, the Diplomatic Post Office (DPO), or the military postal service if you are using an envelope that includes the postage-paid indicia.
- The mail piece does not have to be ready for the U.S. postal system when it enters the mail stream, as long as it's in a postage-paid indicia envelope.
- Election materials for overseas citizens can be sent as free postage-paid via First-Class Mail (as authorized by 39 USC 3406). See this FVAP page: <https://www.fvap.gov/eo/overview/sending-ballots/preparing-mail>
- The FPCA, FWAB and state election materials all count as election materials and can be mailed postage free from the U.S.
- International airmail postage is **required** unless you use a diplomatic pouch, the Diplomatic Post Office (DPO) system, or the Military Postal Service to mail your ballot back to the U.S.
 - USPS International Mail & Shipping Services: <https://www.usps.com/international/mail-shipping-services.htm>
- FVAP link to ballot return envelope: https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Forms/fwab_envelope.pdf

Strategy 3: Identify and conduct outreach to relevant Peace Corps associations in your jurisdiction to gather feedback on their experience voting in the Peace Corps and expand awareness of UOCAVA voting.

Peace Corps associations are another avenue for reaching new and returned Peace Corps volunteers. Many major metropolitan areas have a returned Peace Corps volunteer association, and Peace Corps volunteers tend to network with these groups during and after their time in the Peace Corps.

The National Peace Corps Association maintains a list of all Peace Corps affiliate groups, relevant websites, and leadership contact information. Election offices can contact relevant affiliate groups to connect with incoming and returning Peace Corps volunteers.

[Return to Affiliate Directory](#)

About Chicago Area Peace Corps Association

The Chicago Area Peace Corps Association serves the area of Chicago, Illinois and northwest Indiana. The group organizes community service events, job networking, RPCV support/mentoring and monthly ethnic dinners. CAPCA also donates thousands of dollars annual for Peace Corps Partnership Programs abroad led by Chicago area PCVs.

Our biggest events of the year are the Story Slam (takes place during Peace Corps Week) and the Annual Fundraiser (takes place in October/November). We also facilitate monthly happy hours and volunteer/community service events

Affiliate Group Contact

Primary Contact: Colin Byers

Email: Capca1961@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.capca.org/>

Source: <https://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/affiliate/chicago-area-peace-corps-association/>

By establishing relationships with local Peace Corps affiliate groups, election offices can conduct voter outreach and education to individuals connected with Peace Corps volunteers abroad.

This communication network can also be an opportunity to solicit feedback on what it is like for volunteers voting in the Peace Corps.

Outreach template - Peace Corps affiliate organization

Email Template - Peace Corps affiliate organization

Dear [INSERT PEACE CORPS AFFILIATE ORGANIZATION NAME],

I am the election official for [STATE/COUNTY] reaching out to see if you have Peace Corps volunteers or members who need support figuring out how to vote while abroad.

With the next election [DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS] away, my team wants to ensure your members have access to accurate information on how to register to vote while abroad and how to cast their ballot.

It is sometimes a challenge for overseas voters to return their ballot given postal delays and inconsistent access to the internet. My team and I hope to get ahead of this by establishing a relationship with you so we can share voting information with your members.

Thank you,

[ELECTION OFFICIAL]

Outreach Strategies for Missionaries

When discussing strategies to help U.S. citizens vote abroad, missionaries are often overlooked. A missionary is a member of a religious group who is sent to a location, either domestically or abroad, to promote their faith or provide services, such as health care, literacy, education, or economic development. Missionaries make up a small percentage of the overseas voting population and face unique challenges that require a tailored outreach approach.

A mission trip can last from several weeks to several years, depending on the church, organization, or university coordinating the trip. Election officials can tailor outreach and improve communication to missionaries by:

1. Connecting with local churches in your jurisdiction and providing them with voting information before they leave for a mission trip.
2. Identifying and fostering relationships with local mission organizations and universities that support mission trips.
3. Providing hard copies of voting materials to mission leaders prior to departure.
4. Ensuring mission leadership provides the best contact information to local election officials prior to departure.
5. If your state or jurisdiction doesn't already do so, providing a voting guide for any upcoming elections to missionary leadership to disseminate to voters who would like to learn more about the candidates or ballot measures.

Strategy 1: Connect with local churches in your jurisdiction and provide voting information prior to departure for a mission trip.

Early communication is essential to ensuring missionaries have accurate information and the necessary tools to vote from abroad. To provide information in advance, election officials should identify which churches and organizations conduct mission trips within your jurisdiction. Below you will find a list of common churches that support mission trips:

- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Lutheran
- Seventh Day Adventists
- Jehovah's Witness
- United Methodist

Based on feedback from The Church of Latter-day Saints Missionaries, voting is not typically discussed during mission preparation. However, churches generally know when mission trips are scheduled and who will be participating. It's imperative for election officials to foster relationships with mission leadership within your jurisdiction to discuss upcoming mission trips and provide them with the tools and resources to register to vote and cast a ballot from abroad before departure.

Engaging with mission leaders also allows election officials to inform missionaries about their voting protections under UOCAVA and to answer any questions about upcoming elections. When providing election information, election officials should explain how to utilize [FVAP](#) resources such as the [Voting Assistance Guide](#), the [FPCA](#) and the [FWAB](#).

Strategy 2: Identify and foster a relationship with local mission organizations and universities that support mission trips.

In addition to local churches, there are several larger organizations that support both short and long-term mission trips that are not affiliated with a specific church denomination. Examples of national organizations that support missions include:

- [CRU](#)
- [Thirst Missions](#)
- [Samaritan's Purse International Relief](#)

In addition to stand-alone mission organizations, several universities nationwide offer students the opportunity to complete a mission trip while they are enrolled in college. Examples of mission-affiliated universities include:

- Carson-Newman University
- Bethany Global University
- Moody Bible Institute
- Dallas Baptist University
- Harding University

Missionaries affiliated with large organizations and universities may come from multiple jurisdictions. Thus, outreach should focus on educating organizations and institutions about overseas voting protections under UOCAVA and how missionaries can access specific voting resources tied to their home jurisdictions through FVAP. Key FVAP resources to direct mission organizations and mission-affiliated universities include:

- FVAP's Local Election Office Search - <https://www.fvap.gov/search-offices>
- FVAP's Overseas Citizen Voters Page - <https://www.fvap.gov/citizen-voter>
- The Federal Postcard Application (virtual) - <https://www.fvap.gov/fpca-privacy-notice>
- The Federal Postcard Application (pdf) - <https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/fvap/forms/fpca.pdf>
- The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (pdf) - <https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/fvap/forms/fwab.pdf>
- FVAP's Voting Assistance Guide (pdf) - <https://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Chapter-1/PreChapter1Web.pdf>

Strategy 3: Provide hard copies of voting materials to mission leaders.

Mission trips often take place in remote or rural locations where access to technology is very limited, although missionaries sometimes can access approved websites. Ensure that [FVAP.gov](https://www.fvap.gov) and your state or jurisdiction's elections webpage are added to the list of approved websites before their departure.

In addition to limited access to technology, access to printers might pose an issue for missionaries as well. While some states allow ballots to be transmitted electronically, many states still require ballots to be printed and mailed. With limited access to technology, it is best to print hard copies of all voting materials for mission leadership to take before departing the U.S. to ensure that missionaries can participate in

the voting process. Once abroad, mission leadership can distribute these materials by hand to those who wish to vote while on the mission trip.

Recommended hard copy items to consider providing in advance include, but are not limited to:

- Absentee ballot request forms
- The Federal Postcard Application (FPCA)
- The Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB)
- A physical copy of FVAP's most recent Voting Assistance Guide
- A list of upcoming elections and deadlines
- Envelopes/Postage
- Physical copies of Voter Guides

Strategy 4: Ensure mission leadership provides the best contact information to local election officials prior to departure.

Effective communication with missionaries abroad depends on election officials having reliable contact information. Many missionaries do not have access to personal phones or emails; however, most missionaries do have mission-specific contact information assigned by their church or organization. Missionaries should provide the most reliable contact method available when submitting voting materials. Additionally, mission leadership should

maintain contact information for mission presidents in the event that election officials need to communicate updates or changes. Mission presidents are often U.S. citizens serving as long-term mission leaders in host countries. If an election official is unable to reach a missionary, they can contact church leadership to have the mission president contact the missionary.

Example FAQ - For Missionaries

Q: As a missionary, my internet access is limited. How can I access my state's information for how to register to vote and request an absentee ballot?

A: The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) offers both virtual and physical versions of the Voting Assistance Guide. The Voting Assistance Guide offers step-by-step instructions for absentee voting in all 50 states, U.S. territories and Washington, D.C. The Voting Assistance Guide includes information such as how to register to vote, how to request an absentee ballot, how to return your ballot and contact information for your local election office. For missionaries with limited internet access, having a physical copy of the Voting Assistance Guide is critical.

Mission leaders should consider obtaining a physical copy of the most recent version of the Voting Assistance Guide prior to departing on a mission trip. Additionally, mission leaders can download a PDF of the Voting Assistance Guide locally to the mission computer, if one is available. If internet access issues arise, mission leaders should ensure that [FVAP.gov](https://www.fvap.gov) is on the mission computer's list of authorized websites to access to obtain the most up-to-date voting information.

Q: I want to vote, but I don't know anything about the candidates. How can I learn more about the candidates running for office?

A: Staying informed about candidates while completing a mission abroad can be challenging, especially with limited internet access. Voter guides are a great tool to help missionaries and other overseas citizens learn about candidates and ballot issues. A voter guide is an informational resource designed to help voters gain more insight into candidates running for office, ballot measures and other election information. Voter guides help missionaries and overseas citizens make informed decisions when participating in elections from abroad.

Physical voters guides are particularly helpful for missionaries as they do not require internet access and can be distributed alongside absentee ballot materials before departing for a mission or while serving in the field. Some states offer electronic voter guides that can be accessed online. If internet access is available, be sure to check with mission leadership to see if your state's election website can be approved to access voting information and online voter guides.

Q: I don't have access to my phone or email. What's the best way for me to receive updates about my ballot?

A: Election officials may need to contact you with important updates about your ballot, such as confirming ballot delivery or resolving ballot issues through curing procedures. Thus, it's important to provide the most reliable contact information available when requesting your absentee ballot. If you do not have consistent access to a personal phone or email, you should list the best shared contact method, such as a mission email address or phone number. In some cases, it may be best to provide contact information of your mission leader if they are better positioned to receive and relay information. The key is to identify who can reliably receive communication from election officials and ensure any necessary follow-up actions are completed in a timely manner.

Q: If I am already registered to vote, can a family member send my absentee ballot to me?

A: No, a family member cannot send your absentee ballot to you. In order to receive absentee voting protections under [The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act \(UOCAVA\)](#), your absentee ballot must be sent directly by your election office to your overseas address. Under UOCAVA, states are required to transmit absentee ballots to eligible voters at least 45 days before a federal election, ensuring overseas voters have as much time as possible to both receive and return their ballot.

Q: What do I do if I requested my absentee ballot but haven't received it yet?

A: Mailing times from overseas can be unpredictable. For this reason, it is highly recommended that you send in your absentee ballot request as soon as possible. In the event your ballot does not arrive on time, UOCAVA also authorizes the use of the [Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot \(FWAB\)](#). The FWAB serves as a back-up ballot for overseas voters who did not receive their absentee ballot to vote in federal elections. If your absentee ballot arrives sooner, you can fill that out and send it, too. Your election office will only count one ballot.

The FWAB can be completed online, printed and mailed to your local election office. Given the limited internet access of missionaries overseas, it's imperative that mission leaders have physical copies of the FWAB on hand for missionaries to utilize. Having these materials on hand can prevent missed voting opportunities due to administrative delays.

Q: How can I return my voted ballot from overseas?

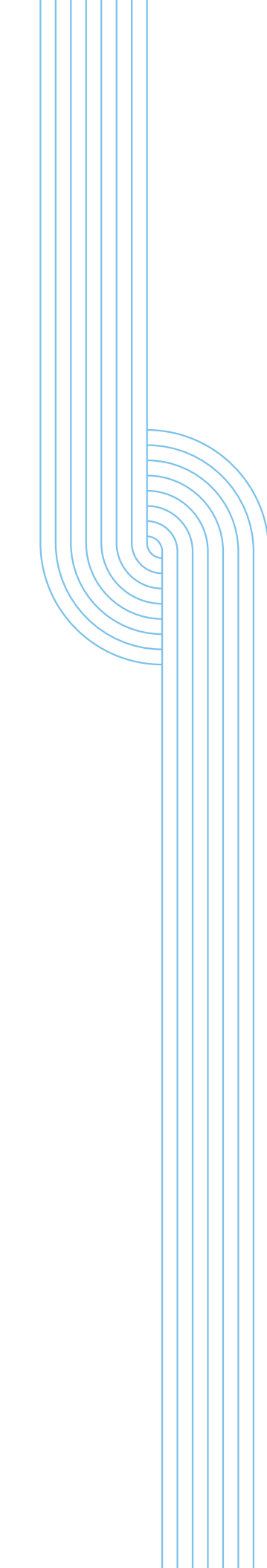
A: Ballot return methods vary state to state, and in some cases by jurisdiction. However, all states allow for absentee ballot return by mail. It's important to review specific authorized return methods and instructions in the Voting Assistance Guide. Returning your ballot by mail is one of the most common ways of returning an absentee ballot. Returning your ballot by mail from overseas, however, will require careful timing, as it can take several weeks for an election office to receive your ballot. However, some states and jurisdictions permit UOCAVA voters to use electronic return methods such as email, fax, or secure online portals. Thus, if internet access is available, electronic return options may provide a faster alternative.

Q: Where can I return my ballot by mail from overseas?

A: There are a few options for returning your voted ballot from abroad. One way missionaries can return their ballots is by mailing it from a U.S. embassy or consulate in their host country. After completing your ballot, you can drop it off at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, where your ballot will be sent through the U.S. diplomatic mail system. Many U.S. embassies and consulates offer a ballot drop box where official election mail with prepaid postage can be dropped off. Once your ballot reaches U.S. soil, it enters the U.S. postal system and will be delivered to your local election office. If you chose to mail your ballot via the U.S. embassy or consulate, you must use the appropriate mailing materials.

Prepaid election mail envelopes are typically accepted. If additional postage is required, however, it must be U.S. postage rather than foreign postage. It is strongly recommended that you submit your ballot as early as possible and check with the embassy or consulate in advance for any ballot-drop off deadlines.

Another option to return your ballot from abroad is to use the local mail system. If you're using your host country's mail system, ensure you apply proper international postage and address the envelope as instructed by your local election office. Mail delivery times can vary from country to country. Thus, it's imperative that you return your ballot as soon as possible to ensure your ballot arrives by your state's ballot return deadline.



Conclusion

With so many responsibilities and competing priorities, election officials often do not have time to conduct targeted outreach to specific voter populations, especially overseas voter populations. The strategies and resources identified in this toolkit aim to simplify outreach to overseas voters, including study abroad students, Peace Corps volunteers, and missionaries. The talking points and sample Q&As may be relevant to other overseas voter populations, and we hope to receive feedback from election officials on how they adapt these resources to target relevant voters in their jurisdiction.

The Overseas Voting Initiative aims to identify and address voting barriers faced by UOCAVA voters through policy, research, and working group meetings with state and local election officials. Communication challenges with overseas voters have been a recurring issue raised by the OVI working group over the last several years. This toolkit complements a series of other communication toolkits, including [best practices for emailing military and overseas voters](#), [best practices for state UOCAVA web pages](#), and [building relationships with local installations](#).

To learn more about OVI's work and follow other communications best practices, visit <https://ovi.csg.org/>.