



POSTAL NEWS

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POSTAL SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE **TEAM UP FOR ABSENTEE BALLOT PROGRAM**

'Absentee Ballot Express' targets delivery of ballots from military personnel overseas

Washington, DC – The U.S. Postal Service, the Military Postal Service and more than 15,000 election officials across the country are working together to make sure that absentee ballots reach to military personnel overseas as quickly as possible.

Absentee Ballot Express (ABE) is a series of special procedures designed to expedite the delivery of absentee ballots to and from Military Post Offices overseas for the November 7 general election. The program will be in place for 50 days.

The Postal Service's goal is to assist the Military Postal Service in expediting the handling of this mail to Army/Air Force Post Office and Fleet Post Office addresses so that all ballots from military service members overseas reach local election officials across the United States.

"The Postal Service has taken a number of critical steps to help serve men and women stationed overseas during the general election," said Paul Vogel, managing director, global business, and senior vice president. "We welcome the challenge to once again provide this valuable service to the Armed Forces community stationed overseas, especially those on the front lines."

The Postal Service plays no role in how elections are carried out in the United States, although it is authorized to inform and educate election officials about USPS products and services available.

Special processing procedures for military absentee ballots will be in place through Nov. 6. Postal Service representatives are meeting with election officials at the local level and explained the procedures for identifying and handling election-related materials destined for bases and installations overseas.

In the 2004 election, the joint endeavor between the U.S. Postal Service and the Military Postal Service Agency expedited military absentee ballots to our service men and women serving outside the U.S., said Dr. David S. C. Chu, under secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

"The Department of Defense is pleased to join with the U.S. Postal Service again this year to speed absentee ballots to our deployed men and women. I want to thank the Postal Service for outstanding support in expediting balloting materials so that our service men and women can exercise their Constitutional right to elect their leaders," Dr. Chu said.

County elections officials are being encouraged to mail requested absentee ballots addressed

to APO/FPO addresses early and sort them to three, specially designated Postal Service international service centers in Miami, San Francisco and New York.

“The U.S. Postal Service recognizes the vital role that mail plays in the American democratic process. We are committed to providing election officials nationwide with the information necessary to meet their election mail needs,” Vogel said.

Local post offices will coordinate the pickup of ballots and expedite the delivery to these three centers. Ballots then are placed in specially marked trays to be given the highest priority in transportation overseas. All Postal Service employees handling election-related materials and absentee ballots have been told of the procedures and are aware of the emphasis being given to the handling and distribution of absentee ballots, according to Vogel.

Overseas, the Military Postal Service will give priority handling to ballots and will make every attempt to deliver them as quickly as possible. Ballots arriving from overseas will be given preference processing at distribution centers. For the month of October, all completed ballots returning to the U.S. will be given priority processing. Beginning Nov. 1, returning ballots will be sent by Express Mail to local election officials to further expedite delivery in time for the Nov. 7 general election.

Since 1775, the United States Postal Service and its predecessor, the Post Office Department, have connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. An independent federal agency that visits more than 144 million homes and businesses every day, the Postal Service is the only service provider delivering to every address in the nation. It receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of \$70 billion, it is the world’s leading provider of mailing and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 46 percent of the world’s mail volume—some 212 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year—and serves 10 million customers each day at its 37,000 retail locations nationwide.

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