

September 28, 2016

Absentee Voting for U.S. Citizens

It's Absentee Voting Week from September 26 – October 3, and States and territories have started sending out ballots to overseas voters. Have you requested and received your State absentee ballot? It's not too late to go online to the website of the Federal Voting Assistance Program, fvap.gov, and register to vote in the upcoming U.S. general election to be held on November 8.

What are absentee ballots? Do they only count in close elections? Many absentee ballots are cast by voters who are unable to vote at their physical polling place due to being an active duty military member, a family member of someone on active duty, or a U.S. citizen residing overseas. All ballots submitted according to State laws are counted in every election.

The media often will report the projected outcome of the election before all of the ballots are counted. In a close election, the media may report that the outcome cannot be announced until after the absentee ballots are counted. However, all ballots, including absentee ballots, are counted in the final totals for every election and every vote (absentee or in-person) counts the same.

Most States require you to register to vote to start the absentee voting process. We encourage you to use the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). The FPCA is a form you can use to register to vote and request absentee ballots for the year. We suggest that you send in a new FPCA every year and when you move.

Many States allow you to submit your FPCA electronically and all States allow for at least one form of electronic transmission of your blank ballot. Mail delivery times will vary based on where you are and customs requirements. Mail your materials early enough to account for the mail delivery time. **Using electronic options can help reduce the ballot transit time for your election materials.** Please note, while we can assist with mailing voted ballots, you will not be able to vote in person at the Embassy or Consular Agency on election day.

You can find more information about how to travel to the US on the embassy's website at kingston.usembassy.gov and the website of our authorized service provider at usvisa-info.com. Keep on top of embassy news on our Facebook page, [facebook.com/pages/USEmbassy-Jamaica](https://www.facebook.com/pages/USEmbassy-Jamaica), and by following [@USEmbassyJA](https://twitter.com/USEmbassyJA) on Twitter. We also answer general visa questions on our Facebook and Twitter pages.

You may also send your questions to: editorial@jamaicaobserver.com to be forwarded to the embassy.

Reminder: Your appointment time is your arrival time, NOT your interview time. Do not show up earlier than your appointment time.