

**NEW WEB TOOL FOR MILITARY AND OVERSEAS MINNESOTANS  
INTRODUCED BY THE OFFICE OF THE MINNESOTA SECRETARY OF STATE**

*Ballots Available for Delivery by E-mail, Fax*

The Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State has launched a new Web site that will make it easier for all military personnel and Minnesotans overseas to participate in elections this fall. The *Military and Overseas Voter Service* provides easy-to-follow instructions to assist eligible military and overseas voters register and request absentee ballots.

The *Military and Overseas Voting Service* Web site is at [minnesota.overseasvotefoundation.org](http://minnesota.overseasvotefoundation.org)

As a result of recent legislation, for the first time all Minnesota military and overseas voters may request that their ballots be sent to them by e-mail or fax — effectively cutting in half the transit time it previously took to receive a ballot. Absentee ballots must still be printed and returned by mail.

In addition, if a voter has moved from one location to another while overseas, the ability to receive a ballot by e-mail can make a difference in whether the ballot is received in time to be sent back to Minnesota to be counted.

Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie believes the online tool will significantly increase voter participation this November by members of the armed services and Minnesotans living abroad.

“We have and will continue to find new and innovative ways to simplify the voting process and to ensure that eligible voters can participate in elections,” said Secretary Ritchie. “I encourage everyone to get the word out to friends and family in the military or overseas and those with plans to travel outside the country this fall to take advantage of this new free service.”

In the 2006 mid-term election, only 2,695 Minnesota military and overseas voters successfully cast ballots. In the 2004 presidential election, only 7,646 military and overseas voters from Minnesota successfully cast ballots. The Pentagon currently estimates that there are approximately 90,000 Minnesotans who are eligible to use this service.

To create this new service, the Office of the Secretary of State worked closely with the Overseas Vote Foundation, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to helping eligible U.S. voters in the military or living overseas participate in their nation’s democracy.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ABSENTEE VOTING FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL AND VOTERS OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES**

**That is the new *Military and Overseas Voter Service* at [minnesota.overseasvotefoundation.org](http://minnesota.overseasvotefoundation.org)?**

The *Military and Overseas Voter Service* is a new, customized Web site that provides easy-to-follow instructions to assist eligible military and overseas voters register and request absentee ballots. For the first time, all Minnesota military personnel and overseas voters may request that their ballots be sent to them by e-mail or fax — effectively cutting in half the transit time it previously took to receive a ballot.

**Who benefits from the *Military and Overseas Voter Service* Web site and from recent changes in legislation?**

Persons who benefit include eligible Minnesota voters who are in the military, their spouses and dependents, as well as civilians who are temporarily or permanently overseas during the fall primary (September 9) and/or general election (November 4). This includes government workers, students, members of faith-based organizations, and employees of private firms.

**What are the absentee ballot delivery options for military and overseas voters ?**

Military and overseas voters may elect to have their absentee ballots sent to them by fax or e-mail. Otherwise, ballots will be sent by mail/air-mail.

**When should a voter register if they want to vote in 2008?**

*Eligible voters should register as soon as possible.* An absentee ballot application can be submitted at any time during the year. However, it should be submitted as far in advance of an election as possible to avoid delays in receiving a ballot.

**What are the registration and ballot request deadlines?**

The practical deadline for submitting voter registration and absentee ballot application depends on the time it takes to return the voted ballot by mail or express delivery service. Technically, the deadline for voter registration and requesting an absentee ballot is 5 p.m. the day before the election. If a voter is overseas, even if they can request a ballot that late, there is not usually time left for the voter to return their ballot by mail so that it will be received by Election Day.

**Can a voter submit their voter registration/absentee ballot application online?**

No. Applications for absentee ballots must be printed out and signed by the voter, and then returned by mail, fax, or scanned and returned as an email attachment.

**What if a military or overseas voter has already requested their absentee ballot?**

If a voter submitted an absentee ballot request before June 1, 2008, by default their absentee ballot will be delivered to them by mail. If a voter wants their absentee ballot to be delivered to them by email or fax, they will need to submit another application for an absentee ballot.

**How long is an absentee ballot application valid?**

An application is valid for four years (two federal election cycles). Ballots will be sent automatically for all elections in which the applicant is eligible to vote. The voter must re-apply after two federal elections, as well as every time their overseas mailing address or other contact information changes.

**Can a voter self-certify their absentee ballot?**

Yes. Voters may self-certify their ballot by using the same passport, Minnesota driver's license or state ID number, or the last four digits of their social security number on all forms throughout the process.

**When can voters expect to receive their absentee ballot?**

Absentee ballots are sent out by election officials at least 30 days prior to the election to voters who have submitted applications for them. Ballots are sent as quickly as possible to voters whose applications are received fewer than 30 days before the election. On their absentee ballot application, military and overseas voters may request to have their ballots delivered by fax or e-mail. Otherwise, ballots are sent by mail or are airmailed to addresses outside the continental U.S. An absentee ballot may be sent by an express mail service if a voter provides a pre-paid envelope to their county auditor's office.

**Can a voter return a voted ballot electronically?**

No. Regardless of how a voter receives their ballot, a voted ballot must be returned by mail or express delivery service to the voter's county auditor to be received no later than Election Day.