

The Department of Defense (DoD) announced that September 27th through October 4th is Absentee Voting Week. During this week, DoD's goal is to promote military and overseas voting awareness, and to encourage those that have yet to request or receive an absentee ballot to go to <http://www.FVAP.gov> and fill it out as soon as possible.

I cannot understate the importance of this week. Join me this week by forwarding the [information about Absentee Voting Week](#) to members of your family or friends who live abroad or are serving in the military. Having served in the Peace Corps in El Salvador, I understand that our uniformed Americans and citizens abroad face unique challenges with voting, and as an educator, I know the importance of voter education.

I have fought to protect the voting rights of the American people—that is why I, along with my colleague, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, introduced the [Overseas Voting Practical Amendments Act of 2009 \(H.R. 1739\)](#), to protect the voting rights of our military and overseas voters.

This week, more than 9,500 voting assistance officers in the military will emphasize the importance of filling out and returning an absentee ballot. Through the Federal Assistance Voting Program, DoD encourages the use of electronic alternatives such as email and fax to request, receive, or return ballots. Many online tools should significantly reduce the waiting time to receive or send in a ballot. If this is done through regular postal mail, it can take up to 40 days, a serious impediment to voting from overseas. In the last election cycle, only 63 percent of the military ballots were returned to their local election officials on time.

Voting is a sacred right that should be made available to all our fellow citizens. Help our military members and families, and all Americans living abroad, participate in this November's election by spreading the word about Absentee Voting Week.