

U.S. Embassy Freetown, Sierra Leone
Message for U.S. Citizens: July 4th Voting Message
June 25, 2014

Celebrate democracy this 4th of July by taking the necessary steps to vote in the 2014 U.S. elections!

In order to vote in the November 2014 elections, all overseas U.S. citizens need to have completed a [Federal Post Card Application \(FPCA\) in 2014](#). Whether you are a first-time voter or have already received ballots and voted absentee in past elections, you must complete an FPCA **each year** to participate in elections as an overseas absentee voter.

Returning Your Completed Ballot: If your state requires you to return paper voting forms or ballots to local election officials, the U.S. Embassy Freetown can provide assistance to you. The ballots must be in postage-paid return envelopes or in envelopes bearing sufficient domestic U.S. postage, and must also be addressed to the relevant local election officials. It will take up to 2 to 3 weeks for your ballot to reach its destination in the United States.

Place your voted ballot in a U.S. postage-paid envelope containing the address of your local election officials. Drop it off at the U.S. Embassy Freetown on Mondays or Wednesdays from 2:00-4:00 pm, and we will send it back home for you without the need to pay international postage. If it is more convenient for you, you can also return your FPCA or ballot to your local election officials via international mail or professional courier service at your own expense.

If you have never voted while overseas before, the process is easy -- just follow these steps:

1. [Complete a Federal Post Card Application \(FPCA\)](#)

Whether you are a first-time voter or have voted absentee in past elections, complete an [FPCA](#) to receive your ballot this fall. It allows you to register to vote and request absentee ballots for all elections for federal offices (presidential and state primaries, run-off, special, and the November general elections) during the course of the year in which you submit the FPCA. Local election officials in all U.S. states and territories accept the [FPCA](#).

The [online voting assistant](#) available at [FVAP.gov](#) is an easy way to complete the [FPCA](#). It will ask you questions specific to your state and tell you if electronic ballot delivery is possible. No matter which state you vote in, **we encourage you to ask your local election officials to deliver your blank ballots to you electronically** (by email, internet download, or fax, depending on your state). Be sure to include your email address to take advantage of electronic delivery. The [online voting assistant](#) will generate a printable [FPCA](#), which you can then print and sign.

2. **Submit the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)**

See the information at the beginning of this message for options to drop off your FPCA in person to the U.S. Embassy Freetown.

If it's more convenient for you, you can have a friend or family member drop off your FPCA to the U.S. Embassy on your behalf or you can send your [FPCA](#) or ballot directly to your local election officials via international mail or professional courier service at your own expense.

3. **Receive Your Ballot**

After submitting your FPCA, most states allow you to confirm online your registration and ballot delivery selection. States are now required to send out ballots 45 days before an election for federal office (President, U.S. Senate, or U.S. House of Representatives) to any overseas U.S. citizen who has completed an FPCA.

4. **Return Your Ballot**

As with the FPCA, you can return your voted ballot to your local election officials via the nearest embassy or consulate or mail it directly via international mail.

Your Vote Counts

Many U.S. elections within the past ten years have been decided by a margin of victory of less than 0.1%. All states are required to count every absentee ballot as long as it is valid and reaches local election officials by the absentee ballot receipt deadline (differs by state).

Be an educated voter. Check out the [FVAP links page](#) for helpful resources that will aid your research of candidates and issues. Non-partisan information about candidates, their voting records, and their positions on issues is widely available and easy to obtain via numerous websites such as [Project Smart Voter](#). You can also read national and hometown newspapers online, and search the Internet to locate articles and information.

To receive information by email about election dates and deadlines, subscribe to FVAP's Voting Alerts (vote@fvap.gov). FVAP also shares Voting Alerts via [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

If you have any questions about registering to vote overseas, please contact the Voting Assistance Officer at VoteFreetown@state.gov.