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November 1, 2007

To: All County Clerks/Registrars of Voters (07199)

FROM: Irene E. Capps 
Voting and Outreach Program Manager

Subject: Military and Overseas Voters -- The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)

The Federal Voting Assistance Program provides the following information regarding Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot voting. The most common barrier that citizens covered under the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* encounter when voting absentee is insufficient ballot transit time. Many citizens are located in remote areas around the world where mail is not delivered or picked up on a regular basis (such as sailors and marines aboard ship, and Peace Corps workers, missionaries, airmen, sailors and soldiers at remote sites).

The FWAB is pre-positioned overseas as a "back-up" ballot should a citizen not receive his or her regular ballot from the state or territory in enough time to meet state deadlines for counting. Under Federal provisions, a U.S. citizen may use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot to vote for Federal offices in the general election if that citizen meets all three of the following conditions:

1. The citizen must be either an absent Uniformed Services voter absent from his/her voting residence or be a citizen outside the U.S. including APO/FPO.
2. The citizen must make a timely ballot request, and submit the FPCA or other state accepted form to their state of legal voting residence requesting a state absentee ballot. The appropriate Local Election Official receives their request at least 30 days before the election or before the ballot request deadline, whichever is later.
3. The citizen has not received the regular state absentee ballot.

In summary, the FWAB is an emergency ballot, only valid when a U.S. citizen makes a timely ballot request for the General Election; is an absent Uniformed Service voter away from his/her voting residence or a citizen located outside the U.S. including APO/FPO and the requested absentee ballot has not been received from the state or territory.

If eligible to use this ballot, the citizen may indicate their election choices for Federal offices in the general election. To vote this blank write-in ballot, citizens may vote for a candidate by writing in the candidate's name or writing in the name of a party affiliation (if the intention of a voter can be ascertained, the candidate/party choices will be accepted).

FWABs are available worldwide at U.S. embassies and consulates, military installations and overseas organizations and corporations with U.S. citizens.

Please advise your military and overseas citizens that they should use the FWAB when the election is rapidly approaching and insufficient time exists to receive, vote and timely return the requested state ballot.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at irene.capps@sos.ca.gov or (916) 657-2166 or you may contact the Federal Voting Assistance Program directly at (703) 588-1584.

Thank you!