



VIRTUAL BALLOT PARTY TOOLKIT

Who says voting can't be fun?! We hope you find this toolkit helpful in planning your next ballot party.

GOALS

1. Increase military family voter participation
2. Cultivate a sense of community centered on civic engagement
3. Make voting fun!

WHAT'S A BALLOT PARTY?

A ballot party is a relaxed, celebratory gathering where partygoers bring their absentee ballots, discuss what candidates and issues they're voting on, and turn in their ballots together at the end. Most military voters vote by mail, which can feel way less momentous than going to a polling place -- we're trying to fix that by bringing a sense of community back to voting.

The inspiration for ballot parties came from a nonmilitary group of friends in Seattle, Washington, where every voter votes by mail. At their ballot parties, everyone's ballots looked the same, and they could discuss the same issues they were all voting on. We have adapted that format for military voters. The folks you gather with may have ballots that look completely different, but hey it's fun to learn about what voting looks like around the country!

Some parties will invite an "expert" to answer questions, either about the absentee ballot rules or about one of the campaigns under consideration. No pressure if you'd rather cultivate a more informal setting.

The primary goal of these parties is to have fun! To that end, while information sharing is welcome, try to keep a non-judgmental tone.

PARTY-PLANNING TIPS

- **Go digital!** Normally we'd recommend inviting milspouses over to your house or a community space for an in-person brunch. But we realize that that's not an option for a lot of us right now! So instead of letting a good time go by the wayside, make your party a virtual hangout instead! Send an email invitation. Set up a Zoom, Google Hangout, or other digital meeting platform.
- **Get creative!** Plan a theme. Ask your guests to dress up. Share menu ideas. Have everyone bring a sweet treat! Find ways to make it fun for your attendees. You can even mail a small care package.
 - Care package ideas - Pick a theme and send a few items within the theme. For example, ladies night in! Send a dollar store champagne flute, a small scented candle, and your favorite candy or sweet treat. Another idea: Rock the Vote! Rock candy, pop rocks, and reusable ice cubes.
- **Use our "I Voted!" stickers.** One of the bummers of not voting in person is not getting your sticker! Under Downloadable Materials below, find some options.
- **Take pictures!** We'd love to see all the ways our volunteers are putting this toolkit to creative use. If you post on social media, **tag Secure Families Initiative** so we can like and re-share.
 - Facebook: [@SecureFamilies](#)
 - Instagram: [@Secure_Families](#)
 - Twitter: [@Secure_Families](#)
 - Hashtag: #MilspouseVote

SUGGESTED TIMELINE

While Election Day 2020 is November 3 for most people, for absentee voters like the majority of military families **our ballot day is more like late September!** Especially this year, with postal mail delays across the wazoo, we strongly encourage folks

- Right now:
 - Think through your invitation list. Who would enjoy voting in community? Maybe send out some feelers to those folks about when they might enjoy partying (responsibly!)
 - Once you've settled on a date and time, customize one of our invitations and send them out!
 - Help your folks make sure they have all their registration and absentee ballot requests in as soon as possible.



- Mid-September:
 - Ballots should arrive at least 45 days before the election. Check in with your folks to make sure they've got theirs. Some states send the ballots by email, so tell them to check their Junk folders in case. They may still need to print the ballot for return, it just depends.
 - If anyone's ballot has not arrived, tell your folks to get a "Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot" (FWAB) just in case.
- Late September / Early October
 - Party time! Get your folks excited by sending them encouraging GIFs ahead of time.

DOWNLOADABLE MATERIALS

Here are some easy-to-use materials, courtesy of our awesome volunteer designers!

- [Click to download Invitation examples](#)
- [Order some of our "I Voted By Mail!" stickers](#)
- [Click to download Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot](#)

RELEVANT SFI RESOURCES

- [Military Spouse Register to Vote Guidance](#)
- [Vote Tripling Challenge](#)
- [Vote by Mail 101](#)
- [Why your vote counts, no matter what](#)
- [Helping U.S. Citizens Living Abroad Prepare for the 2020 Election](#)

