



# DEMOCRATS ABROAD

## Global Presidential Primary

## Helping Americans to cast remote ballots in the GPP

The key document about remote ballots is the Guide to Remote Voting.<sup>1</sup> If you plan to teach your members at a meeting how to cast remote ballots, hold a public event to encourage Americans to participate in the Global Presidential Primary remotely, or organize a Remote Voting Assistance Event before or during the week of March 1-8, **you should read that entire guide carefully.**

In general, it's best to direct people who want to vote remotely to the Democrats Abroad website to download a ballot. In communications with members (and non-member US citizens) in your country, you may include your Country Committee's mail and email contact information for your Remote Voting Assistant, to make the primary accessible to those who may not have access to internet.

The remainder of this document addresses two ways of helping Americans in your area to cast a remote ballot in the Global Presidential Primary: at Remote Voting Assistance Events, and by sending remote ballots to your members without waiting for them to ask.

## Remote Voting Assistance Events

Many Democrats living abroad will receive, fill out, and return their remote ballots on their own. Our process of remote voting allows individuals to organize events where groups of Democrats gather at a particular place and time to help one another complete the process correctly. While there is no official description of such an event, leaders in Democrats Abroad may want to organize a "Remote Voting Assistance Event" to promote the Global Presidential Primary and the general idea of participating in US politics from abroad.

This can be a good opportunity to serve your members, and even more importantly, it can be a way to serve Americans living in places where you cannot organize a full Voter Center for

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<sup>1</sup> <http://wiki.democratsabroad.org/display/DSP2016/Global+Presidential+Primary+2016>

whatever reasons. A Remote Voting Assistance Event can also be an attention-getter in order to earn publicity with the local press.

Any Remote Voting Assistance Event should have:

- a way to check whether an individual is a member of Democrats Abroad
- a way for individuals to join Democrats Abroad (paper form or internet connection)
- copies of paper ballots and plenty of blue or black pens
- envelopes and stamps for those who choose to mail their own ballots
- a copy of the Guide to Remote Voting
- a VoteFromAbroad.org set up for general election ballot requests (voter registration)

Here are some important rules for helping individuals with remote voting:

*Always make sure that a person is a member of Democrats Abroad before assisting him or her with remote voting.*

*Always confirm that the person has not voted and will not vote in their home state's primary at the Presidential level. (Voting for Senate, House, and other races is permitted.)*

*If a person wants to vote in-person at a Voting Center, he or she must not cast a Remote Ballot "just in case" – both ballots would be invalidated.*

*If at all possible, get attendees to register with VoteFromAbroad.org right there. In any case, remind all U.S. citizens that joining DA and voting in the Global Presidential Primary **does not** sign them up to receive an absentee ballot for the general election in November.*

*Study the instructions for the Remote Ballot carefully before planning your event.*

Although a Remote Voting Assistance Event is not a formal Voting Center, the principles of accessibility and neutrality still apply. The environment should be open and welcoming to all Americans under the "big tent" of the Democratic Party. The room should be decorated in a way that respects and gives equal treatment to all candidates. The leaders helping voters should not wear clothing endorsing one candidate or another (or even a "wing" of the Democratic Party). There should be no electioneering or campaigning. Consider, for example, that a voter loudly criticizing a candidate could make another voter intending to cast a ballot for that candidate feel unwelcome.

If you use paper forms to help voters join Democrats Abroad, be sure to enter the information into the DA database that same day. No matter how new members join, send a notice to your country committee's Membership Administrator to approve those members as soon as possible. **If a remote ballot arrives and the voter has not yet been approved as a member, the ballot may be deemed invalid.**

Remote Voting Assistance Events have two real hazards that the following guidance will help you handle: the handling of other voters' ballots and speaking with the press.

## Ballot Handling at a Remote Voting Assistance Event

You know your responsibility to remain neutral, fair, and transparent in the Global Presidential Primary and you take it seriously. And yet an observer may not acknowledge that. The issue is most thorny when it comes to the path that ballots take from the voter's hands to the authorized tabulators.

Outside of Voting Centers and before Global Tabulation, the following people are the only ones officially authorized to handle ballots cast by voters:

- International Chair
- Tabulators of ballots cast by fax and by email, as designated by the International Chair
- Remote Ballot Wardens in each country committee, as designated by the Chairs

If one of these people is at your Remote Voting Assistance Event, then he or she can collect Remote Ballots in any way that conforms with the Guide to Remote Ballots.

If none of these people are at your Remote Voting Assistance Event, then you will need to design a process that does not rely on **anyone at all** to transmit voted ballots outside the supervision of the individual voter.

Here's a concrete way to think about ballot handling. Your process is not acceptable if your Remote Voting Assistance Event introduces any new way in which a person who wanted to manipulate the results of the Global Presidential Primary *could* interfere with the delivery of ballots cast.<sup>2</sup>

For example, you may not collect loose ballots in a box, take the box home, place all the ballots in an envelope, and send that envelope to your Remote Ballot Warden. An outside observer would point out that you could easily remove ballots cast for a candidate that you dislike and send the rest. That undermines confidence in our process to an unacceptable extent.

Ideally, a Remote Voting Assistance Event provides methods for the voters themselves to submit their ballots: by providing means of scanning or taking a photo of the ballot for submission by email by the voter, or by providing envelopes and stamps for the voter to submit their ballot by postal mail.

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<sup>2</sup> This assumption isn't about the trustworthiness of you or your organization's leadership. An acceptable process will assume that everyone involved is capable of manipulation and still get each voter's ballot where it needs to be.

*Ideal Example:* The DA leaders provide blank ballots, the ability to look up members' ID numbers, pre-addressed envelopes, and stamps (for purchase). During a set period, voters can arrive, fill out a ballot completely and ask questions of well-informed leaders. Then they can decide whether to return home with the ballot to scan and email it, or alternatively to take an envelope and stamp and mail the ballot at the postbox on the corner. Press are present to interview willing voters, and the local media contact takes posed photos of consenting voters for social media.

*Acceptable Example:* The DA leaders provide blank ballots, the ability to look up members' ID numbers, and a scanner connected to an internet-capable computer.<sup>3</sup> The voters can arrive, fill out a ballot completely and ask questions of well-informed leaders. Then they can decide: (1) to return home with the ballot to deliver by email attachment, fax, or post, OR (2) to have a volunteer scan their ballot, load it as an attachment to an email message addressed to [PrimaryVoting@democratsabroad.org](mailto:PrimaryVoting@democratsabroad.org) and the voter's own email address for their verification, and send that individual email message on the spot with the voter still present.<sup>4</sup>

No matter how you organize your event, you should know and fully understand all the instructions for casting a remote ballot. For example, all ballots delivered by email must be sent with *one ballot and one voter* per email message.

Ultimately, it is you, the organizer of a Voting Assistance Event, who takes responsibility for all ballots connected with the event. Be sure that each and every voter (no matter how distrusting) has full confidence that his or her ballot was properly delivered and will be accurately tabulated.

## Press at a Remote Voting Assistance Event (and Social Media)

Please do not arrange for press beyond the local media where the event will take place. As a global organization, we want to keep the focus on our Voting Centers. Remote Voting Assistance Events are only appropriate for earning publicity on a local scale – either through press attention or social media. If you have local Voting Centers planned, consider how social media focused on a Remote Voting Assistance Event will help or hinder attendance at the in-person Voting Center.

As for all press-related events, please contact your Country Committee's Media Contact and the Communications Director for Press Relations Mike Heffron ([mike@democratsabroad.org](mailto:mike@democratsabroad.org)) well in advance.

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<sup>3</sup> If you choose to use the camera on a smartphone -- whether your own phone or the voter's -- to take an image of the completed ballot, be sure to check the settings on the camera and the email program. Many smartphones are set to send "social-media" quality by default, which may not be legible.

<sup>4</sup> Another concrete example of a **Don't**: It would not be acceptable, if the internet connection fails, to create many draft email messages with attachments, go home, and then send them outside the presence of the voters.

Words and images to avoid in press coverage and social media:

- polling place
- election *today*
- counting ballots
- collecting ballots

Phrases to use:

- getting together to help each other participate in the Global Presidential Primary
- for those who don't live near one of more than 120 Voting Centers all over the world
- for Americans who can't make it to [local Voting Center] on [date] to vote in-person
- sending our ballots to central tabulators who will verify and count
- giving all Democrats living abroad a chance to choose our nominee for President
- extraordinarily accessible process of voting remotely, from all over the world
- help Americans cast their ballots in the Global Presidential Primary
- any US citizen living abroad, over 18 by Nov 8, who supports Democratic principles can do what we're doing
- volunteers giving their time to help fellow citizens choose the next President
- "absentee voting" is okay if you think that "remote voting" is too unfamiliar a term
- [VoteFromAbroad.org](http://VoteFromAbroad.org); [VoteFromAbroad.org](http://VoteFromAbroad.org); [VoteFromAbroad.org](http://VoteFromAbroad.org) for the general election

Don't forget to promote the idea of the Global Presidential Primary:

- only the Democratic Party gives Americans living abroad this opportunity
- giving a voice to the more than 8 million Americans living overseas
- advocating for the issues that affect Americans living abroad

**You may not engage in any tabulation or simulated tabulation of ballots, even casually.**

Such an impression would grievously undermine the perceived legitimacy of our delegate selection process.

In interviews with the press, ordinary members not associated with the GPP may give their impressions of the mood or the attendance. DA leaders, by contrast, should avoid any topics that might undermine their perceived neutrality.

### **Remote Voting Assistance Events before March 1st**

- Make it clear that the counting of votes will occur in the future
- Make it clear that the ballots are delivered to authorized tabulators
- Choose a nearby Voting Center (if possible) to mention for in-person voting
- Call press attention to the significance of Super Tuesday
- Emphasize the idea of absentee voting, and draw a parallel with voting by overseas absentee ballot in the general election in November

### **Remote Voting Assistance Events during the week of the Global Presidential Primary**

- Call attention to ballots being cast all over the world during the same time
- Mention that Americans can still cast remote ballots from home (until March 8)

## **Sending unsolicited ballots to members**

Country Committees may choose to send blank remote ballots to members without a request. This strategy runs the risk of turning people away from a Voting Center because they have already voted. (Remember that anyone who votes twice will have both ballots invalidated.)

If you choose to send unsolicited ballots, whether by email or by post, you must always include the full instructions. You should include a local contact who can answer questions about remote ballots.

The accompanying letter should include:

- The locations and schedules for nearby Voting Centers, with a notice that those planning to vote in-person should disregard the attached ballot.
- A reminder that eligible non-members in the member's household are welcome to cast ballots but must first become members of Democrats Abroad
- The suggestion that the member log into the [democratsabroad.org](http://democratsabroad.org) website and find their membership number. Better yet, build their membership number into the email message or letter by using tokens.

Do not send unsolicited ballots to non-members. It is too likely that the recipients will return the ballot without joining Democrats Abroad, which will give them the impression that they voted when their ballot is in fact invalid.