

## **TIME OFF TO VOTE**

As President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, “Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting.” The right of U.S. citizens to vote is a fundamental right that is afforded protection by the U.S. Constitution. Every eligible voter shall be given an opportunity to register and vote in any election for which he or she is eligible and be able to vote in person or by absentee. Given the importance of exercising your right to vote, can you be authorized time off during the duty day to vote?

For DA civilians, DoD 1400.25-M states that excused absence (administrative leave) may be granted by the appropriate authority if the polls are not open at least 3 hours either before or after an employee’s regular work hours. Whether the employee reports to work 3 hours before the polls open or after is determined by which one involves less time away from work.

For example, if polls are open 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., and an employee has normal work hours of 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., he or she may receive 30 minutes of excused absence to vote and report to work at 9:30 a.m. This is because going 3 hours after the polls open accounts for 30 minutes away from work whereas going 3 hours before the polls close accounts for 2 hours away from work. NOTE: If the polls are open either three hours before or three hours after the employee’s regularly scheduled duty hours, no time off should be granted. In this example, if the employee’s work day began at 9:30 a.m. instead of 9:00 a.m., the employee would not receive any excused absence.

Texas offers a period prior to the day of the election during which voters may cast ballots early. Some employees, such as those on alternative work schedules, may find it convenient to vote during these early voting periods. Agencies should grant excused absence for early voting only when (1) the employee will be unable to vote on the day of the election because of activities directly related to the agency’s mission (such as travel) and cannot vote by absentee ballot, or (2) early voting hours are the same as, or exceed, voting hours on the day of the election, in which case the information provided under “Granting Excused Absence for Voting” applies.

If an employee chooses to vote earlier, but the hours in which polling places are open are shorter than on Election Day, the employee is not eligible for excused absence because the employee has opted to vote at that time. Also, an agency should not grant excused absence if an employee’s non-workday on his or her compressed or other alternative work schedule falls on a day that his or her polling place is open for voting.

For uniformed personnel, AR 600-8-10 provides the unit commander authority to grant special passes to exercise voting responsibilities of citizenship.

If you have further questions regarding voting, contact your unit voting assistance officer for assistance.