

Sending Holiday Mail/Gifts to our Troops

Every year at this time, my office receives hundreds of requests from people throughout western Pennsylvania asking how they can send holiday cards/care packages to our nation's service members. I appreciate this generosity, and these gifts boost morale during the holidays. My office has identified the following ways in which you can provide a card, a care package, or a gift card this holiday season. Also, please visit <http://www.americasupportsyou.mil> for dozens of ways in which you can support our men and women in uniform.

To Send Holiday Cards:

The American Red Cross and Pitney Bowes have partnered once again to deliver holiday cards to American service members, veterans, and their families in the United States and throughout the world. Last year, they mailed out over 600,000 holiday cards, and this year their goal is to distribute one million. Please visit <http://www.redcross.org/email/saf/> for guidelines and additional information. All cards must be postmarked by December 10th.

To Send Care Packages:

The U.S. Postal Service is offering free military package kits, which includes priority mail boxes, tape, labels, to make it easier to send a holiday package to service members throughout the world and across the U.S. Please call 1-800-610-8734 to request a kit. The Postal Service suggests that if you are planning on mailing a holiday care package to troops serving in Iraq or Afghanistan, you do so by December 4th. For other military bases, the recommended deadline is December 11th.

<http://www.americasupportsyou.mil> has over 100 organizations that provide care packages to our service members and their families. For example, you can donate through Operation USO Care Package (<https://www.uso.org/donate/custom.aspx?id=565&>). For every \$25 donation you make, the USO will send a care package with both needed and requested items valued at approximately \$75 to a deployed service member.

To Send Gift Cards:

You can purchase gift cards through the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES), and our troops can use these at any AAFES (both overseas and throughout the U.S.) to purchase electronics, clothing, jewelry, music, etc. You can buy a gift card for a specific service member of you can send a gift card to someone in Iraq/Afghanistan or recovering in one of our military hospitals. Please visit <https://thor.aafes.com/gcs/default.aspx> for instructions and additional information.

The Fisher House Foundation, Inc. participates in a program that provides military families in need with gift certificates that can be used to buy food and staples through the commissary (the military's grocery store). They have provided over \$100,000 in assistance through the program. Please visit <http://www.fisherhouse.org/support/support.shtml> for additional information.