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# Knoxville NEWS SENTINEL

SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 2026 | KNOXNEWS.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## Military voters scrutinize court case

### Impact on ballot access could be far-reaching

**Sarah D. Wire**  
USA TODAY

For three years, Alberto Ramos had a binder filled with all the important voting-related dates and rules for every state: party registration and absentee ballot request deadlines, election dates

– and available grace periods for military voters.

Along with running the operations on a Navy submarine, the now-retired Navy lieutenant commander served as a voting assistance officer, coordinating helping seamen vote by getting ballots onboard, and quickly off again.

“We worked really hard to surface the ship off the coast of the country, bring on all of this mail, which entails like tossing a rope ladder over and manually

bringing it all below decks, sorting through it, having people vote and then getting that back off of the submarine before we’d have to go back underwater,” he said.

He and people with similar roles in units across every branch of the military do the “backward algebra” of calculating how long it might take a ballot to get off a Navy ship, mailed from the nearest port and back to the United States in time for Election Day.

The role is “critically important,” Ramos said. “As a military family member, as a veteran, and while you’re in active duty service, you really feel the weight of these elections, that you’re voting for people who can send you to war.”

But a pending Supreme Court decision on whether states can offer grace periods for when officials receive ballots postmarked by Election Day could make

See **VOTERS**, Page 3A

## Juneteenth events honor past, celebrate freedom



Former band director Dorothy Brice conducts the Austin-East Magnet High School marching band at the June 19 MLK Jr. Parade/March and Juneteenth Celebration. CAITIE MCMEKIN/NEWS SENTINEL

**Tyler Whetstone**  
Knoxville News Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE



Scan the QR code to see Knoxville’s 2026 Juneteenth celebrations.

Knoxvillians celebrated Juneteenth with joyous hearts under clear skies at the annual MLK Jr. Parade/March and Juneteenth Celebration.

The events were organized by the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Commission.

The parade began at Chilhowee Park, traveled down Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue ended at Dr. Walter Hardy Park. The Juneteenth Celebration was held at the park and included food, vendors and music. A Jackson family tribute concert was held the night before in Market Square.

Juneteenth, a federal holiday, commemorates the end of slavery and is held on June 19 every year. East Tennesseans also historically have celebrated the Eighth of August, which was when Andrew Johnson released the enslaved persons from his Greeneville plantation in 1863.

### WHAT’S THAT?



Joann Fabrics branding has been removed from the store at 276 Morrell Road where Bob’s Discount Furniture is expanding in Knoxville. ANGELINA ALCANTAR/NEWS SENTINEL

## What’s replacing Joann Fabrics?

**Sophia Tiedge**  
Knoxville News Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

If you see new construction or anything funky around town, send an email to [knowyourknox@knoxnews.com](mailto:knowyourknox@knoxnews.com). We’ll work to get you an answer and might even share our findings with Knox News readers!

A former fabric store near West Town Mall is being converted into a place to buy furniture – the first of its kind in Knoxville, joining more than 200 stores nationwide.

The Joann Fabrics store at 276 Morrell Road closed its doors last year after the company filed for bankruptcy,

See **JOANN**, Page 3A

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