2024 Election Mail Planning

OFFICIAL ELECTION MAIL®
Authorized by the U.S. Postal Service

2024 Texas Association of Elections Administrators

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Agenda

- **The Postal Service's Role in the Election Process**
- **2022 Election Cycle Recap/Highlights**
- **Election and Government Mail Services Team**
- **Election Mail Security**
- **Policies and Mailing Recommendations**
  - Postmarking
  - Mailpiece Visibility
  - Ballot Mail Service Type Identifiers (STIDs)
  - Addressing
  - Mailpiece Design
  - Printing & Mailing Schedule
  - Prepaid Reply Mail Options
  - Informed Delivery
  - Informed Visibility Mail Tracking and Reporting
- **Resources**

The Postal Service's Role in the Election Process

The Postal Service is committed to fulfilling our role in the electoral process and we provide a secure, efficient and effective way for citizens to participate when policymakers decide to use mail as part of their elections. The Postal Service has a robust and tested process for proper handling and timely delivery of Election Mail.

Every federal election cycle, we make efforts across the nation to inform local and state election officials about mailing procedures, our operational standards, and our recommended best practices for utilizing the mail.

2022 Election Cycle Recap/Highlights

Thank you for your partnership in the 2022 midterm elections as the United States Postal Service's executed its role in the vote-by-mail process.

Monday, January 9, 2023, we released our **2022 Post-Election Analysis Report**. The final performance numbers for the 2022 election cycle show that the Postal Service once again performed strongly in delivering the nation's election mail.

Election & Government Mail Services

Election Mail Outreach Teams

- **4 Area Election Mail Field Specialists**
  - Area leadership to promote HQ Election Mail policies with field operations
- **4 Area Directors of Customers Relations**
  - Area leadership and senior point of contact to election officials
- **50 Managers of Customer Relations at the District level**
  - Primary point of contact for the District with Election Officials
- **District Election Mail Strike Teams**
  - Cross-functional support to ensure the timely processing and delivery of Election Mail, and address and resolve mailing issues

USPS - Areas and Districts Map

Election Mail Security

Election Mail Security

ENSURING THE SECURE DELIVERY OF OUR NATION'S ELECTION MAIL

- **Supports USPS by responding to customer and partner driven election related security questions and incidents**, including those reported by customers (boards of election and voters).
- **Coordinates closely with federal, state and local partners** on election security table-top exercises, planning meetings and other events on an ongoing basis.
- **Operates a 24hr law enforcement reporting line** for election officials. (877)876-2455 (please select #4).
- **Triages reports of Election Mail security and criminal incidents** from election officials throughout election cycles.
- **Monitors the postal network for election mail related issues** including potential unauthorized delay, delivery, and changes of address related to election mail.
- **Works with local, state and federal law enforcement authorities** to conduct and support election crimes investigations.

- **Monitoring and oversight** of the Postal Service's ability to timely process and deliver Election Mail.
- **Coordinates closely with federal, state and local partners** on election security table-top exercises, planning meetings and other events on an ongoing basis.
- **Conduct site visits to observe and monitor operations** at postal facilities around the country.
- **Continued focus on protecting the integrity** of election mailings through investigating allegations of employee misconduct with respect to election and political mailings.
- **Works with state and federal law enforcement authorities:** to support election offense investigations involving USPS employees

USPS Election Mail Policies and Mailing Recommendations for Election Officials

Postmarking

The Postal Service™ recognizes that elections are essential to our system of government. We are proud of our role in the election process as well as the relationships we have with election officials.

Each state establishes by law the rules and requirements for ballot submission, including ballot-submission deadlines and the role, if any, that postmarks play in determining whether a ballot was timely. In the normal course of operations, the Postal Service does not postmark, or "cancel" every piece of mail in the system. The primary purpose of cancellation is to ensure that postage cannot be reused, and some categories of postage are pre-canceled before they enter the mailstream.

In recognition of the importance that the election laws in some states place on postmarks, it has been the long-standing policy of the Postal Service to try to ensure that every return ballot mailed by voters receives a postmark, whether the return ballot is mailed with postage pre-paid by election officials or with a stamp affixed by the voter. A voter can ensure that a postmark is applied to his or her return ballot by visiting a Postal Service retail office and requesting a postmark from a retail associate when dropping off the ballot.

Election Mail Visibility Tools

- Official Election Mail logo
- Tag 191, *Domestic and International Ballots*
- Serialized Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb®)
- Ballot Mail Service Type Identifiers (STIDs)
- Election Mail Postage Statement Check Box

Official Election Mail Logo

Tag 191

Outgoing Ballot From Election Office to Voter

0	0	7	1	8	8	0	1	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	7	5	1	9	2	2	3	4	5	6	4	2	1	5	2	3
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Barcode ID (2N)		Service Type ID (3N)			Mailer ID (6N)						Serial Number (9N)									Routing Code (ZIP) (None, 5N, 9N, or 11N)										
		Defined STID			Assigned MID						Matching Serial Number									Recipient / Voter Address										

IMb & STID

Updated STID Table

Ballot Mail Service Type Identifiers (STIDs):

Outbound Ballot Mail

- Use appropriate Ballot Mail STID for First-Class Mail® or Marketing Mail® ballots and services desired

Return Ballots

- Use appropriate Ballot Return STID for payment method

New This Year:

- As of July 9, 2023, two STIDs requiring hardcopy address correction notice options for Full-Service mailers were retired.
- Effective January 21, 2024, five Ballot Mail Change Service Requested STIDs will be retired. This includes two First-Class Mail STIDs as well as three Marketing Mail STIDs. Therefore, we do not recommend using these STIDs for Ballot Mail.
- During the 1-year transition period that aligns with the price change effective date, the STIDs will be removed from publication in the Ballot Mail STID Table. If a mailer still uses a retired STID, they will be charged for Change Service Requested Option 1 and receive Address Correction notices.
- After the 1-year transition period ends, the retired STIDs will be completely removed from the STID configuration file and recognized as invalid by the Seamless Acceptance and Service Performance (SASP) system and effect mailer score cards.

Ballot Mail

Class of Mail	Address Correction Option		Basic or Nonautomation with IV® MTR*	Full-Service with IV® MTR*
Election Officials to Voter (Outbound)				
First-Class Mail®	No Address Corrections – No Printed Endorsement		715	720
	Manual Address Corrections **		716	
	OneCode ACS®	**Forward Ballot-** Address Service Requested Opt 1	717	
		Forward Ballot- Address Service Requested Opt 2	718	
		Return Ballot- Return Service Requested Opt 2	713	
	Full-Service ACS™	**Forward Ballot-** Address Service Requested Opt 1		722
		Forward Ballot- Address Service Requested Opt 2		723
		Return Ballot- Return Service Requested Opt 2		725
USPS Marketing Mail®	No Address Corrections – No Printed Endorsement		735	741
	Manual Address Corrections **		736	
	OneCode ACS®	**Forward Ballot-** Address Service Requested Opt 1** $	737	
		Forward Ballot- Address Service Requested Opt 2** $	738	
		Return Ballot- Return Service Requested Opt 2** $	714	
	Full-Service ACS™	**Forward Ballot-** Address Service Requested Opt 1** $		743
		Forward Ballot- Address Service Requested Opt 2** $		744
		Return Ballot- Return Service Requested Opt 2** $		746
	Traditional ACS™	**Return Ballot-** Return Service Requested Opt 2** $	726	
Voter to Election Officials (Return or Inbound)				
First-Class Mail® ***	First-Class Mail Reply		777	
	Business Reply Mail		778	
	Permit Reply Mail		779	
	UOCAVA		780	

$ Postage and fees are charged for undeliverable mail that is returned to sender.

* Informed Visibility® Mail Tracking & Reporting https://postalpro.usps.com/InformedVisibility

** Requires the printed text ancillary service endorsement. The option selected must not be printed with the endorsement.

*** Return Ballot Mail (i.e., ballots that voters return to election officials) is sent at First-Class Mail prices, unless a voter opts to pay for a premium service.

Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act voters use only. Absent overseas uniformed services voters, as defined in 52 U.S.C.§ 20304(d), may return absentee ballots from the following locations by using Priority Mail Express Label 11-DOD without prepaying postage: Overseas APO/FPO military locations; DPO locations; or Department of State (DOS) locations.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Address Correction Option identified by the STID requesting ACS in the IMb on Ballot Mail will take precedence over a printed endorsement if there is a conflict. When a printed endorsement is required to receive ACS, as is for USPS Marketing Mail "ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED" must be printed.

KEY RESOURCE: Detailed descriptions of the various Ballot Mail STIDs can be found in Appendix A at https://postalpro.usps.com/node/461. For other types of Election Mail refer to pages 2 and 4 of the STID Table on Postal Pro at https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/service-type-identifiers.

*Ballot Mail STIDs are reserved for ballots **ONLY**.*

2024 Election Mail Planning

Election Officials that want to receive discounted First-Class® and USPS Marketing Mail® postage rates are required to use an approved Move Update option*

NCOALink®

Pre-mailing, secure automated process that allows mailers to submit a listing of names and addresses or a mail piece for matching to a Change-Of-Address record to find and update to the new address.

ACS™

Post-mailing service that acts on the mail piece to determine the correct disposition of undeliverable mail and generates an electronic address correction notice which includes Change-of-Address information.

Ancillary Service Endorsements

Post-mailing service that provides manual address corrections or return of the mail depending on endorsement used (Address, Return, and Change Service Requested**).

Alternative Methods

Pre-approved **exceptions available for First-Class® Mail**

- Mailer is tested to demonstrate their mailing list is 99% accurate
- Documented Legal Restraint that prohibits updating of list without customer approval

* DMM 602.5 and the Guide to Move Update on PostalPro at: https://postalpro.usps.gov/moveupdate/guide
** Change Service Requested is not valid for Ballot Mail.

Mailpiece Design

Design Considerations

- Letter-size Reply Envelopes
- Colors
- Weight limitations
- Proper wording
- Placement of postal markings

Mailpiece Design Analyst Review

- Consultation for mailing standards
- Guidance regarding automation rate qualification
- Technical assistance for printers, graphic designers, and envelope manufacturers
- We recommend that every Election Mail envelope design be reviewed by an MDA before it is used

Sample Outgoing Ballot

Sample BRM/QBRM Design Standard

Mailing & Shipping Solution Center (MSSC)

MSSCadmin@usps.gov

or 1-877-672-0007 Option 2, Option 2

Mailpiece Design: Ballot Mail Design Challenges:

FIM, IMb, poor print quality, and placement of address block all have a significant impact on the ability of USPS automation equipment to scan the mailpiece accurately.

When USPS automation equipment cannot read mailpieces, they are sorted into manual operations, which causes delays.

Mailpiece Design: Ballot Mail Design Challenges:

Ballot Mail is not tabbed on both ends. This design causes damage to the mailpiece.

Ballot Mail thumb notch catches on automation equipment and causes damage to the mailpiece.

Damaged mailpieces in processing require manual processing, which is the leading cause of delayed mail. Damaged mailpieces can also result in no cancellation (postmark) or complete destruction, which may require that ballot to be reissued.

Printing & Mailing Schedule:

The Postal Service continues to recommend the use of First-Class Mail for time sensitive election mail, particularly outbound ballots.

The process for designing, printing, and mailing Election Mail materials takes time. Be sure to consult with a Mailpiece Design Analyst early in the process to ensure your Election Mail is designed properly and includes all of the recommended visibility tools.

Managers of Customer Relations, Mailpiece Design Analysts, and other Postal Service experts are available to assist you with your Election Mail program.

Prepay Reply Mail Options:

The Postal Service offers a variety of ways for elections officials to prepay for mail returned to them, such as voter registration forms, ballots, or other materials. Depending on your expected volume of reply mail, tracking requirements, and other factors, the Postal Service has a solution that will meet your needs.

State and local officials may choose to offer their voters a prepaid reply mail option such as:

- Business Reply Mail
- Qualified Business Reply Mail
- Metered Reply Mail
- Permit Reply Mail
- Stamps

For more information, contact
Mailing & Shipping Solution Center (MSSC)
MSSCadmin@usps.gov
or 1-877-672-0007

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Informed Delivery

Informed Delivery users receive scanned images of the exterior of incoming letter-sized mailpieces (processed through automated equipment).*

Images are available via email notification, online dashboard, or mobile app.

If a mailer participates in Informed Delivery, supplemental content will be shown for letters or flats.

Interactive campaigns include customer images and a URL that directs the user to a digital experience.

Promotions & Incentive Programs for First-Class® & USPS Marketing Mail® | PostalPro

*Exterior images are only provided for letter-size mailpieces that are processed through USPS automation equipment. Package tracking information on Priority Mail®, Priority Mail Express®, and other trackable parcels is also provided.

Informed Visibility Mail Tracking and Reporting

Informed Visibility Mail Tracking & Reporting (IV®-MTR) is the U.S. Postal Service's solution for near real-time letter and flat mail tracking information

The IV-MTR application provides end-to-end mail tracking information for letter and flat pieces, bundles, handling units, and containers

We encourage elections officials to make use of Informed Visibility to better plan Election Mail mailings and resources.

Resources

Kit 600 - The 2024 Official Election Mail Program Kit

Postal Bulletin: The 2024 Official Election Mail Guide

USPS.com/electionmail

Election Mail Issue Reporting

Report a Problem

Local and state election officials may use this form to report past or current issues with official Election Mail processed by the United States Postal Service. This form is intended as a supplement to official reporting, and should not replace communication with your local post office.

This form is meant only for election officials. If you are a voter, do not complete this form.
Please contact your local election official.

Name *

First | Last

Email *

Phone *

Address *

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

City | State | Zip Code

Please include your 5-digit zip code, so that your issue can be routed to the appropriate Election Mail Specialist.

Election Jurisdiction *

Please include county/parish/city/town/township/municipality/village/borough along with the name.

What type of delivery does this issue impact?: *

USPS Point of Contact:

The Postal Service has designated your District Manager of Customer Relations as a single point of contact for your election mail planning. Your Manager of Customer Relations is supported by local and national Election Mail experts to assist you with questions, issue resolution, mailpiece design, and other issues. These dedicated postal employees are deeply knowledgeable about and fully committed to the timely delivery of Election Mail.

Texas 1 District Manager of Customer Relations:
Kelley Davis Kelley.W.Davis@usps.gov (972) 393-6767

Texas 2 District Manager of Customer Relations:
Sultry Stovall-Harris Sultry.J.Stovall-Harris@usps.gov (713) 226-3172

Texas 3 District Manager of Customer Relations:
Christina Moreno Christina.A.Moreno@usps.gov (210) 368-5597

EGMS Southern Area Field Specialist:
Daniel Alvillar Daniel.Alvillargarcia@usps.gov (915) 235 6493

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE®

Thank You for Your Time and Attention!