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EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



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RE: Election Mail

Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Postal Service anticipates that many voters will choose to use the mail to participate in the upcoming elections, including the 2020 General Election in November. The Postal Service employs a robust and proven process to ensure proper handling of all Election Mail, including ballots. Mailer Service Providers (MSPs) and printers have a critical role to play in the success of that process.

The Postal Service makes the following recommendations to MSPs and printers to facilitate the timely delivery of Election Mail:

1. MSPs, printers, and the Postal Service must work together to educate election officials and voters about the USPS delivery standards. While we are committed to delivering ballots in a timely manner, the Postal Service cannot guarantee a specific delivery date or alter delivery standards to comport with individual state election laws. As general guidance, domestic First-Class Mail is delivered in 3 to 5 days, and domestic Marketing Mail (used by many states to send absentee ballots to voters) is delivered in 3 to 10 days. The Postal Service strongly recommends the MSPs and printers provide our delivery standards to their Election Mail customers when discussing mailing timelines.
2. One of the key challenges during this election will be the transit time for each ballot. The Postal Service strongly recommends that domestic voters request their ballots at the earliest point allowable but at least 15 days before Election Day. The Postal Service further recommends voters mail their ballots at least one week before the due date to account for the Postal Service's delivery standards and to allow for contingencies such as weather issues or unforeseen events. It should be further noted that the above timeline is suited for domestic, non-military voters. To ensure that ballots reach military and overseas voters timely, elections officials should mail ballots at least 45 days before elections for Federal office. The Postal Service asks MSPs and printers to discuss these recommendations with their election customers.
3. The Postal Service recognizes that many state and local jurisdictions allow voters to request ballots less than 15 days before they must be returned. MSPs, printers, election officials, and voters must understand that such deadlines may not provide enough time for the Postal Service to deliver an absentee ballot from the election office to the voter and return the marked ballot from the voter to the election office. Failing to follow the Postal Service's recommendations will increase the risk that voter ballots will not be completed, delivered, and returned in time to be counted.

4. We would also like to clarify the purpose of the Official Election Mail logo. Placing the Official Election Mail Logo on a mailpiece sent using Marketing Mail will not upgrade service to First-Class Mail. The mail is delivered in accordance with the class of service for which postage has been paid. However, the Official Election Mail Logo is a critical component of mailpiece visibility.
5. The Postal Service recommends that MSPs and printers work with their elections customers to use the Postal Service's available visibility tools on all qualifying Election Mail. This includes:
  - Placing the Official Election Mail Logo on every qualifying Election Mail envelope.
  - Utilizing uniquely serialized Intelligent Mail barcodes on every outbound and return ballot envelope.
  - Checking the Election Mail checkbox on all postage statements and eDocs.
  - Attaching Tag 191, Domestic and International Ballots, to ballot mail containers to make the mailing more visible when it is entering a plant.
  - Creating Informed Delivery campaigns to notify the voter that marked ballots should be put in the mail by one week before Election Day.
  - Providing 48 hours of advanced notice to the appropriate Postal Service location before you enter large or at-risk election mailings.
  - We also recommend that all Election Mail meet automation compatibility requirements.
6. Mailpiece design plays a key role in the timely delivery of blank ballots to voters and completed ballots back to election officials. Time-sensitive Election Mail, including ballots, must be prepared in a manner which complies with USPS regulations. The Postal Service has assigned a mailpiece design analyst to assist each local election jurisdiction with quality mailpiece design.
7. It is crucial that every outbound and return envelope or mailpiece is approved by a mailpiece design analyst before each election. Please note that while some pieces may technically meet the Postal Service's mailing requirements, not all designs are recommended. Many templates of quality pieces are available through the Mail & Shipping Solutions Center.
8. An Election Mail project calls for the creation of multiple accounts with the Postal Service. It may take time for those accounts to be created before printing and mail pieces for each account may need to be reviewed. For more information, please contact the Mail and Shipping Solutions Center at 877-672-0007 or [mssc@usps.gov](mailto:mssc@usps.gov).
9. Plan ahead. We recommend that MSPs advise their elections customers to use automation compatible, letter-sized envelopes.

The U.S. Mail remains a secure, efficient, and effective means for citizens and campaigns to participate in the electoral process. The Postal Service is proud of our role as an important component of the nation's democratic process, and we would like to thank you for cooperating with us during this election cycle.

Sincerely,



Steven W. Monteith