



Your  
**2022**  
Official  
Election  
Mail

Kit 600



January 2022

According to the *2020 Election Administration and Voting Survey*, approximately 43% of Americans who cast a ballot in the 2020 general election voted by mail. To help in the planning and preparation of election-related mail, the Postal Service™ has prepared the 2022 Official Election Mail Kit.

**New for the 2022 Election Cycle:** One of the goals of *Delivering for America: Our Vision and Ten-Year Plan to Achieve Financial Sustainability and Service Excellence* is to meet or exceed 95 percent on-time service performance for all mail and shipping products once all elements of the plan are implemented. Service performance is defined by the Postal Service as the time it takes to deliver a mailpiece or package from its acceptance into our system through its delivery, as measured against published service standards.

New service standards for First-Class Mail® went into effect on October 1, 2021 to improve delivery reliability, consistency, and efficiency. The effect on Election Mail from these new service standards will be limited and has no bearing on the Postal Service's commitment to fulfilling its role in the electoral process. First-Class Mail traveling locally maintains its previous delivery standard while mail traveling the greatest distances is subject to a 3– 4– or 5–day standard depending on the distance between origin and destination. Marketing Mail is not affected by the change and maintains its delivery standard. Additionally, the Postal Service has long engaged in several practices that expedite the processing and delivery of ballots, even when they are mailed to voters via Marketing Mail, and our adjustment to the First-Class Mail service standards will not impact those practices.

In an effort to improve the mailing experience and ensure that all voters who choose to use the mail to participate in an election are able to do so successfully, the Postal Service continues to provide common-sense mailing recommendations. To help voters and election officials understand what to expect when using the mail, we recommend that they follow any guidance provided by their state, consider the time required for both legs of mail delivery, and keep in mind any applicable Postal Service mailing recommendations. Sharing the Postal Service's mailing recommendations with your voters can better help them decide which method of participation in the electoral process is right for them. Additionally, election officials should keep in mind general pricing actions that may impact their mailings. Pricing actions are a part of the balanced approach under the Delivering for America plan and comply with the pricing regulations of the Postal Regulatory Commission. For the latest pricing, consult the Postal Service's pricing list known as *Notice 123* on Postal Explorer.

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The kit is part of our continued commitment to provide you with the tools necessary to use the U.S. Mail™ as a secure, efficient, and effective way to facilitate the election process. For added security and peace of mind, all mail, including Election Mail and specifically balloting materials and ballots, is protected by the United States Postal Inspection Service®, the oldest federal law enforcement agency in the nation.

Included in your 2022 Official Election Mail Kit (Kit 600) are the following fact sheets and publications:

- **Election Mail Key Recommendations** — Outline of the Postal Service's key recommendations that should be considered to help ensure you have the tools you need to successfully use the mail.
- **Official Election Mail Resources** — Overview of the many resources available to election officials to effectively use the mail.
- **Steps to Creating Your Intelligent Mail Barcode** — Learn how to create your own serialized IMb to track ballots while in the mailstream and more.
- **Service Type Identifier for Ballot Mail** — Understand how the three-digit code is improving the identification and tracking of ballot mailpieces.
- **Informed Visibility Mail Tracking and Reporting** — Learn about this service that provides near-real-time mail tracking data for letters and flat pieces, bundles, handling units (trays, tubs, and sacks), and containers.
- **Tag 191, Domestic and International Ballots** — Information and guidelines to help your Ballot Mail get higher visibility upon entry.
- **Business Reply Mail and Qualified Business Reply Mail** — Description of the First-Class Mail® service and a step-by-step guide to completing a BRM/QBRM application.
- **Special Procedures: APO/FPO/DPO and Overseas Citizens Absentee Ballots** — Tips to ensure absentee ballots reach military personnel and citizens who are overseas.
- **Informed Delivery** — Discover the benefits associated with creating an Informed Delivery campaign in your electoral jurisdiction.
- **Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service, Domestic Mail Manual** — Includes many of the Postal Service's regulations about balloting materials.
- **USPS Election Mail Checkbox** — Use the Election Mail Checkbox in the *PostalOne!*® processing system and on Postage Statement forms to ensure USPS® visibility of all Election Mail entered into the mailstream.
- **USPS Postmarking Guidelines** — An explanation of the variety of uses for a postmark, including identifying the date the Postal Service accepted custody of a mailpiece, voter registration cards, absentee ballot applications, and polling place notifications.
- **Next Steps** — Ready to get started? Follow a few simple steps for expert advice on how to create, handle, and send Election Mail.
- **Publication 631, Official Election Mail—Graphic Guidelines and Logos** — Learn proper usage of the Official Election Mail logo for inclusion on mailpieces.
- **Publication 632, State and Local Election Mail—User's Guide** — Contains information that election officials must consider before mailing Election Mail.

# Election Mail Key Recommendations

## Fact Sheet for Election Mail

This factsheet includes many of the Postal Service's™ recommendations for Election Mail. Following these recommendations will help increase the visibility of ballots as they move through the Postal network and will generally improve processing and enhance customers' experience.

### MAILING RECOMMENDATIONS

When making decisions about mailing ballots (and other time-sensitive Election Mail), election officials should first consider their state and local rules, requirements and recommendations. Secondly, whether they chose to outsource printing and utilize mail service providers or not, it's also important to consider print and production times. Additionally, make sure to consider mailing logistics such as induction point locations and make sure to avoid comingling outbound ballot mailings.

Along with any guidance from the state or locality, the Postal Service recommends that election officials consider providing any applicable Postal Service mailing recommendations in their voter communications. Sharing the Postal Service's mailing recommendations will help ensure that individuals who wish to use the mail to vote know how to do so successfully.

The Postal Service's mailing recommendations for voters include:

- In jurisdictions that require eligible voters to request a ballot in order to receive one through the mail, we recommend that domestic, nonmilitary voters request their ballot as early as their jurisdiction allows. Not all voters need to request a ballot in order to receive one.
- For domestic, non-military voters who choose to use the mail to return their completed ballot, the Postal Service recommends that they mail their completed ballot before election day, and at least one week before the deadline by which their completed ballot must be received by their local election official. Some states may recommend allowing even more time for mailing completed ballots.
- Voters should keep in mind the time required for both legs of mail delivery—to the voter and back to election officials—when deciding how to participate in an election.

### MAIL CLASS

The Postal Service continues to recommend that election officials use First-Class Mail® for their outbound ballot mailings to voters. Using First-Class Mail allows for faster service while providing high visibility as the ballot moves through the mailstream (when used with USPS® visibility tools, like serialized Intelligent Mail® barcodes). Nevertheless, the Postal Service has long engaged in several practices to prioritize ballots that are entered as Marketing Mail, regardless of the paid class, when capacity permits and mailpieces are identifiable as ballots by the Official Election Mail logo or other Postal Service visibility indicia.

The Postal Service will continue to process and deliver expeditiously, as we have done in past elections, with the result that ballots commonly receive delivery timeframes equivalent to First-Class Mail even when mailed as Marketing Mail.

### MAILPIECE DESIGN REVIEW

The Postal Service strongly recommends that all Election Mail envelopes, including previously approved designs, be reviewed by a mailpiece design analyst, or MDA, each year prior to mail printing. MDAs can provide guidance on envelopes that meet the Postal Service's processing requirements, answer questions about mailpiece design, give advice on evaluating mailpieces for automation discounts, provide technical assistance on the Postal Service's envelope standards, and help construct mailing plans.

For more information, contact the Mailing and Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC) via email at [MSSCAdmin@usps.gov](mailto:MSSCAdmin@usps.gov) or toll-free at 877-672-0007 (select option 2 for mailing and shipping, then option 2 for MDA). Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time (closed federal holidays).

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## MAIL VISIBILITY

Election Mail visibility refers to the range of tools available to provide increased insight and trackability for your mailpiece within the postal network. In some cases, these tools can allow election officials to track their mail through the entire network.

Election officials should use all available tools to improve the visibility of their Election Mail within the postal network. The Postal Service strongly recommends the use of green Tag 191, dedicated Service Type Identifiers (STIDs), and serialized Intelligent Mail barcodes for ballots. In addition, the Official Election Mail® logo and the Election Mail Checkbox should be used for all Election Mail, including ballots.

### ■ Tag 191

- The Postal Service recommends the use of green Tag 191, *Domestic and International Ballots*, to identify trays and sacks that contain Ballot Mail.
- Although use of the tag is optional, it provides greater visibility to Ballot Mail at mail entry.

### ■ Official Election Mail Logo

- When the Official Election Mail logo appears on a qualifying mailpiece, voters recognize the mail as important and distinct from partisan political mailings.
- Additionally, the logo serves to identify official Election Mail for Postal Service workers and distinguishes it from the millions of other mailpieces that are processed daily.

### ■ Election Mail Checkbox

- The Postal Service uses the Election Mail Checkbox in *PostalOne!*® processing and our Postage Statement forms to get increased visibility of Election Mail in the mailstream.

### ■ Serialized Intelligent Mail Barcode

- A serialized Intelligent Mail barcode, or IMb, is a Postal Service barcode that provides the ability to track the delivery and return of individual ballots — increasing your visibility of this important mail within the postal network.

- Because of the central role a serialized IMb plays in identification, tracking, sorting and payment, we strongly encourage the use of a serialized Intelligent Mail barcode on Election Mail.

### ■ Service Type Identifier

- The Postal Service strongly encourages the use of customized Service Type Identifiers, or STIDs, specifically for ballots to improve Ballot Mail visibility within the automation environment.
- These STIDs have proven instrumental in identifying and tracking ballots.
- Be sure to use the latest STIDs for each election cycle mailing. They can be found on *PostalPro*™ at <https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/service-type-identifiers>.

For more information on any of these visibility tools, please review their fact sheets included in this KIT.

## QUICK LINKS

- Election Mail Toolkit: <https://about.usps.com/election-mail/election-mail-resources.htm>
- Publication 631 *Official Election Mail – Graphic Guidelines and Logos*: <https://about.usps.com/publications/pub631.pdf>
- Publication 632 *State and Local Election Mail - User Guide*: <https://about.usps.com/publications/pub632.pdf>
- Business Customer Gateway: <https://gateway.usps.com>
- Find Certified Vendors and Providers: <https://postalpro.usps.com/certifiedmsps>
- Election Mail Permit-Based Solutions: <https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/election-political-mail/permit-solutions>
- Service Type Identifiers (STIDs): <https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/service-type-identifiers>
- Intelligent Mail Barcode Technical Resource Guide: <https://postalpro.usps.com/node/221>

# Official Election Mail Resources

## Fact Sheet for Election Mail

### U.S. Postal Service Resources for Election Officials

The U.S. Postal Service® is proud to provide a secure, efficient, and effective way for citizens to participate in elections when policymakers decide to use mail as part of their election administration. 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 using the mail. We provide training, tools, and resources, to help you and your staff get started. We'll even help you plan your mailings, improve the quality and accuracy of your address files, and design smart, cost-effective mailpieces. The information below introduces you to the services and assistance we provide.

#### LEARNING

The Postal Service™ has developed resources to help election officials learn how to prepare, induct, and track mail sent to voters and returned to the Board of Elections. Postal Service area and district customer relations managers are also available to help you through the mailing process and answer any questions. Please use the interactive map on the resource tab at [about.usps.com/gov-services/election-mail/political-mail-map.htm](https://about.usps.com/gov-services/election-mail/political-mail-map.htm) to find and contact your area and district customer relations manager.

#### PLANNING

Planning your mailing in advance will help ensure that it goes out in a timely, efficient manner, which is vital during election season. Our team of area and district customer relations managers can help you:

- Determine the appropriate class of mail.
- Choose the best postage payment options for outgoing and return mailpieces.
- Identify any extra services that may be needed.
- Provide information on lead time for mailings to armed forces personnel and overseas voters.

#### ADDRESSING

Address quality is critical to the timely and efficient delivery of your mail. Your address lists should be up-to-date, accurate, and complete. To assist you with this, the Postal Service offers several products and services, including software, to help you improve the accuracy of your mailings. For information about address quality, go to: <https://postalpro.usps.com/address-quality>.

#### DESIGNING

Mailpiece design analysts (MDAs) can help you greatly improve the effectiveness of your mailings mail service and reduce postage costs. Consulting with Postal Service MDAs will help ensure mailpiece quality and assist you in choosing a layout that meets Postal Service guidelines and regulations. Customers may contact the Mailing and Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC), via email at [MSSCAdmin@usps.gov](mailto:MSSCAdmin@usps.gov) or toll-free at 877-672-0007 (select option 2 for mailing and shipping, then option 2 for MDA). Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time (closed federal holidays). Visit [pe.usps.com](https://pe.usps.com) for more information.

For information on preparing and sending mail, visit our election officials' mailing resources site at [usps.com/electionmail](https://usps.com/electionmail). You'll also find resources to help you plan, address, and design Election Mail.

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## IDENTIFYING

Display the Official Election Mail logo on your mailpiece to indicate your mail is from a federal, state, or local election official. When the Official Election Mail logo appears on a mailpiece, voters recognize the mail as important and as distinct from partisan political mailings. Additionally, the logo serves to identify official Election Mail for Postal Service workers and distinguishes it from the millions of other mailpieces that are processed daily.

For more details on how to comply with the requirements for its use, review Publication 631, *Official Election Mail — Graphic Guidelines and Logos*.

For information on preparing and sending mail, visit our election officials' mailing resources site at [usps.com/electionmail](https://usps.com/electionmail). You'll also find resources to help you plan, address, and design Election Mail.



# Steps to Creating Your Intelligent Mail Barcode

## Fact Sheet for Election Mail

The serialized **Intelligent Mail® barcode (IMb®)** is a 65-bar Postal Service™ barcode used to sort and track individual letters and flats. The barcode simplifies data-gathering by consolidating information for multiple Postal Service identifiers into one comprehensive location. Using a serialized IMb also expands mailers' ability to track individual mailpieces and gain greater mailstream visibility.



Uniquely serialized IMbs facilitate the tracking of individual ballots to and from individual voters. For example, a single household may have multiple individual voters residing at the same address. If the IMb on the ballot envelopes to and from those individual voters have not been uniquely serialized, they cannot be tracked as they move through the mailstream. Election officials will need to maintain the relationship of the serial number to the specific voter.

A serialized IMb can be applied to most Election Mail and is critical for using Informed Visibility® Mail Tracking and Reporting (IV®-MTR) service. The IV-MTR application provides information about when and where the Postal Service sorts a mailpiece on mail-processing equipment. A serialized IMb can also be used for address correction services: manual address correction notices, Address Change Service (ACS™), OneCode ACS®, and Intelligent Mail Full-Service ACS™.

### [PolicyNet Resources](#)

For more information on OneCode ACS, please review Publication 8, *ACS Product Information Guide* at <https://about.usps.com/publications/pub8/welcome.htm>.

Additional information on the Intelligent Mail program is provided in Publication 685, *Publication for Streamlined Mail Acceptance for Letters and Flats* at <https://about.usps.com/publications/pub685/welcome.htm>.

### **PostalPro™ Resources**

The *IV-MTR User Guide* can be found under the IV-MTR User Guides and Training section at <https://postalpro.usps.com/InformedVisibility>.

For guidance on address quality, please visit <https://postalpro.usps.com/address-quality>.

## STEP 1: DOWNLOAD AND INSTALL THE ENCODER AND FONT

An IMb consists of a 20-digit tracking code field [Barcode Identifier, Service Type Identifier (STID), Mailer ID (MID), and Serial Number] and a Routing Code (ZIP Code™) field of up to 11 digits. An encoder is required to convert the numeric digits into a 65-character string representing the bars of the IMb and a special font is required to convert the 65 alpha-character string into the IMb bars. Users can download the fonts and computer source code at <https://postalpro.usps.com/resources/mailing/encoder-software-and-fonts>.

## STEP 2: APPLY FOR A MID

A MID is required for the IMb tracking code. New MIDs are assigned through centralized USPS® processes, generally through the MID system at <https://gateway.usps.com/eAdmin/view/signin> (Business Customer Gateway).

Once the encoder and font are installed, verify the print quality by producing samples, as instructed in the encoder package. The *Intelligent Mail Barcode 4-State Specification USPS-B-3200* and the *Intelligent Mail Barcode Technical Resource Guide on PostalPro* provide extensive technical information about IMbs.

## STEP 3: POPULATE THE BARCODE FIELDS

The five IMb fields are the Barcode Identifier, the STID, the MID, the Serial Number, and the Routing Code (ZIP Code). Each field has its own unique set of standards, explained below:

The **Barcode Identifier** field should be “00” (zero-zero) with one exception: automation-price eligible flat mail bearing a printed optional endorsement line (OEL). When mailers prepare flat-size pieces using IMb tracking codes to meet automation-price eligibility requirements, the IMb tracking codes on any pieces bearing printed OELs must contain the Barcode Identifier corresponding to the printed OEL used. See the Barcode ID Reference Table on *PostalPro* to determine the correct Barcode Identifier.

The attributes that determine which **STID** should appear in an IMb tracking code are the class of mail, the ACS service selected, and whether IV-MTR service is desired. See the Service Type Identifier Reference Table on the



(Steps to creating your Intelligent Mail Barcode continued)

PostalPro site or the reverse of the Service Type Identifier for Ballot Mail fact sheet included in this kit to determine the correct STID.

More information about STIDs is available on PostalPro at <https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/service-type-identifiers>.

The **MID** is explained in Step 2, above. IMBs must contain a valid MID.

The **Serial Number**, in conjunction with the MID and class of mail, can uniquely identify the mailpiece. Although Serial Number uniqueness is not required to qualify for basic automation prices, barcoding mailpieces with unique serial numbers enables visibility of individual pieces. If an individual mailpiece or ballot does not have a unique identifier, it cannot be tracked through IMb. The

Postal Service strongly recommends utilizing Full-Service Intelligent Mail over Basic Intelligent Mail. Full-Service Intelligent Mail requires that mailpieces be uniquely identified, and the tracking code cannot be reused for a period of 45 days. Depending on the length of the MID, the Serial Number is either a nine- or six-digit number.

The **Routing Code** can contain a 5-digit ZIP Code, 9-digit ZIP+4® code, or 11-digit delivery-point code. To obtain automation discounts, a Delivery-Point ZIP Code from CASS™-certified (Coding Accuracy Support System) software is required. Mailers may opt not to populate the ZIP Code and use the IMb tracking code only for tracking the mailpiece. If populated, it must never be padded with leading or trailing zeros that are not part of a valid 5-, 9-, or 11-digit ZIP Code. The IMb concatenates the five fields in this way:

### Six-Digit Mailer ID

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 Code) [none, 5, 9, or 11N]													

### Nine-Digit Mailer ID

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 [9N]						Serial Number [6N]						Routing Code (ZIP Code) [none, 5, 9, or 11N]													

## STEP 4: PUT EVERYTHING TOGETHER

Once mailers have selected service(s), received a MID, and devised a unique serial number strategy, they are ready to put the five fields together to form the 20- to 31-digit string, encode it to 65 characters, and convert


the 65-character string using the IMb font to form the 65-bar IMb as in the example below. On letters, the IMb can be placed in the address block or in the barcode clear zone. On flats, it can be placed on the address side at least 1/8 inch from the edge of the piece.

Learn more about the IMb at <https://postalpro.usps.com>.

**EXAMPLE:** STID of 270 (First-Class Mail®, Intelligent Mail Full-Service option, with IMb IV service, no address correction), MID 123456, uniquely identified by Serial Number 200800001, going to ZIP Code 98765-4321(01), is encoded like this:

**Digit String:** 0027012345620080000198765432101

➔ IMb encoder ➔ **Encoded string** (T=Tracker, F=Full Bar, A=Ascender, D=Descender):  
TTFAFDADTFFFADTAFAFTTDAFDFAAFTDAFDFFDFDFDATFDFTDDDDFADFFDADDDTDDTTDAT

➔ IMb font ➔ **IMb:** 

To learn about certified mail service providers (MSPs), please visit <https://postalpro.usps.com/node/3816>. The latest version of the MSP — *Full-Service Certified Mailers* contact list can be found on this page under Featured Resources.

# Service Type Identifier for Ballot Mail

## Fact Sheet for Election Mail

A **Service Type Identifier (STID)** is a unique three-digit code that indicates the service type for an individual mailpiece. The service code denotes the mail class, address correction option, and whether Informed Visibility® Mail Tracking and Reporting (IV®-MTR) are being used.

As part of the Intelligent Mail® barcode (IMb®), STIDs offer mailers near-real-time tracking visibility on both outbound and return Election Mail. STIDs also provide the Postal Service™ with enhanced tracking capabilities that allow us to quickly identify and process on-hand ballots throughout the mail network.

### NEW THIS YEAR

Based on industry feedback, the STID table available on *PostalPro* was updated to include new STIDs for Ballot Mail that may be used when preparing mailings on and after January 23, 2022.

Use of the appropriate STIDs allows for IV-MTR to identify mailpieces, with all expected service combinations, during mail processing. These new STIDs are for use only on Ballot Mail. Ballot Mail consists of any mailpiece sent to or from an authorized election official containing a live ballot that may be used to cast a vote in an election.

For other Election Mail (e.g., voter registration applications, polling place locations, absentee applications, and sample ballots), use the appropriate STID for the mail class and ACS™ and IV®-MTR services desired that are identified for First-Class Mail® or USPS Marketing Mail® of the STID Table on *PostalPro*. The Election Mail attribute in eDoc (electronic documentation) should be used to identify a mailing that contains any type of Election Mail.

The Service Type ID Table can be found at: <https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/service-type-identifiers>.

### HOW TO DETERMINE THE RIGHT STID:

There are four main aspects to consider:

#### 1. Which class of mail is being used?

First-Class Mail® or USPS Marketing Mail®.

#### 2. What direction is the ballot going?

There are two directions the ballot may be mailed:

- Outbound:** From the election office to the voter.
- Return (or inbound):** From the voter to the election office.

#### 3. How should Undeliverable as Addressed (UAA) Election Mail be handled?

Address Change Service (ACS™) is a post-mailing service that provides the Postal Service with instructions on how to handle UAA mail and provides the mailer with electronic Change of Address (COA) information or the reason for nondelivery. In certain instances, ballots mailed by First-Class Mail and USPS Marketing Mail are eligible for Full-Service ACS, OneCode ACS®, Traditional ACS, manual notices, or mailers can choose to not use ACS at all.

#### 4. Is tracking required?

Tracking is not required but is highly recommended. Full-Service IV-MTR can provide mailers with greater insight into when voters have received all types of Election Mail, and in some cases, mailed back their ballots.

### HOW TO CHOOSE A STID:

**1. Consult the Service Type Identifier Reference Table** for Ballot Mail on the reverse of this sheet to determine the correct STID or visit <https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/service-type-identifiers>.

**2. Create an IMb** code using the step-by-step instructions provided in this kit.

(STID table continued on back)

# Service Type Identifier Table

Ballot Mail (Effective January 23, 2022)

Class of Mail	Address Correction Option	Basic or Nonautomation with IV-MTR*	Full-Service with IV-MTR*	
First-Class Mail®	No Address Corrections	715	720	
	Manual Address Corrections**	716	721	
	OneCode ACS®	Address Service Requested Opt 1	717	
		Address Service Requested Opt 2	718	
		Change Service Requested Opt 1 #	719	
		Return Service Requested Opt 2	713	
	Full Service ACS™	Address Service Requested Opt 1		722
		Address Service Requested Opt 2		723
		Change Service Requested Opt 1 #		724
		Return Service Requested Opt 2		725
	USPS Marketing Mail®	No Address Corrections	735	741
		Manual Address Corrections **	736	742
OneCode ACS®		Address Service Requested Opt 1 ** \$	737	
		Address Service Requested Opt 2 ** \$	738	
		Change Service Requested Opt 1 ** #	739	
		Return Service Requested Opt 2 ** \$	714	
Full Service ACS™		Address Service Requested Opt 1 ** \$		743
		Address Service Requested Opt 2 ** \$		744
		Change Service Requested Opt 1 ** #		745
		Return Service Requested Opt 2 ** \$		746
Traditional ACS™		Address Service Requested Opt 1 ** #	740	
		Return Service Requested Opt 2 ** \$	726	
Ballot Returns	Return Ballot - First-Class Mail Reply Envelopes	777		
	Return Ballot - Business Reply Mail by ZIP Envelopes	778		
	Return Ballot - Permit Reply Mail by ZIP Envelopes	779		
	Return Ballot - UOCAVA †	780		

† Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act voters use only.

# ACS Green & Secure Option. Additional First-Class Mail Green & Secure STIDs are available when you sign up for Secure Destruction. For more information go to: <https://postalpro.usps.com/mailling/secure-destruction>.

\$ 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.

# Informed Visibility Mail Tracking and Reporting

## Fact Sheet for Election Mail

The Informed Visibility® Mail Tracking and Reporting (IV®-MTR) application provides election officials with near-real-time tracking and enhanced visibility of uniquely barcoded mailpieces as they move through the mailstream. IV-MTR is flexible, so you receive data when and how you want. It is also powerful, enabling you to better plan Election Mail mailings and resources, measure success of each mailing, staff efficiently, and instill confidence in voters that use vote-by-mail.

IV-MTR expands visibility beyond physical scans of mailpieces by leveraging the intelligence of Full-Service Intelligent Mail® and nesting associations. The application creates assumed handling events for nested mail whenever the mail aggregate containing the nested mail is scanned. For example, the scan of a pallet creates assumed events for the trays and pieces that are associated with that pallet.

Barcoding mailpieces with unique serial numbers enables visibility of individual pieces. To make the most of IV-MTR, abide by proper mail preparation and barcoding requirements. Full-service requirements and Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb) guidance are available on *PostalPro*™.

### HOW DOES IV-MTR HELP ELECTION OFFICIALS?

For outgoing mail, IV-MTR data allows you to:

- Obtain near real-time notification when your mail receives its last processing scan.
- Identify mail delivery trends and anticipated delivery dates.
- Know when mailpieces reach their destination so you can better manage election activities.

For incoming reply mail, IV-MTR data helps you to:

- Obtain near-real-time notification when your return mail enters the mailstream by utilizing a serialized IMb.
- Know when voters' return items are on the way and where they are in the Postal Service™ network.

### HOW DO I GET STARTED WITH IV-MTR?

To get started with IV-MTR, you need to register for a Business Customer Gateway account, enable the IV-MTR service, and set up your Election Mail data feeds. Step-by-step instructions are available in the [Applying for Access](#) presentation on the IV-MTR *PostalPro* page, <https://postalpro.usps.com/InformedVisibility>, under IV-MTR User Guides and Training.

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**Learn More:** <https://postalpro.usps.com/InformedVisibility>

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**Get Assistance:** IV® Solutions Center  
[InformedVisibility@usps.gov](mailto:InformedVisibility@usps.gov)  
1-800-238-3150, Option #2  
Monday through Friday (closed federal holidays)

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To learn about certified mail service providers (MSPs), please visit <https://postalpro.usps.com/node/3816>. The latest version of *MSP - Full-Service Certified Mailers* contact list can be found on this page under Featured Resources.

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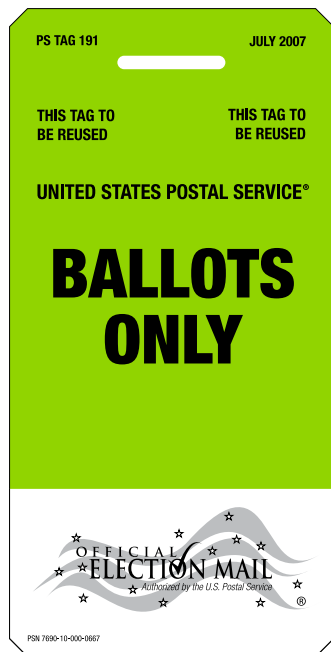
# Tag 191, Domestic and International Ballots

The Postal Service™ recommends the use of green **Tag 191, Domestic and International Ballots**, to identify trays and sacks that contain Ballot Mail. Although use of the tag is optional, it provides greater visibility to containers of Ballot Mail as they enter Postal Service processing and distribution operations.

Tag 191 may only be used to identify Ballot Mail addressed for domestic or international delivery. The tag cannot be used to identify containers of other types of Election Mail such as polling place notices, voter registration applications, absentee applications, or sample ballots. Tag 191 also may not be used for Political Mail. Political Mail has its own designated tag, Tag 57, *Political Campaign Mailing*. More information on Tag 57 can be found at <https://www.deliverthewin.com/tag-57/>.

## AFFIX TAG 191 TO THE MAIL CONTAINER AS FOLLOWS:

- **Strapped Letter Trays:** Using a plastic twist tie, attach Tag 191 to the strap at the end of the tray that bears the tray label.
- **Non-strapped Letter Trays:** For trays permitted to be tendered without strapping, attach Tag 191 to the tray with a rubber band that is double-looped through the tray handhold at the end that bears the tray label.
- **Sacks and Flat Trays with Flat-Size Mail:** Depending on the type of sack, attach Tag 191 to either the strap or label holder on the sack.



Tag 191 is used to identify your outgoing Ballot Mail only. Tags are available at your local Post Office™ or can be ordered online at <https://about.usps.com/gov-services/election-mail/>.

## Availability:

Tags are available at your local Post Office™ or your Business Mail Entry Unit, which can be found at <https://postalpro.usps.com/node/1623>. The tags can also be ordered online at <https://about.usps.com/gov-services/election-mail/>.

Tag 191 is used to identify your outgoing Ballot Mail only. Tags are available at your local Post Office or can be ordered online at <https://about.usps.com/gov-services/election-mail/>.

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# Business Reply Mail and Qualified Business Reply Mail

## Fact Sheet for Election Mail

Business Reply Mail® (BRM) and Qualified Business Reply Mail™ (QBRM™) are First-Class Mail® services that enable you to pay the return postage (including a per-piece fee), for ballots that are mailed to your election office. You can distribute BRM or QBRM Election Mail and have it returned to you at any Post Office™.

The mailpieces you distribute must conform to a specific format, including use of a unique ZIP+4® assigned by the Postal Service™. Proofs for QBRM must be approved by a Postal Service mailpiece design analyst and bear an Intelligent Mail® barcode (IMb®). QBRM can be used only on automation-compatible cards and letter-size mail weighing up to and including 2 ounces. For more information on BRM and QBRM, see *Quick Service Guide 505* and *Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service, Domestic Mail Manual (DMM)® 505.1.1* and 1.6 available on Postal Explorer at <https://pe.usps.com>.

### HOW DOES QBRM BENEFIT THE ELECTION PROCESS?

- Using a unique IMb with ZIP+4 increases mailpiece visibility and tracking.
- Prepaid postage facilitates easy voting for citizens.
- Automatic mailpiece counting and debiting simplify billing for states and counties.

### HOW DO I GET STARTED WITH BRM/QBRM?

1. Discuss your BRM/QBRM needs with a mailing requirements clerk. Contact the Mailing and Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC) by emailing [MSSCAdmin@usps.gov](mailto:MSSCAdmin@usps.gov) or calling toll-free at 877-672-0007 (select option 2 for mailing and shipping, then option 1 to be connected to a mailing requirements clerk). Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time (closed federal holidays).
2. Complete Part A of PS Form 3615, *Mailing Permit Application and Customer Profile*, to establish a BRM permit. Then fill out section 1 of PS Form 6805, *BRM/QBRM Application for ZIP+4 Code Assignment/Validation and QBRM Approval*, to request

a unique ZIP+4 for the BRM address. Both forms must be submitted via email to the MSSC – Mailing Requirements Department at [MSSC@usps.gov](mailto:MSSC@usps.gov) for processing.

3. Set up a Mailer ID (MID) by visiting <https://gateway.usps.com/eAdmin/view/signin> and creating a Business Customer Gateway (BCG) account.
4. Request a unique IMb from your mailpiece design analyst (MDA) after your BRM account is created on the BCG, a unique ZIP+4 has been assigned, and your MID is provided. Connect with an MDA by contacting the Mailing and Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC), via email at [MSSCAdmin@usps.gov](mailto:MSSCAdmin@usps.gov) or toll-free at 877-672-0007 (select option 2 for mailing and shipping, then option 2 for MDA). For more information on creating an IMb for Election Mail, see the IMb Fact Sheet included in this kit.
5. Design a new BRM/QBRM return ballot envelope with advice from an MDA. Submit an electronic copy of the BRM/QBRM proof in PDF file with crop marks/borders at 100% (no scaling) to an MDA for review and feedback prior to printing. Physical samples should also be submitted because they are required for reflectance, barcode quality, print/contrast ratio, and QBRM approval. Connect with an MDA by contacting the Mailing and Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC), via email at [MSSCAdmin@usps.gov](mailto:MSSCAdmin@usps.gov) or toll-free at 877-672-0007 (select option 2 for mailing and shipping, then option 2 for MDA).

Mailpiece designs must comply with the following directives:

- Publication 631 — *Official Election Mail — Graphic Guidelines and Logos*.
- Publication 632 — *State and Local Election Mail — User's Guide*.
- Kit 600 — *Your 2022 Official Election Mail*.
- DMM 201, 202, 204, 505, and 703.8.0.

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- 6.** Return PS Form 6805, *BRM/QBRM Application for ZIP+4 Code Assignment/Validation and QBRM Approval*, with 10 physical samples or paper mockups to ensure compliance with Postal Service regulations and processing systems. The application and 10 samples must be submitted to the Post Office where the BRM/QBRM will be returned. That Post Office will initiate a help desk ticket with the MDA and will work with you to finalize the approval process. Connect with an MDA by contacting the Mailing and Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC), via email at [MSSCAdmin@usps.gov](mailto:MSSCAdmin@usps.gov) or toll-free at 877-672-0007 (select option 2 for mailing and shipping, then option 2 for MDA).

# Special Procedures: APO/FPO/DPO and Overseas Citizens Absentee Ballots

## Fact Sheet for Election Mail

### SEPTEMBER 1, 2022 – NOVEMBER 30, 2022

The United States Postal Service® and the Military Postal Service Agency have again joined forces to expedite delivery of federal absentee ballots to overseas military personnel. We recognize the important role that mail plays in the election process and are committed to ensuring that everyone who chooses to vote by mail experiences a smooth, well-organized process — one that provides them with the highest level of trust and confidence.

#### Program Summary:

- All military ballots mailed by election officials will be subject to special handling procedures. Election officials should mail absentee ballots at least 45 days prior to the November 8, 2022, Midterm Elections.
- Local election offices are requested to segregate military absentee ballots into bundles for the Chicago and Miami International Service Centers (ISCs), which serve as the gateways for the military. At the ISCs, absentee ballots receive special handling.
- Trays or containers of Ballot Mail destined for APO/FPO/DPO (Army Post Office/Fleet Post Office/Diplomatic Post Office) addresses and overseas citizens may be identified using Tag 191, *Domestic and International Ballots*, and presented to the Post Office™.
- APO/FPO/DPO absentee ballots will be sent from local Post Office locations to the nearest Processing and Distribution Center for further processing.
- Facing slips are used to presort loose ballots, based on bundle size, that are destined to pass through the two ISC military gateways. The facing slips are pictured on the right side of this fact sheet.

**ELECTION OFFICIALS:** Separate military absentee ballots by preparing bundles for the two ISC military gateways: Chicago and Miami.

#### Directions for Marking the Bundles:

ISC Name	ISC State Abbreviation	ISC ZIP Code™ Range
Chicago	AE	090–099
Chicago	AP	962–966
Miami	AA	340

If fewer than five (5) pieces will be in a separate bundle, a mixed bundle may be prepared. This bundle must have the facing slip marked, “APO/FPO/DPO MIXED – Absentee Ballots.”

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Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4  
APO/FPO/DPO and MIXED Facing Slips



**APO/FPO/DPO**  
**090 AE IL 62109**  
**Absentee Ballots 090–099**



**APO/FPO/DPO**  
**ADC MIAMI FL 331**  
**Absentee Ballots 340**



**APO/FPO/DPO**  
**962 AP IL 62196**  
**Absentee Ballots 962–966**



**APO/FPO/DPO**  
**MIXED**  
**Absentee Ballots**

## UNIFORMED AND OVERSEAS CITIZENS ABSENTEE VOTING ACT

As mandated by law, election officials are expected to send absentee ballots to military personnel, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens at least 45 days prior to a federal election. The Postal Service™ is committed to helping you meet your obligations with proactive planning and mailpiece preparation.

Get started by doing the following:

- Contact your Postal Service area and district customer relations managers.
- Discuss your timeline and known deadlines.
- Review address files for military and overseas voters and perform any necessary address maintenance.
- Consult Publication 632, *State and Local Election Mail - User's Guide*, or Postal Explorer for tips on how to properly address internationally bound mailpieces at [https://pe.usps.com/text/imm/immc1\\_008.htm](https://pe.usps.com/text/imm/immc1_008.htm).
- Determine if your mailpiece meets the postage exemption criteria with postage paid as authorized by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act.
- Obtain and then affix Tag 191, *Domestic and International Ballots*, to your outbound sacks and trays of Ballot Mail.

For more information, please review Publication 632, *Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service*, Domestic Mail Manual (DMM®) 703.8.2, or visit the Federal Voting Assistance Program at <https://www.fvap.gov/vao/overview>.

# Informed Delivery

## Fact Sheet for Election Mail

Informed Delivery® is a secure, free, and optional feature that can help election officials connect with voters by providing eligible residential and personal P.O. Box consumers with a digital preview of their household's incoming mail and the ability to manage their packages all from one location. Users can view grayscale images of the exterior, address side of automation-processed, letter-sized mailpieces via email, USPS Mobile® App or an online dashboard. Nearly 43.5M users are already

signed up, with an average email open rate exceeding 64 percent. The Postal Service's Informed Delivery feature continues to deliver on its value proposition to election officials by providing the opportunity to reach more voters, target and increase interaction with users, encourage responses to voter engagement campaigns, reach customers digitally from their physical address, and gain more returns on Election Mail campaigns.

### Election Official Benefits

- ✓ **Increased Interaction.** Generate multiple impressions to increase awareness of a voter registration forms, absentee ballot requests, or voted ballot return deadlines through synchronized physical and digital touchpoints.
- ✓ **Faster Responses.** Use interactive content and clear call-to-actions to help encourage voter response.
- ✓ **Gain Insights.** Informed Delivery Interactive Campaigns provide Election Officials the ability to gain insights from reporting.

### Voter Benefits

- ✓ **Convenience.** Preview incoming Election Mail via email notifications, an online dashboard, or USPS Mobile App.
- ✓ **Visibility and Security.** Check what's arriving and have peace of mind that Election Mail will be delivered.
- ✓ **Call-to-Action.** Easily respond to the election official's call-to-action by virtually interacting with them before the mailpiece physically arrives.

## Get Started with Informed Delivery

- 1. Choose Your Submission Method.** An Informed Delivery mailing campaign can be created in either *PostalOne!*® or the Mailer Campaign Portal. Consider using *PostalOne!* for your complex mailings, especially mailings that have several different treatments.
- 2. Define Your Voter List.** Decide if one treatment will work for all recipients or if you need to have segments within the mailing for specific ZIP Codes™ or counties. The full ZIP 11 is required for recipients. If you need to segment your mailing, segregate the groups within your mailing list prior to printing or assigning the Intelligent Mail® barcode (IMb®).
- 3. Determine Mailer ID (MID) and/or IMb Serial Number Range.** Identify the MID used for the mailing. Ensure your MID is valid and included in the IMb on the physical mailpieces. Lastly, determine your serial number ranges in the IMb. Your mail service provider (e.g., printer, ad agency) will generally have this information.
- 4. Produce Your Creative Content.** Design the "ride-along" image that will appear in your campaign. Determine your target URL, as well as the call-to-action (i.e., "Register to Vote"). The more compelling your call-to-action is, the more likely a recipient is to respond. Lastly, decide whether you will use the grayscale image provided by the Postal Service™ or use a color representative image.

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*(Informed Delivery continued)*

**5. Select a Timeline.** You need to consider where the mail is being entered for your Informed Delivery mailing schedule. Suggested mailing start times are 2–3 days prior to your first expected in-home delivery date and suggested end times are 2–3 days after the last expected delivery date.

**6. Submit Campaign.** Submit your mailing using your selected submission method from Step 1.

**7. Analyze Results.** See how your mailing campaign worked! Download your Post-Campaign Analyses (Summary and Detailed level reports) directly from the Mailer Campaign Portal or get a copy of your Post-Campaign Summary report via email by contacting us at [USPSInformedDeliveryCampaigns@usps.gov](mailto:USPSInformedDeliveryCampaigns@usps.gov).

Want more information? Visit <https://www.usps.com/business/informed-delivery.htm> or contact your Postal Service sales representative.

# Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service, Domestic Mail Manual

## Fact Sheet for Election Mail

Each election cycle presents new parameters for ballot creation, causing return mailpieces to be different sizes and weights. As a result, many voters do not know the correct amount of postage required to return their ballots by mail.

**Balloting materials for any election, whether disseminated in hardcopy or electronically, must indicate in a prominent location the proper amount of First-Class Mail® postage that must be applied, except in certain circumstances for balloting materials for military and overseas voters or where postage is prepaid.** This information must be included in the balloting materials (i.e., on the ballot, ballot instructions, mailing instructions, or on the envelope) with the marking “First-Class Mail postage must be applied.” Alternatively, the marking “Apply First-Class Mail postage here” could be printed in the upper-right corner of the address side of the envelope used by the voter to return the marked ballot to election officials. The Postal Service™ will also accept approved variations of these indicia.

The marking requirements will not apply to balloting materials that meet one of the following exceptions:

- The balloting materials fall under the special exemptions for military and overseas voting.
- The ballot is returned under Business Reply Mail® (BRM) service.
- Return postage is guaranteed through a postage due account.
- Postage on the ballot is prepaid by stamps, meter, or Permit Reply Mail.

For some of these exceptions, such as BRM, return postage and Permit Reply Mail, the mailpiece will bear the indicia “NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES” in the upper right-hand corner where postage is typically applied.

Election officials should consult with Postal Service officials to assist with mailpiece design and barcode placement as well as to determine the proper amount of postage required for mailing ballots to voters and the return of marked ballots to election officials. For more information, please see the *Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service, Domestic Mail Manual (DMM®) 703.8.0* available on Postal Explorer at <https://pe.usps.com>.

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# USPS Election Mail Checkbox

## Fact Sheet for Election Mail

The Postal Service™ is committed to providing a secure, efficient, and effective way for citizens to participate when policymakers decide to use mail as part of their elections. In furtherance of that commitment, the Postal Service created the Election Mail Checkbox in *PostalOne!* processing and our Postage Statement forms (e.g., PS Form 3600-FCM, PS Form 3600-PM, PS Form 3602-N, PS Form 3602-R) to get increased visibility of Election Mail in the mailstream. Please check the “This is Official Election Mail” box for each mailing presented for acceptance. This provides the Postal Service with

important insight into Election Mail volume by entry point that may help with future Postal Service capacity planning.

The Election Mail checkbox facilitates inclusion in internal operational reporting, which is leveraged by the Postal Service to identify any bottlenecks or service impacts—and drives actions to address them and improve service.

Examples of the Election Mail Checkbox are illustrated below.

### PS Form 3600-FCM, *Postage Statement—First-Class Mail and First-Class Package Service*

The image shows a portion of the PS Form 3600-FCM. A callout box highlights the following checkboxes:

This is a Political Campaign Mailing  Yes  No

This is Official Election Mail  Yes  No

### PS Form 3602-R, *Postage Statement—USPS Marketing Mail*

The image shows a portion of the PS Form 3602-R. A callout box highlights the following checkboxes:

This is a Political Campaign Mailing  Yes  No

This is Official Election Mail  Yes  No



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# USPS Postmarking Guidelines

## Fact Sheet for Ballot Mail

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. A postmark, sometimes called a cancellation mark, has a variety of uses, including identifying the date on which the Postal Service accepted custody of a mailpiece. 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.

Voters should be aware of posted collection times on collection boxes and at Post Office™ locations and other retail facilities. Voters should also be mindful of when mail is delivered and picked up at their residential mailbox. Ballots deposited after the last posted collection time will not be picked up, and therefore will not be postmarked, until the following business day.

### Figures 1, 2, and 3 Sample Postmarks (Images not to scale)



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# Next Steps

## Fact Sheet for Election Mail

### 1. Familiarize yourself with the content of Kit 600, Your 2022 Official Election Mail Kit.

For your convenience, we have also made Kit 600 available at <https://about.usps.com/election-mail/election-mail-resources.htm>.

### 2. Consult with your area and district customer relations managers.

Area and district customer relations managers are designated Postal Service™ employees who will help you coordinate with the Postal Service for best results. Customer relations managers are available to discuss designing, preparing, and sending Election Mail as well as ordering Postal Service labels and tags to identify Election Mail.

Find your area and district customer relations managers by using the interactive map on the resources tab at <https://about.usps.com/gov-services/election-mail/political-mail-map.htm>.

### 3. Work with a mailpiece design analyst (MDA).

The Postal Service recommends that election officials have all ballot envelope designs reviewed each year by an MDA prior to printing, even if the designs have been previously approved. MDAs are experts on Postal Service mailpiece design standards and can ensure that all mailings are compliant with current Postal Service regulations as well as postage and automation requirements.

To take advantage of this free service, customers may contact the Mailing and Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC), via email at [MSSCAdmin@usps.gov](mailto:MSSCAdmin@usps.gov) or toll-free at 877-672-0007 (select option 2 for mailing and shipping, then option 2 for MDA). Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time (closed federal holidays). Also, mailpiece design information is available online at <https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/mailpiece-design-analyst-mda-customer-service-help-desk>.

### 4. If you are interested in contracting with a mail service provider (MSP), consider consulting with a Full-Service certified mailer.

An MSP offers a variety of solutions to mail owners seeking assistance with the preparation and presentation of Full-Service presort mailings.

There are many advantages of using an MSP to prepare Election Mail. An MSP can:

- Provide/manage your address list.
- Print and/or presort your mailing.
- Ensure your mailing receives the greatest discounts available.
- Manage mailing feedback, such as address correction service data.
- Monitor mail quality reports.

To get started, contact your area and district customer relations managers and MDA before viewing the most recent list of MSPs at <https://postalpro.usps.com/certifiedmsps>.

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