

THOMAS J. MARSHALL
GENERAL COUNSEL
AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



August 11, 2020

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3212

Dear Chairwoman Maloney:

Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States Postal Service anticipates that there will be an increased demand among voters to use the mail to participate in the 2020 General Election, and that public policy makers will choose to increasingly utilize our services as part of their administration of elections. To the extent they do, the Postal Service remains fully committed to fulfilling our role in the electoral process by doing everything we can to handle and deliver Election Mail, including ballots, in a timely manner consistent with our operational standards.

As part of that commitment, we have conducted and will continue to conduct significant outreach to election officials at the state and local levels, as well as other public officials, to ensure close coordination between the Postal Service and the policy makers who choose to use our services. This letter briefly summarizes the outreach efforts we have undertaken to date, and also notes an area of ongoing concern regarding the incompatibility of state election law deadlines with the Postal Service's delivery standards.

Each election cycle, the Postal Service conducts outreach with state and local election officials, in which we explain our services and our delivery processes, and provide guidance on how election officials can design and send their mailings in a manner that comports with postal regulations, improves mailpiece visibility, and ensures timely and efficient processing and delivery. These outreach efforts, which we have significantly intensified this year, establish solid points of contact between election officials and Postal Service personnel to foster ongoing coordination, and also provide repeated opportunities for the Postal Service to address questions and discuss our delivery standards, postage-payment options, mailpiece design issues, tracking and mailpiece-visibility services, and other matters regarding Election Mail. The purpose of this outreach is to enable policy makers and election officials to (1) make informed decisions about how to effectively utilize the Postal Service in their administration of elections, and (2) educate the public about what they can expect when using the mail to vote.

475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW
WASHINGTON DC 20260-1100
PHONE: 202-268-5555
FAX: 202-268-6981
THOMAS.J.MARSHALL@USPS.GOV
www.usps.com

For the 2020 election cycle, the Postal Service began conducting initial outreach meetings with election officials in February. In March, the Postal Service prepared a 2020 Official Election Kit (Kit 600) and distributed it to roughly 11,500 election officials throughout the nation. A copy of the Election Kit is available at <https://about.usps.com/kits/kit600.pdf>. In May, I sent a letter to the same group of more than 11,500 election officials and to state political-party officials, highlighting some key aspects of the Postal Service's processes and delivery standards, and providing recommendations for steps that election officials can take to ensure the efficient and timely handling of mail pertaining to elections. A copy of that letter is available at <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2020/2020-05-29-marshall-to-election-officials-re-election-mail.pdf>. That letter also attached a copy of Publication 632, *State and Local Election Mail – User's Guide*, which is also available, along with other Election Mail resources, at the Postal Service's Election Mail website: <https://about.usps.com/election-mail/election-mail-resources.htm>.

The Postal Service has also assigned election mail coordinators to each locality that stand ready to assist and consult with state and local election officials concerning the logistics of their mailings and the services that are available. A list of election mail coordinators may be found on our website at: <https://about.usps.com/election-mail/political-election-mail-coordinators.pdf>. In addition to the election mail coordinators, we have assigned mailpiece design analysts for each state who are available to assist election officials in designing and preparing envelopes that are consistent with postal regulations, increase mailpiece visibility, and allow officials to receive available postage discounts.

Our election mail coordinators consistently reach out to election officials in their assigned jurisdictions, and we have repeatedly encouraged election officials to contact their assigned election mail coordinators if they have questions and to discuss the services we offer and the logistics of their planned mailings. We also strongly recommend that election officials reach out to a mailpiece design analyst **before** designing and printing any mailpieces for use in upcoming elections.

These outreach efforts are ongoing and will continue through the fall. But there have already been nearly 40,000 contacts between Postal Service personnel and state and local election, public, and political party officials in 2020.

One particular area of focus concerns the interplay between deadlines set by state law and the Postal Service's delivery standards, specifically as it involves the time for mailing blank and completed ballots. To ensure that voters who wish to use the mail to vote can do so successfully, it is critical that election officials and voters are mindful of the time that it takes for us to deliver ballots, whether it is a blank ballot going to a voter or a completed ballot going back to election officials. In other words, the time required for both legs of a ballot's delivery through the mail must be taken into account.

In this regard, the Postal Service does not guarantee, and has not previously guaranteed, a specific delivery time for its classes of mail. The transit time for a given mailpiece depends on a variety of factors, including the class of mail selected and the mailpiece's place of origin and destination. However, most domestic First-Class Mail is delivered 2-5 days after it is received by the Postal Service. Marketing Mail, which some states use for transmitting blank ballots to voters despite our consistent recommendation to the contrary, has a slower delivery standard, with most mailpieces delivered 3-10 days after they are received by the Postal Service.

Meanwhile, as you are undoubtedly aware, each state establishes its own requirements for whether and when voters may cast a vote by mail, including deadlines for when a ballot must be requested and/or mailed to voters and when the voter must return the completed ballot. The