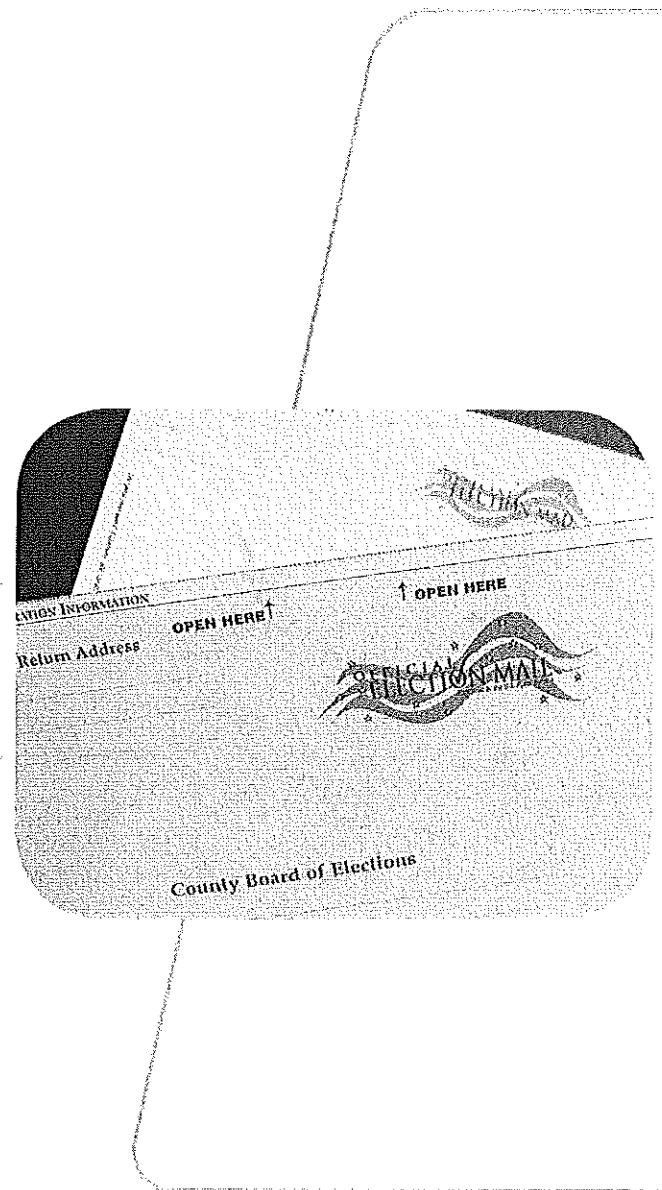


**STATE AND LOCAL
ELECTION MAIL—
USER'S GUIDE**

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How to Use this Guide

You will find eight sections in this guide. Each of the following sections provides information election officials must consider before they mail:

- I. Determining the Appropriate Class of Mail
- II. Using Reply Mail and Mailing to Military Personnel
- III. Preparing Your Address List
- IV. Meeting with the Postal Service Election Mail Representative and Planning the Mailing
- V. Filing Required Forms for Postage Discounts and Other Mailing Services
- VI. Working with the Postal Service Mailpiece Design Analyst to Ensure Mailpiece Quality
- VII. Preparing and Presenting the Mailing
- VIII. Election Mail Checklist

Each of the sections in this guide contains a brief description of the topic, the most pertinent items to consider, and references for additional information. The information in this guide and additional resources can be accessed through *usps.com*.

- Election Mail Web site at *usps.com/electionmail*. Contains material you need to prepare your mailings, including resources, FAQs, and direct links to the additional references mentioned in this guide.
- Postal Explorer at *pe.usps.com*. Contains information you need to make informed decisions.
- Quick Service Guides (QSG) at *pe.usps.com*. Contain concise explanations and useful illustrations covering most Postal Service requirements.
- *Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service, Domestic Mail Manual (DMM)* at *pe.usps.com*. Manual for all domestic mail information and requirements.

Section I. Determining the Appropriate Class of Mail to Use

Which class of mail you will use to send your pieces depends on the following:

- What are you mailing (e.g., ballots, newsletters, and registration)?
- Does your mailpiece contain personal information?
- How are the mailpieces designed (e.g., dimensions, and card vs. envelope)?
- How quickly do you need the pieces delivered?
- How many pieces do you have?
- Do you want free forwarding and return (if pieces cannot be forwarded)?
- Will you require extra services (e.g., Certified Mail service, which provides you with a mailing receipt and delivery status)?

The main classes of mail you will want to consider are First-Class Mail and Standard Mail. The following table summarizes the important features of each.

Class of Mail	Speed	Free Forwarding and Return	Extra Services	Presort Discounts
First-Class Mail	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Standard Mail	No	No	Only Parcels or Certificate of Mailing	Yes
Nonprofit Standard Mail	No	No	Only Parcels or Certificate of Mailing	Yes

What You Are Mailing

First-Class Mail: You may send mailable matter using First-Class Mail service. Some types of mail you must send using First-Class Mail (or Express Mail) service, including mail that has the character of personal correspondence. Only First-Class Mail and Express Mail are closed against postal inspection. For a full definition of what must be sent using First-Class Mail service, see DMM 133.3.0.

Standard Mail: Standard Mail is mail that is not required to be sent as First-Class Mail. For a full definition of what you can send as Standard Mail, see DMM 243.2.0.

Nonprofit Standard Mail: The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 authorized voting registration officials to mail certain Standard Mail materials at the Nonprofit Standard Mail rates, which are lower than the Regular Standard Mail rates. For further information on what organizations are eligible to use Nonprofit rates and what kind of mail can be sent at Nonprofit rates, please refer to Publication 417, *Nonprofit Standard Mail Eligibility*. Applicable customer support rulings such as PS-323, "Computer-Prepared Mailpieces Entered by Nonprofit Organizations," can be found online at pe.usps.com.

How Your Mailpieces Are Designed

In addition to the contents of your mail, the weight, size, and design of your mail can affect which class of mail to use. First-Class Mail may weigh up to 13 ounces. Standard Mail, including Nonprofit Standard Mail, must weigh less than 16 ounces.

Various presort discounts apply to both First-Class Mail and Standard Mail. Additional discounts are available for automation rates, which have additional requirements. Many of the requirements are the same for different classes, but there are differences. For example, for letter-size pieces sent at automation rates, the weight limit is 3.5 ounces for First-Class Mail and 3.3 ounces for Standard Mail. For further information, see DMM 201.3.1 and DMM 301.3.1.

How Quickly You Need the Pieces Delivered

The standard delivery time for First-Class Mail service is 1–3 days. Standard Mail and Nonprofit Standard Mail pieces may take up to 9 days to be delivered. Work closely with your local Postal Service representative to determine the most likely delivery times for your mailing.

How Many Pieces You Have

There is no minimum for the number of pieces that may be sent at First-Class Mail single-piece rates. If you have at least 500 pieces in the same size category (letter-size or oversize envelopes), you may be able to send them at First-Class Mail discount rates. For further information, see DMM 233. To send Standard Mail service, you need to have at least 200 pieces or 50 pounds in the same size category. For further information, see DMM 243.

Whether You Want Free Forwarding and Return

The Postal Service offers a number of options for how it treats mail that cannot be delivered to the address on the envelope. The mail can be forwarded to the new address, always returned to you, or discarded.

Note: The discard option is only available for Standard Mail. If you use First-Class Mail service, the forwarding and/or return services are free. If you use Standard Mail service and you want the mail returned, it must have the appropriate endorsement on the address side of the piece, and you will be charged for each piece that is returned. For further information, see DMM 507.1.5.1 and DMM 507.1.5.3.

If You Need Extra Services

The Postal Service has a number of service enhancements available for use with First-Class Mail service, called extra services. Extra services can be purchased for an additional fee. The extra service that is generally of most interest to election officials is Certified Mail service, which provides the sender with a mailing receipt and, upon request, electronic verification that the mailpiece was delivered or that a delivery attempt was made. For further information, see DMM 503.3.

Section II. Using Reply Mail and Sending Mail to Armed Forces Personnel and Overseas Voters

Business Reply Mail: If you provide return envelopes for mail such as ballots, consider using Business Reply Mail (BRM) service. BRM is a First-Class Mail service that enables you to pay the return postage (including a per-piece fee), for only the mail returned to you. You can distribute BRM cards, envelopes, self-mailers, cartons, or labels and have them returned to you at any Post Office. The pieces you distribute need to conform to a specific format, including use of a unique ZIP+4 code assigned by the Postal Service.

For more information on BRM, see Quick Service Guide 507a and DMM 507.8.0.

Qualified Business Reply Mail: If you are anticipating receiving 809 or more return pieces annually, consider the use of Qualified Business Reply Mail (QBRM). QBRM service provides you with discounts on postage and per-piece fees. It can be used only on automation-compatible cards and letter-size mail weighing up to 2 ounces. The design must be approved by the Postal Service before distribution, and there are requirements for advance deposits and accounting fees.

For more information on QBRM, see Quick Service Guide 507a and DMM 507.8.3 and 507.8.10.

Courtesy Reply Mail: Courtesy Reply Mail (CRM) consists of pre-addressed postcards or envelopes that you provide to the voters both to expedite their responses and to provide accurate delivery to the correct return address. CRM differs from BRM in that the voter is responsible for applying the correct postage to the return piece and no permit or fees are required. For further information, see Quick Service Guide 507b.

Postal Service Publication 25, *Designing Letter and Reply Mail*, will provide you with detailed information about the types of reply mail. There is also information available on the Reply Mail Web site about the features and benefits for BRM, QBRM, and CRM at www.usps.com/replymail.

Absentee Balloting Materials for Military Personnel and Overseas Voters:

You may send absentee balloting materials through the mail without prepayment of postage. Absentee balloting allows eligible persons in the following categories to apply for registration and vote by absentee ballot when absent from their place of voting residence:

- Members of the Armed Forces in active service and their spouses and dependents.
- Members of the U.S. Merchant Marine and their spouses and dependents.
- U.S. citizens residing outside the territorial limits of the United States and the District of Columbia and their spouses and dependents residing with or accompanying them.

You must prepare balloting materials in accordance with DMM 703.8.0 in order to mail without prepayment of postage.

Section III. Preparing Your Address List

Having an updated, correct, and complete address list will help ensure accurate and timely delivery of your mail. By maximizing your address quality, you can also minimize your mailing costs. The Postal Service has established minimum standards for address quality for certain postage rates.

Accurate and standardized addresses will help reduce the amount of undeliverable-as-addressed (UAA) pieces in your mailings. To learn more about the correct way to standardize your addresses, see Publication 28, *Postal Addressing Standards*.

Address Hygiene Tools

The Postal Service has a variety of products and services that will help improve the accuracy of your mailing lists, the quality of the physical addresses, and move updates. These products and services are available through either the Postal Service or private mail service providers.

Physical Address Hygiene and Quality

The following four products will help ensure that all your addresses are deliverable — and also identify all that are not:

- a. Coding Accuracy Support System (CASS).** CASS-certified address matching software will help standardize your addresses and update your files with ZIP+4 codes. You can get CASS-certified software from numerous mail service providers or have your own software CASS-certified. Having ZIP+4 codes on your mail improves the speed and efficiency of your mail delivery and can reduce postage rates.
- b. Delivery Point Validation (DPV).** DPV can confirm the existence of an address on a mailing list as a valid delivery point and helps you identify inaccurate or incomplete addresses. You must use the DPV product in conjunction with CASS-certified address matching software. DPV is available from various vendors or can be acquired by the end user.

c. Address Element Correction (AEC). AEC is an entirely computerized address correction process which uses logic routines to assist in ZIP+4 coding previously un-coded addresses, allowing mail to qualify for automation rate discounts.

d. Address Element Correction II (AEC II).

AEC II is for addresses that AEC cannot resolve electronically. In AEC II, addresses are sent to delivery personnel, carriers, and clerks in local Post Offices for resolution.

Move Update Options

Mailers are required to update all addresses on discounted First-Class Mail within 185 days before a mailing. The Postal Service makes the following Move Update options available to mailers at reasonable costs. You need to determine which of the following methods works best for your organization:

- a. NCOALink™ Systems.** The NCOALink process provides change-of-address (COA) data, submitted by relocating customers on PS Form 3575, for the 18 or 48 months prior to a mailing. Updated, computerized change of-address information is provided on a regular basis to the NCOALink licensees by the Postal Service. NCOALink is very effective because it corrects your addresses before you mail.
- b. Address Change Service (ACS).** ACS provides mailers a cost-effective means of obtaining current residential change-of-address information when mail is undeliverable-as-addressed (UAA). ACS allows you to update address files electronically, eliminating the cost, time, and errors of manual keying. ACS provides mail-forwarding information in days, rather than weeks, after a new change-of-address becomes effective. A fee is charged for each address record. With ACS, you get corrected information after the mailing.

c. Ancillary Service Endorsements (ASE).

Ancillary service endorsements are used to request an addressee's new address and to provide the Postal Service with instructions on how to handle undeliverable-as-addressed mail. Only the "Return Service Requested" endorsement meets the Move Update standard. ASE gives you information after a mailing. For more information on endorsements, see DMM 507.1.5.1.

More Addressing Tips for Election Mailers

To help you with the processing of your mail, consider including the following information on your mail in addition to the voter name and address:

- Election date or code.
- Voter identification.
- Precinct number or name.
- Party code (primary election only; party code may not be used to disclose to the public what party the voter is affiliated).

However, if you include this type of information on your election mail, it should be printed so it is not in the optical character read area used by Postal Service processing equipment to read the delivery address. If voter information must appear in the delivery address block area (i.e., address labels are used for both the voter information and the delivery address), then the voter information line should appear above the recipient line of the delivery address.

A Postal Service mailpiece design analyst (MDA) can assist you, at no charge, with this and other aspects of proper mail design.

For more information on Postal Service addressing products and services contact:

NATIONAL CUSTOMER SUPPORT CENTER
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
6060 PRIMACY PKWY STE 201
MEMPHIS TN 38188-0001

TEL.: (800) 238-3150
FAX: (901) 767-8853

Addressing Official Election Mail to Persons Overseas and in the Military

Foreign addresses except Canada: The very last line of mail addressed to a foreign country should contain the country name printed in capital letters (no abbreviations). When using a foreign postal code, place it on the line above the country of destination. Example:

MR THOMAS CLARK
117 RUSSELL DRIVE
LONDON WIP7HQ
ENGLAND

Canadian addresses: For mail addressed to Canada, the last line of the address must show only the country name, written in full (no abbreviations) and in capital letters. There must be two spaces between the province abbreviation and the postal code, as shown below between ON and K1A OB1. Example:

MRS HELEN K SAUNDERS
1010 CLEAR STREET
OTTAWA ON # K1A OB1
CANADA

Military addresses: Overseas mail addressed to military personnel must show grade; full name, including first name and middle name or initial; and unit number. The last line must contain the APO or FPO designation and the appropriate two-letter "state" abbreviation (AA, AE, or AP), followed by the ZIP+4 or 5-digit ZIP Code. Examples:

PC1 DAVID LEE JONES
X-1 DIV/ADMIN
USS KITTY HAWK (CVA-61)
FPO AP 96634-2770

PFC SUSAN M SMITH
COMPANY A 122 SIG BN
UNIT 20511 BOX 4290
APO AA 34049-2342

For additional information on mailing to foreign countries, consult the *Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service*, International Mail Manual (IMM) available online at pe.usps.com.

Section IV. Meeting with the Postal Service Election Mail Representative in Your Area and Planning the Mailing

The Postal Service will help you with every step of your mailing process. Get acquainted with the Postal Service Election Mail representative in your area.

The best person for you to contact at the Postal Service is determined by your ZIP Code. There is a list for determining your Mailpiece Design Analyst on the Election Mail Web site. Consider the Postal Service as part of your team.

Arrange a Meeting with Your Local Postal Service Representative

Contact your local Postal Service Election Mail representative to arrange a meeting. You may also want to have direct contact with all local Post Offices within your county to help coordinate your mailing. In the meeting, include the following people:

- All your personnel involved in ordering, designing, addressing, and preparing mail.
- Any outside mail service providers or suppliers you are using.

In the meeting, your Postal Service Election Mail representative will discuss the logistics of your mailings with you, including the following:

Delivery date. When planning the date, you will want to consider the size of the mailing, the time sensitivity of the contents, and the class of mail (e.g., First-Class Mail, Standard Mail). For ballots, take into consideration holidays and 3-day weekends so that ballots will not sit in mailboxes over a long weekend. The Postal Service delivers 6 days a week, Monday through Saturday, but does not deliver on national holidays. Because different classes of mail have different service standards, the Postal Service recommends the use of First-Class Mail service to obtain timely delivery.

When to give the mailpieces to the Postal Service.

The Postal Service can help schedule a time that allows for the immediate acceptance of your mailing. If more than one county is involved, it is important to coordinate the time of acceptance for each.

Where to give the mail to the Postal Service.

Typically, you will give your mail to a business mail entry unit, but larger Post Offices may need to direct the mailing to a specific dock area.

Bulk preparation supplies and equipment you will need. Talk with your Postal Service Election Mail representative about Postal Service supplies (e.g., forms, tags, trays, sacks), and when and where you can order them. There are no charges for these items. The Postal Service recommends the use of Tag 191, *Domestic and International Ballots*, on tray and sack containers to identify official ballot mail while in the mailstream.

Required forms and mailing profiles. Forms are required if you want to mail at bulk (large-volume) discount postage rates for First-Class Mail, Standard Mail, or Nonprofit Standard Mail.

Options for mail that cannot be delivered.

Discuss how you want the Postal Service to handle mail that is undeliverable-as-addressed; see Ancillary Service Endorsements in Section III.

Return Address options. You have a number of options for your return mailing address for completed ballots, including the following:

- Use your office address and ZIP+4 code.
- Rent a Post Office box. This service allows you to pick up your mail during the hours the box lobby is open.
- Rent a "phantom" Post Office box (caller service). Caller service is a premium service available for a fee, which allows you to pick up mail at a Post Office call window or loading dock when the office is open.

Section V. Filing Required Forms for Postage Discounts and Other Mailing Services

The forms you will need are available through your local Post Office and on the Internet at *usps.com*.

For Postage Discounts Use PS Form 3615

If you want to send your mail using First-Class Mail service and receive discounts based on the volume and preparation of your mailings, or if you want to send Standard Mail, you will need to obtain a permit from the Postal Service. This can be done by using PS Form 3615, *Mailing Permit Application and Customer Profile*.

For Authorization for Nonprofit Status Use PS Form 3624

If you want to mail any of your mailpieces using Nonprofit rates, you will first need to obtain authorization from the Postal Service. To do so, submit PS Form 3624, *Application to Mail at Nonprofit Standard Mail Rates*, to apply.

For more information, see Publication 417, *Nonprofit Standard Mail Eligibility*.

For Business Reply Mail Use PS Forms 3615 and 6805

To apply for a permit to use BRM, complete PS Form 3615, *Mailing Permit Application and Customer Profile* (see above).

Once you have your permit, you can give permission to your authorized representative to distribute and receive BRM pieces at other Post Offices using your permit number. For further information, see DMM 507.8.11.2.

If you want to use QBRM, you will also need to complete PS Form 6805, *Qualified Business Mail (QBRM) Application and Approval*. For further information, see DMM 507.8.3.2.

Section VI. Working with Your Mailpiece Design Analyst to Ensure Mailpiece Quality

Mailpiece design is one of the most critical components in determining your mailing costs. Properly designed mail can allow you to receive automation rate discounts.

Meet with Your Mailpiece Design Analyst Before Printing Your Envelopes

Most of your questions about mailpiece design can be answered by a Postal Service mailpiece design analyst (MDA).

Arrange to meet with an MDA to discuss the design for the cover or envelope of every mailpiece you plan to mail (e.g., postcards, envelopes, or larger mail such as manila envelopes and catalogs, also known as flats). This service is free, and it can save significant costs for your mailing operation.

Bring at least 25 sample mailpieces for each anticipated mailing to the meeting, using new samples, or if none are available, materials from similar past mailings. The mailpiece design analyst will check to see if they meet current Postal Service standards for automation (e.g., envelope dimensions, paper stock, and ink colors for readability) and general mailability.

Ask the MDA to do the following:

- Help you design outgoing and return envelopes to meet automation-compatibility standards.
- Review and assist with proper wording and placement of postal markings and endorsements on your envelopes.
- Review and approve the blueprint or PDF file of your envelopes, postcards, and other mail before it is printed.

More Design Tips for Election Mailers

- Always consider using the Official Election Mail logo. The purpose of the Official Election Mail logo is to alert all Postal Service employees that (1) the mail so designated is either from or to an official state or local election organization, and (2) appropriate handling should be provided.
- Consider possible weight limitations. Printing instructions and information on both sides of forms will reduce the amount of paper and overall weight of your mail, saving postage costs.
- Consider different colors for different ballot types, districts, elections, parties, or inserts. Instead of colored envelopes, consider using colored bands that encircle only part of the envelopes, but away from the delivery address. Discuss this with your MDA.
- Some ink and paper colors will not work well on automated postal equipment. Discuss potential colors with your MDA.
- If the return mailpiece weighs more than 1 ounce, add printing on the return envelopes to notify voters they need more than one stamp to return the ballot. Alternatively, consider redesigning the return envelopes to reduce the need for additional postage.

Design Resources

Other sources of information include:

- Quick Service Guides. The Quick Service Guides (QSG) provide information covering design of letters, cards, flats, and various reply forms for automation compatibility, along with schematics, as well as the requirements for absentee ballot design. Find them at pe.usps.com.
- Postal Explorer. Most of the information you need to make informed decisions can be found using Postal Explorer at pe.usps.com.
- Publication 25, *Designing Letter and Reply Mail*.

- Publication 28, *Postal Addressing Standards*.
- Publication 177, *Guidelines for Optimizing Readability of Flat-Size Mail*.
- Publication 178, *Recommendations for Designing Flat-Size Mail*.
- Publication 631, *Official Election Mail — Graphic Guidelines and Logos*.
- Election Officials' Mailing Resources page at usps.com/electionmail.

Section VII. Preparing and Presenting the Mailing

At Least 2 Weeks Before Election Day, Finalize Your Plans

- Let your postal Election Mail team know if you want to pick up returning ballots at a Postal Service facility each day or have them delivered to your election office with your regular mail. If you want to pick up your mail, coordinate with your Postal Service Election Mail representative to see if this can be arranged and the best time for pick up. This option will allow you to get the election mail as early as possible. This is another reason to consider using Post Office box service or caller service.
- Let your Postal Service Election Mail representative know your cut-off time for receiving returned ballots. Arrange the latest time when an election official may pick up last-minute returns.
- Obtain carts, pallets, trays, sacks, labels, tags, and stickers. If you use a mailing service, be sure to verify that the service will be providing all the needed supplies or can obtain them for you.
- Depending on what you are mailing, you will need one or more of the following forms that you will present to the Postal Service along with your mail.
 - PS Form 3600 series for First-Class Mail
 - PS Form 3602 series for Standard Mail

These forms are available on the Postal Service Web site. Go to www.usps.com. Click on *Forms*, then *Postage Statement Wizard*.

Section VIII: Election Mail Checklist

The following suggested checklist will help ensure a successful mailing:

Decide the most appropriate class of mail to use

- Consider the specific purpose for the mailing (e.g., information, ballots, and voter registration)
- Determine the size of the mailing
- Determine if the mailing needs to be delivered within a certain window of time
- Determine if the mailing should or must go as First-Class Mail
- Determine if the mailing must meet address or Move Update requirements
- Determine if the mailing needs to have an ancillary service endorsement (e.g., Return Service Requested)
- Determine if the mailing needs any Extra Services (e.g., Certified Mail, Registered Mail)

Determine if the mailing needs to include a reply piece

- Decide if you plan to use Business Reply Mail or Courtesy Reply Mail
- Decide if it is cost effective to use QBRM

Prepare your address list

- Decide who should receive the mailpieces
- Compile your address list
- Ensure proper address list hygiene
- Validate physical address accuracy
- Validate that you meet the Move Update standard, if applicable

Call or meet with your Postal Service Election Mail representative

- Discuss when you intend to present the mail to the Postal Service
- Discuss your delivery date requirements
- Determine where and when the mailpieces must be presented to the Postal Service to meet your delivery requirements
- Determine the best method of receiving return mail (e.g., P.O. box or Caller Service)
- Determine the best time to pick up the mail each day
- Determine the latest time when an election official can pick up returns
- Determine the final date for receiving return mail
- Determine the necessary postal equipment and supplies needed
- Determine payment method
- Determine what forms are needed for mailing and for postage payment

File required forms for postage discounts and other mailing services (if needed)

- PS Form 3615, *Mailing Permit Application and Customer Profile* (for Permit Imprint and Business Reply Mail permits)
- PS Form 3624, *Application to Mail at Nonprofit Standard Mail Rates*
- PS Form 3623, *Application for Nonprofit Standard Mail Rates at Additional Mailing Office*
- PS Form 1093, *Application for Post Office Box or Caller Service*
- PS Form 6805, *Qualified Business Reply Mail (QBRM) Application and Approval*

Work with a Mailpiece Design Analyst to ensure mailpiece quality

- Consider using the Official Election Mail logo
- Consider appropriate colors, weight limitations, proper wording, placement of postal markings, etc.

- Consider coding additional information onto the mailpiece (e.g., dates, voter ID)
- Obtain approval of final mailpiece design before final printing

Prepare and present the mailing

- Print mailing in time for preparation and delivery to Post Office
- Obtain postal supplies and equipment (e.g., carts, trays, stickers, rubber bands, tags)
- Prepare mailing for delivery to Post Office
- Obtain and complete postage statements to be presented with mailing:
 - If using Bulk First-Class Mail, you will need to use one or more forms in the 3600 series
 - If using Standard Mail, you will need to use one or more forms in the 3602 series
- Present mailing, postage statement, and check (payment) for postage account, if needed

Note: The following are trademarks of the United States Postal Service: Business Reply Mail™, Certified Mail™, Courtesy Reply Mail™, DMM®, First-Class Mail®, NCOALINK™, Official Election Mail®, Post Office™, Postal Explorer™, Postal Service™, Standard Mail®, USPS®, usps.com®, ZIP+4®.