



To: **State and Local Election Officials**
From: **U.S. Election Assistance Commission**
Date: **March 2026**
RE: **Updates to USPS Election Mail Issue Reporting and Postmarking**

MEMORANDUM

The USPS has created a new way for election officials to report problems with election mail. The new "Report a Problem" form can be accessed from the [USPS' election mail website](#), or by navigating directly to the "[USPS Contact Forms for Election Officials](#)" link. This form replaces the previous issue reporting at electionmail.org and, as of February 6, 2026, tickets submitted on that site are no longer accepted by the USPS.

Additionally, on December 24, 2025, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) [finalized a new section for the Domestic Mail Manual \(DMM\)](#) related to postmarks. According to the USPS, "this new section defines postmarks, identifies the types of Postal Service markings that qualify as postmarks, and describes the circumstances under which those markings are applied." Though postmarking practices have not changed, changes to other USPS operations have made it more likely that a postmark will not be applied the same day an item is mailed.

This memo outlines key information related to these changes, as well as election mail best practices.

USPS Election Mail Support

The Postal Service offers direct support to state and local election officials for their Election Mail needs. Officials should contact USPS as soon as an issue arises to ensure timely handling and resolution.

Use the "[USPS Contact Forms for Election Officials](#)" link to:

- Notify the Postal Service of any Election Mail service issue,

- Contact Local Managers of Customer Relations, regional representatives who can liaise directly with election officials, or
- Request an Election Mail Design Review to evaluate mailpiece design, automation discount opportunities, envelope standards, and more.

USPS Postmarking FAQs

Information about postmarks

- A postmark shows the date and location of the mailpiece when the postmark was applied.
- Most mail is postmarked by machines at processing facilities, not when it is dropped in a mailbox or handed to a carrier.
- Not all mail is postmarked during the course of regular operations, but the USPS attempts to postmark all returned ballots.

What a postmark date means

- When present, a postmark shows that, “the mailpiece was in the possession of the Postal Service on the identified date.”
- However, “the postmark date does not necessarily indicate the first day that the Postal Service had possession of the mailpiece.”
- Since not all mail is postmarked, “the absence of a postmark does not imply that the Postal Service did not accept custody of a mailpiece.”

How to get a postmark that shows the mailing date

Voters who need a postmark that matches the date of mailing may request a manual (hand-applied) postmark at a USPS retail counter at no cost.

Other proof-of-mailing options are available

Certificates of Mailing, Certified Mail, and Registered Mail all provide written proof of the exact date USPS accepts a mailpiece.

Election Mail Best Practices

Voter communication on returning mail ballots

Inform voters about key dates and mailing times.

- Provide clear, consistent, and timely information about how voters can return their mail ballot.
- Inform voters about deadlines for ballots to be postmarked and/or received by the election office, as well as when they should be mailed to arrive on time.



- If your state uses postmarks for accepting mail ballots, remind voters that they may request a manual (hand-applied) postmark at a USPS retail counter.
- Inform voters about other ways to return mail ballots if timelines no longer permit the use of postal service options.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

United States Postal Service Resources

- USPS Election Mail Website:
usps.com/electionmail
- USPS "Report a Problem" Link:
<https://electionmail.usps.com/s/report-a-problem>
- USPS "Contact Local Manager, Customer Relations" Link:
<https://electionmail.usps.com/s/contact-local-mcr>
- Federal Register - Postmarks and Postal Possession:
[federalregister.gov/documents/2025/11/24/2025-20740/postmarks-and-postalpossession](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/11/24/2025-20740/postmarks-and-postalpossession)
- USPS Postmarking Guidelines:
<https://about.usps.com/kits/kit600.pdf>
- USPS Postmark FAQs: <https://faq.usps.com/s/article/Requirements-and-Standards-for-Sending-Domestic-Mail#postmarks>
- USPS Statement, January 2026:
about.usps.com/newsroom/statements/010226-postmarking-myths-and-facts.htm