

2020 Post-Election Analysis:

**DELIVERING
THE NATION'S
ELECTION
MAIL IN AN
EXTRAORDINARY
YEAR**



99.89%

OF BALLOTS DELIVERED
FROM VOTERS TO
ELECTION OFFICIALS
WITHIN SEVEN DAYS

99.7%

OF BALLOTS DELIVERED
FROM VOTERS TO
ELECTION OFFICIALS
WITHIN FIVE DAYS

97.9%

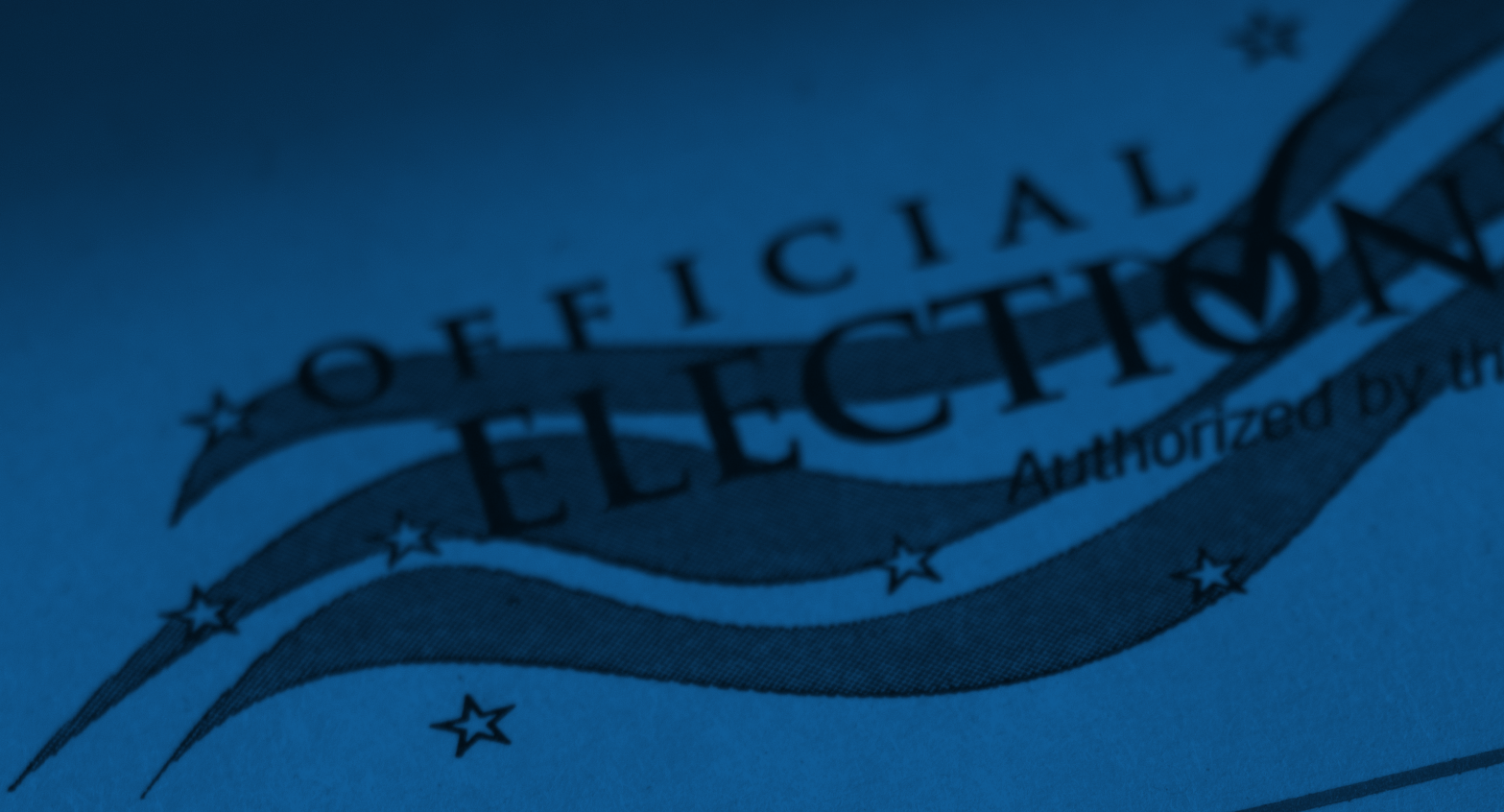
OF BALLOTS DELIVERED
FROM VOTERS TO
ELECTION OFFICIALS
WITHIN THREE DAYS

2.1

DAYS ON AVERAGE
TO DELIVER BALLOTS
FROM ELECTION
OFFICIALS TO VOTERS

1.6

DAYS ON AVERAGE
TO DELIVER BALLOTS
FROM VOTERS TO
ELECTION OFFICIALS



Authorized by the

OFFICIAL VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT

BUSINESS REPLY
FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 100
POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

REGISTRATION-RECORDS
00450

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(Letter from Postmaster General Louis DeJoy and Governor Lee Moak)

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DELIVERING FOR THE AMERICAN PUBLIC

The United States Postal Service delivered for the American public during the 2020 election cycle. We did so in every community in America, as thousands of jurisdictions turned to the U.S. Mail more than ever before to enable greater public participation in the nation's electoral process.

It is the task of policymakers to decide the role that the U.S. Mail should play in our electoral system. Our task, as the Postal Service, is to ensure that we provide secure and timely delivery of the ballots that are entrusted to us for mailing, as well as to ensure that both elections officials and individual voters who choose to utilize the mail understand how to do so effectively.

A record 159 million voters cast ballots in the 2020 general election – 22 million more than in 2016 – and the turnout percentage was the highest in a U.S. election since 1900. In a year when COVID-19 made voting in-person less desirable, these dramatic increases were achieved in part because the public had the convenient and safe option of voting via a mailed ballot. The Postal Service delivered at least 135 million ballots to or from voters in the general election.*

We are proud of our performance as a delivery organization. We delivered 99.89 percent of ballots within seven days, consistent with the guidance we provided voters throughout the election cycle, and delivered 97.9 percent of ballots from voters to election officials within

three days. Overall, on average, we delivered ballots to voters in 2.1 days. Most importantly, on average, we delivered ballots from voters to election officials in just 1.6 days.

The Postal Service went to extraordinary lengths to achieve these results. The scale of planning and the organizational effort throughout the 2020 election cycle was immense, reflecting the hard work and commitment of postal employees at every level of our operations and in every community we serve.

Throughout our enterprise, we prioritized ballots in our processing operations and conducted regular sweeps in our facilities to ensure ballots were quickly moving through the system. We added extra transportation, staff and overtime, and we arranged special trips and coordinated special deliveries in thousands of locations.

In the days before the election, our letter carriers took the unprecedented step of checking every mailbox on every street throughout the nation for ballots being sent to election officials – regardless of whether we were delivering mail to a particular customer. Leaving no stone unturned, we additionally took the extraordinary step of collecting and processing mail on the Sunday before election day. And, where we identified ballots that were at risk of not arriving on time, we engaged in additional steps such as utilizing our Priority Mail Express network, at no additional cost

*The total number of delivered ballots may greatly exceed 135 million. This figure includes only those ballots that were properly identified as ballots using the correct electronic identifiers, and does not include many of the ballots that the Postal Service diverted from its processing network or otherwise handled outside of normal processes in an effort to accelerate delivery.

to the customer; bypassing our processing network entirely to accelerate local delivery of ballots; and making additional deliveries and special trips to help ensure that ballots arrived on time to be counted.

We also made special efforts to inform the American people that if they were going to use the mail to vote, they should plan ahead and vote early. We encouraged voters to check with their state election officials to understand their local rules and, as a common-sense best practice, to mail their completed ballots before election day and at least a week before their state's deadline. In all, we reached out in one way or another to millions of voters, thousands of election officials, and communicated constantly with the postal workforce.

The Postal Service is an organization composed of extraordinary people. Our ability to undertake these many efforts, and to achieve these extraordinary results, is due entirely to the dedication of the women and men of the Postal Service in fulfilling their mission of public service.

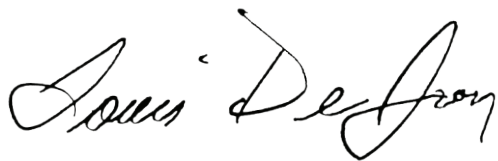
In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated our serious financial and operational challenges – and despite

substantial political rhetoric and sensationalism – the postal workforce remained focused on delivering the nation's election mail.

The wide-ranging election mail efforts and achievements documented in this report demonstrate that the Postal Service continues to play an indispensable role in the lives of the American public and in the life of the nation. We take great pride in the achievements of the 644,000 women and men of the Postal Service in fulfilling our public service mission, meeting the public's high expectations, and in delivering the nation's election mail amid the significant challenges of COVID-19.

Of course, our work is not complete. Georgia is holding two runoff elections for the United States Senate on January 5, 2021, and the Postal Service remains laser-focused on fulfilling our essential role for the election officials and voters who use the mail as part of the voting process. We will supplement this report after the conclusion of those elections.

We hope you find this report interesting and informative, and we thank you for your interest in the United States Postal Service.



LOUIS DEJOY

*Postmaster General & Chief Executive Officer
United States Postal Service*



THE HONORABLE LEE MOAK

*Governor & Chair,
Election Mail Committee
United States Postal Service*

Status of Mail-In Voting leading up to the 2020 Election

Over the past decade, the percentage of voters casting their ballots in person on Election Day has steadily declined, with more states expanding alternatives and more voters choosing a mail-in voting option. “Mail-in voting” refers to a number of different processes, all of which allow a voter to receive and return a ballot using the mail instead of going to a traditional polling place on Election Day to vote.

The three main types of mail-in voting are:

- Traditional absentee voting: A registered voter must attest to a valid “excuse” for why they are unable to be present at the polls on Election Day and must request a ballot in order to receive one.
- No-excuse absentee voting: Any registered voter may request and receive a mail-in ballot without having to provide an explanation.
- Vote-by-mail, sometimes called “all-mail”: All registered voters are automatically mailed a ballot without having to request one. Some “all-mail” elections may be conducted exclusively by mail, but most provide for an in-person voting option and other drop-off options.

Nationally, the number of mail-in voters nearly doubled from 2004 to 2016. However, mail-in voting rates have varied dramatically across states, largely dependent on the state’s voting system and the ease with which individuals can cast a mail-in ballot in the state.

In 2016, 16 states, including the vote-by-mail states (then Colorado, Washington, and Oregon), accounted for more than half of votes cast early, by mail, or via absentee voting. Some states, meanwhile, have historically seen relatively few mail-in ballots. In West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee, for example, just 2 percent of voters mailed in their ballots in the 2016 presidential election.

Overall, states have tended over time to expand access to mail-in voting. This trend continued

The Postal Service has no role in determining election laws or deadlines. The Postal Service offers a public service, which public policy makers may choose to allow voters to utilize as part of the administration of their elections. The Postal Service employs a robust and proven process to ensure the proper acceptance, processing, and delivery of all election mail.

in the leadup to the 2020 election, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, as several states passed legislation to expand their mail-in voting options.

For example, Michigan (in 2018) and Pennsylvania (in 2019) passed legislation that allowed, for the first time, no-excuse absentee voting for the 2020 election. Hawaii and Utah became vote-by-mail states after years of expanding their vote-by-mail processes. Heading into the 2020 Election Cycle, it seemed likely that mail-in voting would continue to grow modestly in popularity.

The Postal Service's Plan and Preparations for the 2020 Election

The Postal Service has long recognized the important role that mail-in voting plays in the Nation's electoral processes. In response to the growing popularity of mail-in voting and to provide exemplary customer support for this critically important mail volume, the Postal Service has for several federal election cycles established an election mail team dedicated to operational execution, outreach, and problem solving.

The primary group responsible for assisting with election mail is usually called the Election Mail Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is a cross-functional group comprised of members from functions throughout the Postal Service, from Operations to Marketing to the Postal Inspection Service, in order to ensure that there is a sustained organization-wide focus on all aspects of successfully delivering election mail.

In addition to the Steering Committee, employees throughout the country known as Political and Election Mail Coordinators work closely with elections officials in all jurisdictions. The Postal Service has developed a robust internal process to ensure the timely

delivery of election mail and has fostered and developed strong relationships with election officials and other election stakeholders.

Over the years, the Steering Committee's team members have spearheaded innovations for election mail, including the creation of dedicated tags to increase ballot mail visibility and special identifiers for tracking ballots. In a typical election cycle, the Steering Committee assists with the development and implementation of a comprehensive set of project plans to ensure that there is consistent application of election mail policies and practices.

For instance, the Steering Committee provides consistent messaging and guidance for election officials and political campaigns on election mail; develops responses to media inquiries to ensure that the public is receiving timely, accurate information on election mail; ensures organizational awareness of issues and changes to state election laws impacting mail-in voting; and monitors operational issues. In late 2019, the Steering Committee was formed and began implementing internal and external election mail plans for the 2020 election cycle, expecting a traditional election year.

As in each cycle, the Postal Service's top priority for the 2020 election cycle was the secure and timely delivery of election mail. To that end, the Steering Committee began taking steps even before the primaries to ensure that our Operations group ("Operations") was prepared and had the institutional support it needed.

Operations updated trainings, standard operating procedures, and standard work instructions related to election mail to ensure that employees were knowledgeable about the appropriate processes and procedures. The procedures for the proper handling of election mail were reinforced to employees throughout the Postal Service network, including retail, mail processing, and delivery, through Stand-Up Talks, Service Talks, and regular webinar touchpoints.

Operations also established a regular cadence of meetings with key personnel, called “Learn and Grows,” to discuss best practices as well as any common issues and how to handle them.

Leading up to and through the primaries, Operations also implemented changes to help improve existing processes based on the conditions experienced in processing plants and retail facilities throughout the country. Operations conducted thorough reviews of established processes to identify areas of opportunity and implemented solutions to bolster these processes in areas like postmarking and mail preparation. As in prior years, the Postal Service conducted daily “all clears,” including facility sweeps, to ensure that election mail was accounted for and was moving properly through the network.

Also as in prior years, local facilities during the primaries continued to utilize a variety of extraordinary measures – practices that extend beyond our normal operating procedures in order to accelerate the delivery of ballots – to ensure ballots mailed on or shortly before Election Day by election officials and voters could be delivered on time whenever possible.

These extraordinary measures included using Priority Mail Express, at no additional cost to the customer, to move ballots mailed at the last minute by voters or election officials; bypassing the processing network entirely to deliver ballots locally, a practice known as a “local turnaround”; making additional deliveries to election officials; and making special trips to ensure that ballots arrived on time to be counted.

Consistent with past practice, the security of election mail remained a top organizational focus. During the 2020 election cycle, the Postal Inspection Service monitored election mail as it moved through the postal network, to prevent, identify and resolve issues that might interfere with its secure and timely delivery.

All Inspection Service field divisions utilized designated and trained personnel who

coordinated election mail security within their division. Postal Inspectors conducted reviews of the physical security of both the workplace and the mail in processing plants, Business Mail Entry Units, delivery units and Post Offices. They also coordinated mail observations with the Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG). Inspection Service Special Agents and OIG auditors added another level of expertise and additional sets of “eyes.”

In addition to its own operational preparations, the Postal Service conducted extensive outreach efforts to ensure that elections officials were prepared to effectively use the mail for the 2020 election cycle. In February and March 2020, the Postal Service mailed the 2020 Election Mail Kit (known as Kit 600) to more than 11,500 election officials across the country. Among other things, the Kit provided election officials with detailed materials on what they can expect when using the mail; the products and services that may be of most interest to them, like options regarding different classes of mail, mailpiece design services, ways to enable the tracking of election mail through the use of barcodes, and prepaid postage; and information about offerings and features unique to election mail, like the Official Election Mail logo or Tag 191 for ballots.

The Kit also included updated Publication 631, Official Election Mail – Graphic Guidelines and Logos, and Publication 632, State and Local Election Mail – User’s Guide. These materials echoed the Postal Service’s longstanding recommendations that election officials use First-Class Mail when mailing ballots to voters and that voters mail their completed ballots at least one week before the applicable deadline. Consistent with prior years, the Postal Service published an Election and Political Mail Guide, which provided an overview of the election cycle and the Postal Service’s products and processes, in its Postal Bulletin, the Postal Service’s biweekly publication announcing organizational information and updates to

Observations of Election Mail Conditions in 2020: Key Statistics

Postal Inspectors directly involved:

More than
600

Geographies Covered:

**All 50 states, the
District of Columbia,
and Puerto Rico**

Observations conducted in the
General Election:

1,856

Observations conducted in the
Primary elections:

368

Total observations conducted in 2020:

2,224



policies and procedures.

In addition to these written materials, the Postal Service continued to conduct proactive outreach with local election officials and chief state election officials, like Secretaries of State. These outreach efforts were primarily led by more than 400 local Political and Election Mail Coordinators, including four Area Lead Coordinators. Political and Election Mail Coordinators are talented and experienced personnel who, among other things, serve as the primary points of contact for election officials and resolve issues reported to the Postal Service.

The outreach sessions provided key opportunities to discuss the Postal Service's delivery processes; to advise election officials on how they can design their mailings in a manner that comports with postal regulations, improves mailpiece visibility, and ensures efficient and cost-effective processing and delivery; and to emphasize and address questions about other key mailing recommendations. These sessions established vital points of contact that allowed open communication, so that when issues occurred, they could be quickly raised and resolved.

The Postal Service's outreach has also extended beyond election officials to include engagement with other members of the election community each Federal election

cycle, allowing the Postal Service to further disseminate its educational messaging about successfully using the mail.

In the 2020 election cycle, the Postal Service continued to foster these relationships and build contacts with key election stakeholders, like the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), the National Association of State Election Directors (NASED), Democracy Works, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Election Assistance Commission, by participating in panels, conducting joint meetings, and engaging in frequent communication. The Postal Service also prides itself on its strong partnerships with the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) and the Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA). The teamwork between FVAP, MPSA, and the Postal Service enables successful participation in elections through the mail by members of the military, their families, and overseas citizens.

In short, by early 2020, the Postal Service was well into the process of implementing its regular election mail preparedness efforts, which are robust and have proven effective. At that point, the election was shaping up to be consistent with prior cycles, with two new vote-by-mail states and otherwise incremental growth in mail-in voting overall.

COVID-19 & THE CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Starting in March, it became increasingly clear that the Postal Service's preparation for the 2020 election would require additional resources, planning and outreach. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the increased demand for and availability of mail-in voting options, caused the Postal Service to rethink and dramatically expand its overall approach.

And, as the Postal Service itself was increasingly the subject of media and political scrutiny and suspicion, the Postal Service had to engage in additional public communication and formalization of existing postal practices to reassure the public that the Postal Service remained fully committed to its limited but important role in the electoral process.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The most significant event affecting the Postal Service, and the public at large, was the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic was first and foremost a public-health and economic calamity and, by the Spring of 2020, it was evident that the pandemic would have a tremendous impact on the Postal Service's personnel, operations and finances. Mail volume declined by more than 20 percent and remained at a depressed level for most of the year, while package volume grew substantially, to levels that were previously only experienced during the peak holiday season.

Because postal employees perform an essential function as part of the nation's critical infrastructure, they continued to process and deliver the nation's mail and packages. However, the high levels of absenteeism caused

by the pandemic hampered the Postal Service's achievement of its service standards in many locations throughout the country.

It also quickly became obvious that the pandemic would impact the 2020 election, and particularly the way in which voters would participate. Demand for alternatives to in-person voting increased, some policymakers began expanding the use of mail for voting or transitioning to vote-by-mail elections, and the entire electoral system anticipated dramatic growth in the use of mail-in voting.

The Postal Service responded to the anticipated increase in demand by intensifying its outreach efforts so that election officials – and particularly those with limited experience in administering elections with high volumes of mail-in votes – could make informed decisions on using the mail and know what to expect from the Postal Service.

Focusing initially on educating election officials in states with limited experience in mail-in voting, the Postal Service redoubled its efforts in building relationships with election officials and informing them about issues such as mailpiece design, tracking and mailpiece-visibility services, postage-payment options, and mail acceptance processes. Area Political and Election Mail Coordinators reached out to boards of election and Secretaries of States in advance of each state's primary to discuss

concerns and to clarify recommendations on mail-preparation best practices, payment options, and delivery standards.

To supplement these efforts, the Postal Service's General Counsel sent a letter in late May to more than 11,000 election officials and state political-party officials nationwide, highlighting key aspects of the Postal Service's processes and delivery standards, informing election officials about the resources the Postal Service makes available to assist them, and reiterating recommendations for steps that election officials can take to ensure the efficient and timely handling of election mail.

Echoing the recommendations from earlier in the year (provided in Kit 600) and from prior election cycles, the letter recommended that election officials use First-Class Mail for all outgoing Election Mail, that voters mail their completed ballots one week before Election Day, and that election officials contact the available Postal Service personnel assigned to assist them, like Mailpiece Design Analysts and Political and Election Mail Coordinators.

The General Counsel followed that letter with individual letters to each state's top election official in July, noting instances in which apparent structural incongruities between state-law election deadlines and the Postal Service's delivery standards could put some ballots at risk of not arriving in time to be counted, i.e., situations where the timelines under state law appeared to be shorter than the time it reasonably takes for a blank ballot to be mailed to a voter, completed, and then mailed back and delivered to the appropriate election official.

While this was not a new problem, the Postal Service was concerned that it would likely be more acute in 2020, particularly in jurisdictions with significant increases in mail-in voting – often by voters using the mail for the first time to participate in an election. Those letters made clear that the Postal Service was not suggesting that

state law be changed to accommodate the Postal Service, but was simply alerting state officials to the tension between certain state deadlines and the practicalities of using the mail, and to recommend that states keep the Postal Service's delivery standards and recommendations in mind when administering the upcoming election and when informing voters how to successfully participate in it.

This letter was part of an effort to impart a common-sense message: that voters who choose to use the mail to participate in the election should plan ahead and act early. The Postal Service had imparted this message to elections officials before, in both Kit 600 and the May letter from the General Counsel to the states.

The Postal Service also developed a comprehensive strategy for educating the voting public directly regarding this message. To that end, the Postal Service developed plans to launch a new Election Mail website by the end of summer, which would contain clear and comprehensive information to election officials and the public. It further planned to echo its basic messaging through a variety of media platforms, retail channels, and direct mailings.

In addition, the Postal Service bolstered its internal structure to support the need for additional resources. In April, the Postal Service's Executive Leadership Team appointed Justin Glass to serve as the Executive Director of Election Mail and to provide day-to-day leadership over the Steering Committee. Mr. Glass created a cross-functional work group that met three days per week starting in mid-July (and seven days per week in the Fall) to exchange information and address emerging issues.

A dedicated outreach team was formed and began conducting regular meetings in June. The Postal Service also engaged in enhanced training in the field concerning core processes such as tracking Election Mail through logs; reporting on daily "All-Clears" in processing

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Overview | Our transformation | Business services | Government services | Social responsibility | Performance | Financials

Election Mail

Introduction | Voters | Military & overseas | Election officials | Resources

The General Election is Tuesday, November 3, 2020. The American public can rely on the United States Postal Service® to fulfill our role in the electoral process. We provide a secure, efficient and effective way for citizens to participate when policymakers decide to use mail as part of their elections.

KRISTIN SEAVER
CHIEF RETAIL AND DELIVERY OFFICER, USPS

"OUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY BETWEEN NOW AND THE NOVEMBER ELECTION IS THE SECURE AND TIMELY DELIVERY OF THE NATION'S ELECTION MAIL..."

27 DAYS TO GO...

POST OFFICE: "NUMBER ONE PRIORITY" IS ENSURING SECURE, TIMELY DELIVERY OF ELECTION MAIL

JR OFFICERS WERE FIRED ▶ THE OTHER THREE EX-POLICEMEN ARE CHARGED

EVENT BEGINS 7P ET

CNN DEBATE NIGHT IN AMERICA

3:15:38

National news

Oct. 13, 2020

Postmaster General Champions USPS Employee Commitment to a Safe and Secure Election

WASHINGTON, DC — With the November election less than a month away, Postmaster Louis DeJoy today reiterated his great faith in the fundamental integrity of the employees of the United States Postal Service and expressed tremendous confidence in their commitment and readiness throughout the organization.

Our Commitment to You

Throughout this extraordinary year, as COVID-19 disrupted the life of the nation and impacted the lives of millions, the more than 630,000 women and men of the Postal Service performed their essential role every day and fulfilled their mission of service in every American community—and we continue to do so.

As we accept, transport, process and deliver the nation's mail and packages, we embrace and hold dear the responsibility and core value of maintaining the sanctity and security of all that the public entrusts to our care.

Millions of Americans have already begun to participate in the November election—many choosing for the first time to vote through the U.S. Mail. The public puts their faith in the secure and timely delivery of their ballots to election officials throughout the nation, and the Postal Service strives continually to earn this trust. Indeed, this is our most sacred duty.

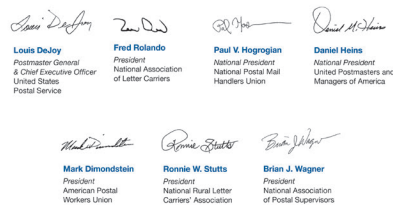
We are proud of our longstanding role in the electoral process, enabling voting by mail in thousands of elections over the years—and we are confident in our capability and capacity to deliver in this election season.

Throughout the Postal Service, in every processing facility, delivery unit and Post Office, delivery of the nation's election mail is our top priority. We are allocating extra resources where needed, prioritizing the processing of ballots, and working with our partners including election officials across the country.

Our simple message for those who choose to vote through the U.S. Mail is to plan ahead and vote early.

And as we continue receiving ballots cast by mail, you can be assured that the women and men of the Postal Service are united and fully focused on ensuring their secure and timely delivery.

This is our commitment to you.



Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General & Chief Executive Officer
United States Postal Service

Fred Rolando
President
National Association of Letter Carriers


Paul V. Hogrojan
National President
National Postal Mail Handlers Union

Daniel Heins
National President
National Postmasters and Managers of America

Mark Diamondstein
President
American Postal Workers Union

Ronnie W. Stutts
President
National Association of Letter Carriers

Brian J. Wagner
President
National Association of Postal Supervisors



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USPS: EVERY TEAM IN EVERY FACILITY ACROSS THE COUNTRY IS FOCUSED ON ELECTION MAIL

Oct 14, 2020 | E-Commerce Parcel Post | 0



Postmaster Louis DeJoy has reiterated his great faith in the fundamental integrity of the employees of the Postal Service and expressed tremendous confidence in their commitment and readiness to fulfill the nation's need for secure and timely delivery of election mail.

Dear Postal Customer,

If you vote by mail, we're committed to providing you a secure, effective way to deliver your ballot. Use this checklist to prepare:

- Start today. Give yourself and your election officials ample time to complete the process.
- Rules and dates vary by state, so contact your election board to confirm. Find links at usps.com/votinginfo.
- Request your mail-in ballot (often called "absentee" ballot) at least 15 days before Election Day.
- Once received, follow the instructions. Add postage to the return envelope if needed.
- We recommend you mail your ballot at least 7 days before Election Day.

We're ready to deliver for you. Make sure you're ready, too.

Your United States Postal Service

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Columbia MD 21044-1100

Visit usps.com/votinginfo or contact your election board.

and delivery to ensure that Election Mail was accounted for and moving properly through the network; monitoring mail conditions; and ensuring postmarks were placed on all ballots mailed by voters.

In addition, the Postal Service analyzed service issues that arose during the 2020 primary season and developed improvements to its postmarking policy and other processes in response. And, the Postal Service assigned “ballot monitors,” knowledgeable employees tasked with following ballot mail processing to identify and correct any issues that could cause a ballot to miss its postmark, to serve in each processing facility in the country.

It should be emphasized that each of these efforts required collaboration and close coordination between postal management and the Postal Service’s unions, which were an integral and enthusiastic part of the efforts to enhance and improve the organization’s procedures and performance throughout the 2020 election cycle.

The Changing Political Landscape

As the Postal Service was in the process of responding to the pandemic and preparing for the increased demand in mail-in voting, it was hit with a second disruptive event: a rapid change in the political landscape that unexpectedly thrust the Postal Service, a fundamentally nonpartisan institution, into the political and media spotlight.

The change grew out of the Postal Service’s looming financial crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent decline in mail volume and employee availability, which ultimately led to a broader debate among policymakers about the Postal Service’s role in the upcoming election. Around the same time, candidates and political parties were beginning

to engage in a protracted debate over the value and security of mail-in voting.

Although the Postal Service maintained that it remained ready and able to safely and securely deliver whatever amount of election mail policymakers chose to employ in administering the 2020 election, it also has no control over the extent to which elections should rely on mail-in voting and took no position on the matter. Nevertheless, the Postal Service found itself in the middle of an increasingly heated partisan tug-of-war.

This dispute over the Postal Service and mail-in voting only intensified when Louis DeJoy took office on June 15, 2020, as the Postal Service’s 75th Postmaster General. Because Mr. DeJoy had previously contributed to Republican Party candidates, some jumped to the conclusion that he must have been appointed to effectuate the Administration’s opposition to expanded mail-in voting or to somehow undermine mail-in voting for the 2020 Election – even though (1) the Postal Service has no control over the extent to which mail-in voting features in the electoral process, and (2) Mr. DeJoy had been appointed not by the President but by the unanimous vote of the Postal Service’s bipartisan Board of Governors.

Suddenly, seemingly everything concerning the Postal Service was viewed through a partisan lens. Routine business decisions – such as the removal or relocation of sorting machines and collection boxes – were perceived as part of an effort to make voting by mail more difficult or less efficient, ignoring the fact that these decisions were made pursuant to processes that were in place long before Mr. DeJoy’s arrival, were consistent with decisions in prior years to ensure the postal network remains fluid and responsive to changes in volume and density (including substantial declines in mail volume), and were implemented months before the upcoming election.

Mr. DeJoy’s directive that the Postal Service adhere to its established transportation

schedule – a schedule that long predated his tenure – was also viewed as an effort to intentionally degrade mail service, even though the directive was consistent with long-standing efforts to increase operational efficiency and improve service, and in fact was consistent with a report by the Postal Service’s Inspector General that transportation-schedule delays were forcing the Postal Service to incur needless costs.

transportation constraints, and changing volume trends. In addition, for a period of time in July and early August, there was a temporary decline as the Postal Service adjusted clearance times to its locally established operating plans, particularly its transportation schedule.

The Postal Service has been focused relentlessly (as it has in the past) on trying to ascertain and correct the root causes of these service declines to the extent possible.

“...no matter what, we will do everything we can to ensure we deliver ballots in a timely fashion. This is our top priority over the next five weeks.”

Postmaster General Louis DeJoy,

Message to Postal Employees

October 5, 2020

The Postal Service was accused, inaccurately, of banning overtime and cutting back hours in post offices. Even the letters to election officials that the General Counsel wrote in May and July were perceived not as offering common-sense guidance on how the mail works or as identifying persistent structural inconsistencies between state election deadlines and longstanding Postal Service delivery standards, but as some kind of warning that the Postal Service was planning to slow down mail delivery for the election several months later.

To be sure, many facilities reported delayed volumes over the summer and fall months, and the Postal Service experienced service declines over this period. Service performance results are influenced by a number of factors. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected service performance, due to the fact that it has led to reduced employee availability,

However, the service declines had nothing do with election mail as such, and certainly were not the product of a deliberate choice to slow mail delivery, let alone an effort to impact the general election several months into the future.

To reassure the public that the Postal Service’s commitment to, and ability to handle, election mail had not wavered in the slightest, the Postmaster General made repeated public statements affirming that the Postal Service was ready and committed to handle whatever volume it received and that organization’s highest priority was the secure and on-time delivery of the Nation’s election mail. He further reiterated that the Postal Service’s prices, delivery standards, and requirements regarding election mail had not changed and would not change before the 2020 election.

To assuage any concerns, and to avoid even the appearance that operational decisions to

improve the Postal Service's overall efficiency and effectiveness may impact the upcoming election, in August, the Postmaster General suspended the implementation of certain operational efforts and guaranteed that retail hours at Post Offices would not change, that there would be no further removal of mail processing equipment and collection boxes, that mail processing facilities would not be closed, and that overtime would continue to be approved as needed.

Further demonstrating the Postal Service's commitment to its role in the 2020 election, the Postmaster General also announced in August that, beginning October 1, additional resources would be made available in all areas of operations, including extra transportation and overtime, to satisfy any increased demand and to ensure the expeditious processing and timely delivery of election mail.

In addition, the Postmaster General committed that, as it has done in previous election cycles (as well as in the 2020 primaries), the Postal Service would continue to expedite election mail through the system, and would deploy extraordinary policies and procedures that allow ballots to be treated "better" than First-Class Mail where necessary.

Finally, the Postmaster General announced the establishment of an Election Mail Task Force to coordinate and lead the Postal Service's organization-wide commitment to deliver ballots and other election mail securely and on time. This Task Force would expand the existing Steering Committee to include leadership of the four major postal unions and leaders of postal management associations, further solidifying the crucial interplay among essential components of the postal workforce and providing strong coordination throughout the organization.

Further, a bipartisan Election Mail Committee was established by the Board of Governors to support and monitor postal management and advise on election-mail matters.

MANY BALLOTS ARE SENT OUT CLOSE TO ELECTION DAY AND REQUIRE EXTRAORDINARY MEANS TO CONNECT THEM TO VOTERS. IN THE 2020 GENERAL ELECTION, LOCAL COORDINATORS REPORTED

**4.8
MILLION
BALLOTS**

**ENTERED BETWEEN
OCTOBER 26TH
AND NOVEMBER 3RD.**

DELIVERING THE NATION'S ELECTION MAIL

The Postmaster General assured the public that the Postal Service would take all steps needed to handle the increased volume of Election Mail and deliver it effectively. As discussed below, the Postal Service devoted the next several months to making good on that promise.

Enhanced Outreach, Structural Improvements, and Formalized Policies

In the final months before the 2020 election, the Postal Service continued to improve and enhance its efforts to ensure that it was fully prepared to handle whatever volume of election mail it received in the fall and to fulfill its role in the democratic process.

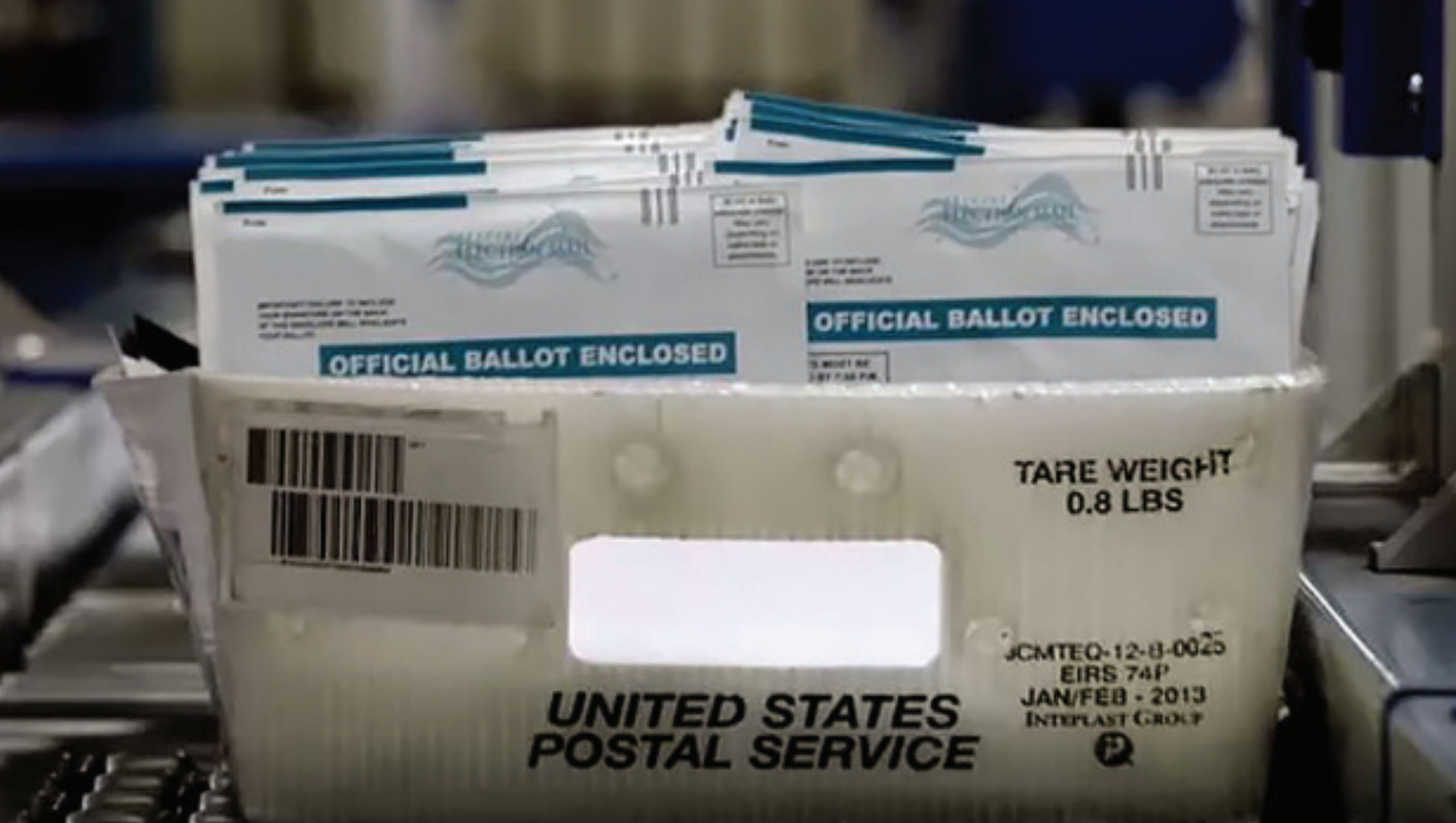
The Postal Service redoubled its outreach efforts with state and local officials, and engaged directly with NASS and NASED, along with other organizations, to restate key messages and communicate operational plans. With input from NASS and NASED, the Postal Service finalized its revamped election-mail website, www.usps.com/votinginfo, to provide clear and comprehensive guidance to both election officials and the public on successfully using the mail in the upcoming elections.

In early September, the Postal Service mailed a postcard to every household in America, reiterating its general recommendation that voters who choose to use the mail in the upcoming election should plan ahead and vote early, and directing recipients of the postcard to the Postal Service's new website. This educational effort was further amplified through mass-media communications and retail signage.

The Postal Service's expanded oversight efforts included the Board of Governors' Election Mail Committee, which met weekly to review plans and performance and to provide direct support for and oversight of the Postal Service's preparations, and the now-expanded Election Mail Task Force, which met weekly to oversee implementation and ensure that it was receiving relevant information from throughout the organization.

To these ends, the Task Force formed local task forces that contained union member employees who served as "ballot ambassadors." The ballot ambassadors facilitated information sharing by reporting processing issues and findings to their individual Plant Managers and Division Directors who, in turn, would discuss these issues and findings during weekly meetings with the Chief Logistics and Processing Operations Officer and the Executive Director of Election Mail. Postal Service Operations officials across the country then shared and discussed these issues and findings in depth on a weekly basis.

In addition, a cross-functional Retail and Delivery Command Center was established in late September. The Command Center helped ensure that Postal Service policies were articulated comprehensively and were understood and followed consistently, addressed and corrected deficiencies, and served as a primary resource to address questions and concerns from retail and delivery



employees. Similarly, a Logistics and Processing Operations Command team was assembled in early October, and a Help Desk Call Center was created for inquiries from both employees and customers.

In addition to this additional outreach and these structural improvements, the Postal Service issued several policy documents to memorialize the Postmaster General's public assurances and to codify and formalize practices that had been performed on an informal (although widespread) basis in previous election cycles (and during the 2020 primary season).

In September 2020, for example, the Postal Service issued an explicit organization-wide directive authorizing and instructing the use of additional resources beginning on October 1, 2020, by District Managers, Postmasters, Division Directors and Plant Managers across all areas of operations. These additional resources included, but were not limited to, expanded

processing procedures, extra transportation, extra delivery and collection trips and overtime to ensure that Election Mail reaches its intended destination in a timely manner.

Moreover, to help effectuate the Postmaster General's August commitment to providing even better than First-Class Mail service for ballots where necessary, the Postal Service issued formal directives setting forth the kinds of "extraordinary measures" that local management were authorized and expected to employ in the period immediately before the 2020 election.

As noted above, the term "extraordinary measures" refers to practices that extend beyond the ordinary course of operations in order to accelerate the delivery of ballots, and particularly ballots that are entered very close to state election deadlines. While the Postal Service continued to strongly recommend that voters mail their ballots at least a week before they were due, particularly due to the high

amount of expected election-mail volume, the Postal Service ultimately has no control over when voters request or return their ballots, and extraordinary measures are designed to rescue as many “at risk” ballots as possible. These measures included, among other things:

- processing ballots as Priority Mail Express, at no additional charge to the customer, to accelerate the delivery of ballots that were at risk of not arriving before state deadlines;
- pulling ballots from processing facilities on Election Day and transporting them directly to boards of election to satisfy state deadlines;
- employing local “turnarounds,” in which ballots mailed to board of elections in the same locality would be handled by local retail and delivery units without ever entering the processing network;
- coordinating direct hand-offs among delivery units to ensure ballots reach boards of election before state deadlines;
- collecting and processing mail on Sunday, November 1;
- running early collections on November 2 and November 3;
- altering sort programs in processing plants so that ballots could be pulled and moved more quickly to their destination;
- creating “ballot postmark only” lines or drive-through ballot-acceptance lines at retail facilities to expedite collection and/or postmarking of customers’ ballots;

As discussed above, these “extraordinary measures” were not new; facilities had long been employing these measures for ballots as a matter of widespread local practice rather than formal policy. Given the expected increase in mail-in voting, however, these measures took on added importance, and were expressly established in formal policy documents to ensure that they were being implemented

consistently throughout the organization in a standardized manner. This formalization also allowed election officials and the public to more fully understand the kinds of actions the Postal Service was taking to get ballots delivered timely and securely.

As the Postal Service was making these structural improvements and formalizing and implementing these policies and procedures, it was confronted with one more hurdle: lawsuits in a variety of federal courts. These suits were largely premised on, at worst, a baseless assertion that the Postmaster General was intentionally slowing down the mail to interfere with the election, or, at best, the unsupported notion that the Postal Service was unwilling or unable to efficiently deliver the nation’s election mail.

Four different courts issued nationwide preliminary injunctions in seven different cases. While the preliminary injunctions that these lawsuits prompted were largely consistent with the Postal Service’s practices and policies, they required the Postal Service to generate and produce data and reports, to certify compliance with existing policies, and to make postal officials available for depositions and other discovery demands.

The Postal Service complied with these orders, but they were undoubtedly a distraction for the organization, requiring the diversion of resources and keeping critical postal leadership from their primary duty of ensuring that the nation’s election mail was being handled expeditiously. The lawsuits were, in short, another unexpected barrier that the Postal Service had to overcome in carrying out its role for the 2020 election.

Key General Election Performance Statistics

Percent of ballots delivered from voters to election officials within seven days:

99.89

Percent of ballots delivered from voters to election officials within three days:

97.9

Average time to deliver ballots from election officials to voters:

2.1 Days

Average time to deliver ballots from voters to election officials:

1.6 Days

Preliminary Assessment of Postal Service Performance in the Election

Despite the significant obstacles it faced throughout the year, and despite persistent criticism and skepticism from various sources, the Postal Service served the American public well in the 2020 election, and effectively handled the dramatic increase in election mail volume.

Preliminary estimates are that, in the 2020 election cycle, the Postal Service delivered

more than four billion pieces of political mail – i.e., mail from political candidates, political action committees, and similar organizations in order to advocate for candidates or issues – which represents a 76 percent increase over the amount of political mail delivered in the 2016 election cycle.

The Postal Service also delivered roughly 543 million pieces of election mail – meaning mail to or from election officials, including ballots, ballot applications, registration forms, or other items that enable citizens to participate in the voting process – which represents a 96 percent increase over the amount of election mail delivered in 2016.

The Postal Service also delivered at least 135 million ballots to or from voters in the general election alone – and likely far more than that, as that figure includes only those ballots that could be identified and tracked in the system as ballots through the use of ballot-specific identifiers, and the figure excludes ballots for which extraordinary measures were employed in many instances (because many of the extraordinary measures involved ballots that were diverted from, or did not enter, the normal processing network in order to expedite them and thus did not receive processing scans).

With respect to reliability, 99.89 percent of identified ballots mailed after September 4, 2020 were delivered within seven days, consistent with the recommendations that the Postal Service disseminated to voters. And the overwhelming majority of ballots were delivered in far less time than that. Based on its internal ballot processing scores, the Postal Service estimates that 97.9 percent of ballots mailed from voters to election officials were delivered within three days, and 99.7 percent of ballots mailed from voters were delivered within five days. While the average delivery time for First-Class Mail – the class of mail by which nearly all ballots from voters are mailed – was roughly 2.5 days in October 2020, ballots generally traveled even faster. The average delivery time for ballots mailed to voters was 2.1 days and the average delivery time for completed ballots returned from voters was 1.6 days.

These successes demonstrate that the Postal Service created a robust, proven process for expeditiously handling the nation’s Election Mail and was flexible enough to respond to unique challenges by bolstering and altering those processes in the face of dramatically changed circumstances. More than that, the Postal Service’s performance in the 2020 election is a testament to the hard-working and mission-driven women and men of the Postal Service.

The Postal Service faced unprecedented challenges and operated under a wholly unfamiliar political spotlight in 2020, but the commitment among letter carriers, clerks, mail handlers, supervisors, postmasters, plant managers, and other employees throughout the organization never wavered, even in the face of the pandemic. Postal employees rose to the occasion, served the American people with pride and distinction, and upheld the Postal Service’s promise to deliver the nation’s election mail securely and on time, consistent with the organization’s non-partisan public service mission.

Of course, the Postal Service’s mission with regard to the current national election season is not yet complete, but we remain confident that the processes and procedures that we have in place will ensure that we will successfully perform our role in the electoral process, just as we did in the general election. Georgia is holding two runoff elections for the United States Senate on January 5, 2021, and the Postal Service remains laser-focused on fulfilling its essential role for the election officials and voters who choose to use the mail as part of the voting process.

Each of the processes and measures in place for the 2020 general election will remain in place for the 2021 runoff elections, and this report will be supplemented after those elections are complete.

