

# National Association of State Election Directors Election Projects

Daniel Bentley  
Election Mail Program Manager  
August 23, 2017

- 2016 Election Cycle Review
  - What Worked Well
  - Challenges
- 2018 Election Cycle
  - Election Community Partnership
  - Improvements
  - Recommendations

## USPS/Election Community Partnership

- National Association of Secretaries of State
- National Association of State Election Directors
- Election Assistance Commission
- Election Center; Joint Election Officials Liaison Committee
- Bipartisan Policy Center
- Military Postal Service Agency
- Federal Voter Assistance Program
- Local Election Offices
- Council of State Governments
- International Association of Government Officials

## Election Community Partnership

- **Thank you for making this a successful Vote-By-Mail cycle**
- Election Mail success due to our joint efforts to improve Vote-By-Mail experience
- Improved communications with Election Officials across the country
- Improved postal standardized operational processes
- Significant growth of absentee ballots in many areas

## 2016 Election Cycle (Oct. 2015 - Nov. 8, 2016)

- Postal Service delivered 276 million pieces of outbound Election Mail and 2.3 billion pieces of Political Mail

## Ongoing Communications

- Postal Service's Election Mail Coordinators improved their outreach and communications with local Election Officials
- More Election Mail pieces were reviewed by Mailpiece Design Analysts
- Higher use of Official Election Mail logo and Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMb)
- Usage of automation-compatible return ballots for higher postmarking percentage
- Used Tag 191 to increase visibility of Election Mail in a processing facility
- Paid First-Class Mail postage to receive 2 to 5 day delivery standards
- Encouraged voters to return ballots one week prior to election
- 2016 Official Election Mail Kit distributed to 7,500 State/Local Election Officials
- Election Mail guidelines sent to Secretaries of State and State Election Directors

## Operational Focus

- Conducted employee training on Election Mail, including national webinars and employee service talks
- Continuously monitored Election Mail entry, processing and delivery operations
- Implemented new internal measurements and Standard Operating Procedures to ensure ballots processed within service standards
- Implemented daily “all clear” certification at all Post Offices and mail processing plants during weeks before and after local election primaries and Election Day

## Issue Resolution

- Quick and direct communications between Election Officials and local Election Mail Coordinator
- Direct communications between Election Mail Coordinators and Election Officials
- Collaborated with Democracy Works to provide an easy-to-use method for Election Officials to report issues through ElectionMail.org
  - Issues automatically sent to local Election Mail Coordinator for resolution
  - Provided national reporting to identify trends and systemic issues

## Most Frequently Reported Issues

- Misdelivered return ballots due to mailpiece design
  - Voter address information and multiple barcodes printed on the back of return ballot envelopes resulted in automation equipment using voter address for delivery
- Postmarking Issues
  - Missing or obscured Facer Identification Marks (FIMs) resulted in mailpiece orientation errors in automation equipment, including postmarking the back of the return ballot
  - Non-automation-compatible return ballots require manual processing for a postmark



## Proposed 2017 Changes

### Situation:

- ❖ Having addresses, numbers and barcodes printed on both the front and back of the Ballot Return Envelope has been causing ballots to be misdirected and/or delayed!

**FOR CLERK'S USE ONLY**

Ballot Envelope Returned: Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Received By \_\_\_\_\_ **Ballot No.** \_\_\_\_\_ **Precinct No.** \_\_\_\_\_  
 I certify that I have checked the signature on this envelope with the signature on file and they agree. **X** **Election Date** \_\_\_\_\_ **Ward No.** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Election Official \_\_\_\_\_

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE ABSENT VOTER**

I assert that I am a United States citizen and a qualified and registered elector of the city, township or village named below. I am voting as an absent voter in conformity with state election law. Unless otherwise indicated below, I personally marked the ballot enclosed in this envelope without exhibiting it to any other person.

I further assert that this absent voter ballot is being returned to the clerk or an assistant of the clerk by me personally; by public postal service, express mail service, parcel post service, or other common carrier, by a member of my immediate family; or by a person residing in my household.

**VOTER SIGNATURE REQUIRED**

**SIGN HERE: X** Signature of Absent Voter \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
**THE ABOVE FORM MUST BE SIGNED OR YOUR VOTE WILL NOT BE COUNTED.**  
**AN ABSENT VOTER WHO KNOWINGLY MAKES A FALSE STATEMENT IS GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR.**

▼ VOTER'S NAME, ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP ▼

**Correctly Addressed**

110082016 01001 1 00000218

**TO BE COMPLETED ONLY IF VOTER IS ASSISTED IN VOTING BY ANOTHER PERSON**  
 I assisted the herein named absent voter who is disabled or otherwise unable to mark his/her absent voter ballot pursuant to his/her directions. The absent voter ballot was inserted into the return envelope without being exhibited to any other person.

Signature of Person Assisting Voter \_\_\_\_\_  
 Print Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 A PERSON WHO ASSISTS AN ABSENT VOTER AND WHO KNOWINGLY MAKES A FALSE STATEMENT IS GUILTY OF A FELONY.

**Facer Identification Mark (FIM) can become illegible for many reasons**  
 Postage affixed, stray marks, use of perforation tear strips

**DO NOT BEND**

**OFFICIAL ABSENT VOTER'S BALLOT**

**WARNING**  
 PERSONS WHO CAN LEGALLY BE IN POSSESSION OF AN ABSENT VOTER BALLOT ISSUED TO AN ABSENT VOTER ARE LIMITED TO THE ABSENT VOTER, A PERSON WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE ABSENT VOTER'S IMMEDIATE FAMILY OR RESIDES IN THE ABSENT VOTER'S HOUSEHOLD AND WHO HAS BEEN ASKED BY THE ABSENT VOTER TO RETURN THE BALLOT; A PERSON WHOSE JOB IT IS TO HANDLE MAIL BEFORE, DURING, OR AFTER BEING TRANSPORTED BY A PUBLIC POSTAL SERVICE, EXPRESS MAIL SERVICE, PARCEL POST SERVICE, OR COMMON CARRIER, BUT ONLY DURING THE NORMAL COURSE OF HIS OR HER EMPLOYMENT; AND THE CLERK, ASSISTANTS OF THE CLERK, AND OTHER AUTHORIZED ELECTION OFFICIALS OF THE CITY, TOWNSHIP OR VILLAGE. ANY OTHER PERSON IN POSSESSION OF AN ABSENT VOTER BALLOT IS GUILTY OF A FELONY.

**TO**

**Correctly Addressed**

**SIGN BACK OF ENVELOPE**  
 Deadline for Returning Ballot: 8pm on Election Day

**FIRST-CLASS MAIL POSTAGE MUST BE APPLIED**

## Most Frequently Reported Issues

- Delivery Issues
  - Employee scheduling at a plant impacted processing and delivery of ballots in 2 states
  - Despite training, some employees did not always follow standardized processes
  - Mailpieces without unique IMb could not be tracked in mail processing operations
  - Many states have deadlines for requesting absentee ballots that are very close to Election Day
    - ▶ Service standard for First Class Mail 2 - 5 days

## Collaborate on Design Standards - Improve Automation Compatibility

- Develop best practice outbound and return envelope templates
- Promote Informed Delivery to support voter awareness
- Training opportunities
  - Informational WebEx Series
- Strengthen Election Mail mailing requirements
  - Facer Identification Mark (FIM)
  - Official Election Mail Logo
  - Tag 191
- Legislative and Education Efforts
  - Work with State Election Officials to review statutory deadlines and postmarking language for absentee ballots
  - If your state is considering legislative changes, please contact us at [electionmailprogrammanager@usps.com](mailto:electionmailprogrammanager@usps.com)
  - Educate federal, state and local Election Officials on the Postal Service processes

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**Facer Identification Mark (FIM) can become illegible for many reasons**  
 Postage affixed, stray marks, use of perforation tear strips



HOLD HERE WHEN OPENING

ADDRESS

PRINTING SYSTEMS, INC. • 1-800-95-12345 • FORM NO. 694 (Rev. 10/10) (101)10

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**Correctly Addressed**

**FIRST-CLASS MAIL POSTAGE MUST BE APPLIED**

### Test - Proposed Solution:

- ❖ For Full Service mailpieces Print the same IMb above the address and at the bottom of the envelope. This may improve the likelihood the mailpiece will be oriented correctly if the FIM is illegible.

## Official Election Mail Logo



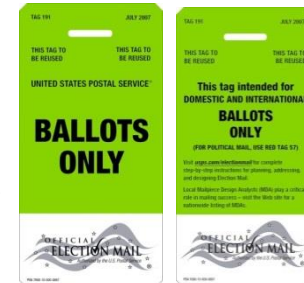
- When the logo appears on a mailpiece, voters recognize the mail as important and postal workers can distinguish it from the thousands of other mailpieces processed daily

## Update Domestic Mail Manual (DMM)

- Require the use of the Official Election Mail Logo on all Official Election Mail
- Require the use of Tag 191 on all Official Election Mail Ballot mailings
- Change the current location of the Facer Identification Mark requirement in the DMM to align with the new requirements stated above

## Tag 191 for Ballots

- Domestic and International Ballots only
- Greater visibility during USPS handling and distribution
- Available at Business Mail Entry Unit (BMEU)



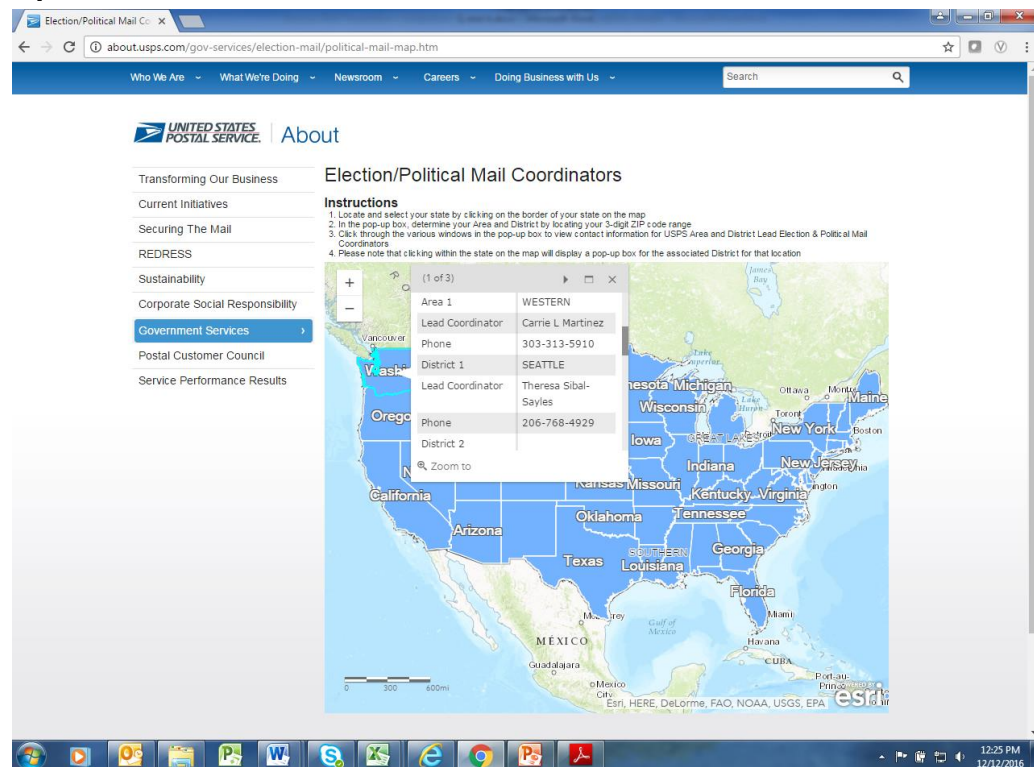
## Simplify Trouble Ticket Process

- During the 2016 election cycle we made significant progress on how we manage issues reported by the election community.
- Our work is not done.
  - Through our commitment to continuous improvement we will be implementing several elements this year to collect additional issue details as well as provide additional reporting.
    - [Electionmail.org](http://Electionmail.org)
    - Postal Service SharePoint Ticket System

## Create an IMb Element to Identify Official Election Mail Ballots

## Update Interactive Election and Political Mail Map

- Include Processing and Distribution Center and Business Mail Entry Unit addresses and phone numbers



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the USPS website. The page title is "Election/Political Mail Coordinators". The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with "Government Services" selected. The main content area features a map of the United States with a pop-up window for Washington state. The pop-up window displays the following information:

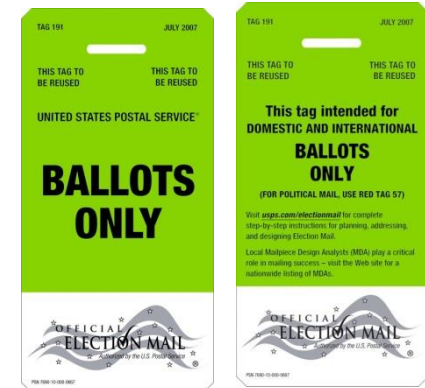
(1 of 3)	
Area 1	WESTERN
Lead Coordinator	Carrie L. Martinez
Phone	303-313-5910
District 1	SEATTLE
Lead Coordinator	Theresa Sibal-Sayles
Phone	206-768-4929
District 2	

Below the map, there are instructions for using the map and a search bar. The instructions are:

1. Locate and select your state by clicking on the border of your state on the map
2. In the pop-up box, determine your Area and District by locating your 5-digit ZIP code range
3. Click through the various windows in the pop-up box to view contact information for USPS Area and District Lead Election & Political Mail Coordinators
4. Please note that clicking within the state on the map will display a pop-up box for the associated District for that location

## Recommendations contd.

- Use letter-size reply envelopes
- Board of Elections should use First-Class Mail postage on outbound absentee or Vote-by-Mail ballots
- Design outbound and return envelopes to contain:
  - Official Election Mail logo
- Tag 191 Domestic and International Ballots
- Official Ballot Mailings - Provide a sample mailpiece with all contents, exceptions (see [DMM 703.8](#))





## Intelligent Mail Barcode IMb Tracing®

- IMb Tracing® is a free subscription-based service
- Provides real-time tracking information for your automation-compatible letters and flats, giving advance notice for both incoming and outgoing mail
- Uses Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMb)
  - Available for IMb Tracing® with or without ACS™
  - Ability to track different mailing levels
  - Entire mailing can be analyzed

## How do I get started with IMb Tracing®?

To learn more or get started with IMb Tracing™, visit our website or contact our customer support center

Mail	NATIONAL CUSTOMER SUPPORT CENTER UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE 225 N HUMPHREYS BLVD STE 501 MEMPHIS TN 38188-1001
Telephone	800-238-3150
Email	<a href="mailto:IMbTracing@usps.gov">IMbTracing@usps.gov</a>
Website	<a href="https://postalpro.usps.com/node/103">https://postalpro.usps.com/node/103</a>

## Voter Communication

Election Officials should consider including a voter notification in the ballot material packet to ensure the timely delivery of ballots

- Return by Mail Date Guidance
  - Domestic non-military voters
    - ▶ *The Postal Service recommends that voters mail their ballots at least one week early to account for any unforeseen events or weather issues*
- Promote Informed Delivery to support voter awareness

Informed Delivery is Now Nationwide!

  - See What's Coming
    - ▶ *See your household mail - even while traveling.*
  - Get Email Notifications
    - ▶ *Get an email each morning with images of that day's mailbox contents*

## Contacts

- Election Mail Coordinators – Support preparation, entry delivery and pickup planning  
[usps.com/electionmail](https://usps.com/electionmail)
- Mailpiece Design Analysts – Support design and compliance review MDA Support Center at 855-593-6093 (hours of operation: Monday-Friday, 7 a.m.-5 p.m. CT) or by sending your request by email to [mda@usps.gov](mailto:mda@usps.gov). For more information: <https://postalpro.usps.com/node/1341>
- Find a Business Mail Entry Unit: Learn where to drop off government and Election Mail. <https://postalpro.usps.com/locators/find-bme>
- Election Mail Task Force/ Program Manager:  
[ElectionMailProgramManager@usps.gov](mailto:ElectionMailProgramManager@usps.gov)

**Thank you!**

