

## **Citizens Guide for the USPS and Election/Political Mail**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Starting with the 2020 Election, voting by mail has become a significant part of our election system. Even though back in 2005, the Carter-Baker Commission On Federal Election Reform Report stated, "Absentee ballots remain the largest source of potential voter fraud", the trend to vote by mail continues to increase. As a result of the growth in voting by mail, the USPS has become a significant part of our election system.

We have to start thinking about the USPS as a super-precinct in our elections, and we have to monitor their process of handling election and political mail, just like any other precinct. This guide will provide the framework for Local and Statewide Election Integrity Task Forces to identify, investigate and monitor the activities of the USPS in our elections.

### **SECTION ONE**

#### **Background**

The USPS handles two classes of mail that are related to elections. Election Mail is "Official" Mail-In Ballot Applications, and Ballots, mailed from an Election Office, or from a voter. The envelopes for Election Mail bear the "Official Election Mail Logo". Political Mail is considered Marketing Mail and is any election related material that is mailed by an unofficial party. A mailing, by an unofficial party, that includes a partially populated Absentee Ballot Application, that can be used by a voter to apply for an Absentee Ballot, is considered Political mail. The USPS offers similar services for both classes of mail, and the movement of both is prioritized in their system.

The services for a particular mail piece are coded in the barcode that is printed on the envelope. This barcode is called an IMb, for Intelligent Mail Barcode. The barcode identifies the mailer, the tracking service requested, the disposition of undeliverable mail and a unique identifier for the addressee.

A new barcode is available for any envelope that contains a ballot. So, anyone with a scanner can tell if an envelope contains a ballot, either blank to the voter, or filled out and mailed back to the Election Office.

The services for Election Mail are standardized throughout the USPS System. The mail from an Election Office, an application or a ballot, to the voter; and, the return mail from the voter, are usually both First Class Postage, with the

fastest USPS delivery standard. Some states provide a First-Class Postage Paid Envelope to the voter.

All Election Mail is tracked in the USPS System. The tracking information is provided to the Election Office, or to a designated third party who provides Absentee Ballot status updates to voters. The last scan is actually in the Post Office just before the Letter Carrier is given the mail for his route, not when the carrier puts the mail in the addressee's mailbox. So, even though the tracking system says the voter received the ballot, there's no way to be sure.

All Election Mail that is "Undeliverable", the voter is not at the address, is returned to the Election Office, with the reason why it wasn't delivered. That should trigger the NVRA procedures by the Election Office to change the voter's status to "Inactive".

The typical services for Political Mail are different from Election mail. Most Political Mail is sent Third Class, or Bulk Mail. Although the delivery standard is slower in both cases, the USPS prioritizes Political Mail in their system. If the mail piece includes an Absentee Ballot Application, with a return envelope to the Election Office, the return envelope usually has First-Class postage.

Most Political Mail is tracked in the USPS System, especially mail containing partially populated Absentee Ballot Applications. The tracking information is sent electronically to the unofficial party who did the mailing. The return envelope in the mail piece is also tracked in the USPS System. So, an unofficial party, typically a Left-Wing, Non-Profit organization, who has sent out a mass mailing of Absentee Ballot Applications knows when the application gets to the voter, and if, and when, the voter returns the application to the Election Office.

Political Mail that is "Undeliverable", the voter is not at the address, is typically not returned to the unofficial party who did the mailing. The "Undeliverables", are discarded and the voter's name and address are reported electronically to the mailer, with the reason why the mail wasn't delivered. The mail piece is discarded in a "Recycle Bin" on the dock of the Post Office without any "Chain of Custody".

## SECTION TWO

### Left-Wing, Non-Profit Organizations & The USPS

There are several Left-Wing, Non-Profit organizations who work very closely with the USPS. It is extremely important to find out if they're operating in your state and to monitor their activities. Here are a few examples and their known activities.

The Center for Voter Information, also known as The Center for Voter Participation, is a Left-Wing, Non-Profit organization located in Washington, DC. They do mass mailings (Political Mail) of Absentee Ballot Applications supposedly targeted to the "New American Majority", young voters, communities of color and unmarried women, However, we know they include a much broader mailing list from the voter rolls. They mailed out millions of these partially populated Absentee Ballot Applications in at least 25 states in the 2020 Election. In 2021 they mailed out over Two Million Absentee Ballot Applications for the elections in Virginia and New Jersey.

These mailings by CVI/VPC have the typical Political Mail Services. The mailer is sent out to the voter with Third-Class postage, and the return envelope to the Election Office has Pre-Paid First-Class postage.

Both the mailer and the return envelope have a trackable barcode. CVI/VPC knows when the voter receives the mailer, and if, and when, they send the application to the Election Office.

Their most important service is the way they handle their "Undeliverables". The "Undeliverables", the voter is not at the address, are discarded and they receive an electronic report, with the name and address of the voter and the reason why the mail piece could not be delivered. So, they get a list of voters who do not live at their registration address. These are unlikely voters, and they could become "Phantom Voters"?

The Center for Civic Design is a Left-Wing, Non-Profit that provides design services for election materials to the USPS and Election Offices. CCD is project of the Democracy Fund, a Left-Wing, Non-Profit funding source that was started by Pierre Omidyar, founder of Ebay. Tammy Patrick, from the Democracy Fund, is a key Election/Political Mail advisor to the USPS. She also sits on the board of directors for the Center for Tech and Civic Life, the Left-Wing, Non-Profit that distributed the Zuckerberg Grants in 2020.

Ballot Scout is a project of Democracy Works another Left-Wing, Non-Profit organization. Ballot Scout provides a system to Election Officials for voters to track Absentee Ballots in the mail. A voter can go to a website and see the current status of their ballot in the mail. The system relies on the USPS to scan an intelligent barcode on the ballot envelope. When a ballot is received without a postmark on the envelope, the Ballot Scout tracking status is used to determine the mail date. Democracy Works also runs The Voting Information Project, that provides users with locations for voting and information on their region's ballot. The Voting Information Project is included in the toolkit for the Election Assistance Commission.

Electionmail.org is a website set up by Democracy Works with a grant from Democracy Fund (Pierre Omidyar and Tammy Patrick, again). This website

provides a direct link to the USPS Internal Resolution Tracking System. Local and state election officials can use this form to report past, or current issues with official Election Mail processed by the USPS. The website has direct links to The Center for Civic Design and The National Vote at Home Institute, both Left-Wing Non-Profits. The Election Assistance Commission recommends it as a resource for Election Officials.

### SECTION THREE

#### Tools & USPS Definitions

Here are the tools to use to discover these Left-Wing Infiltrators in the USPS System.

1. Internet searches
2. Review State Board of Elections meeting agendas/minutes
3. Attend Local Election Board meetings
4. FOIA Requests to State Dept of Elections and to Local Election Officials
5. Meet with Regional, State and Local USPS Officials

Here are some of the abbreviations that the USPS uses.

1. MID – Mailer ID, a number assigned by the USPS to organizations that are sending out these mailings. Included in IMb barcode.
2. STID – Service Type ID, the services that have been requested for the mailing. Included in IMb barcode,
3. ACS – CSR Option 1 – “Address Correction Service” – “Change Service Requested” – Option 1 – “Undeliverables” are discarded, and a notice, with a reason code, is sent to the mailer.
4. ACS Fulfillment Files – These files contain compressed ACS Notification Files that are posted to the USPS Electronic Product Fulfillment (EPF) for the mailer to retrieve.
5. ACS Notification Files – These files are the actual notices that are generated by “ACS-CSR Option 1” for each “Undeliverable”, and that are retrieved by the mailer in the daily ACS Fulfillment Files.
6. IV-MTR – “Informed Visibility – Mail Tracking & Reporting” is the tracking system that was used by CVI/VPC.
7. USPS Form 3602 NZ – A form that the mailer submits with every mailing that indicates whether its Election or Political Mail, and outlines the type of services, class of postage, costs, number of pieces, etc.

### SECTION FOUR

#### Contact With USPS Officials

The Election Integrity Task Force should arrange meetings with statewide and local USPS Officials. Statewide officials will either be located in your

state, or if they are regional officials, they may be in a neighboring state. The USPS Officials that handle Election/Political Mail for your state can be found on this website,

<https://about.usps.com/election-mail/political-election-mail-coordinators.pdf>

(Note: The names may have changed, but the phone numbers should get you to the coordinator in your area). Either the Statewide Election Integrity Task Force, or a Local Task Force should contact your Election/Political Mail Coordinator and set up the meeting. Preferably the meeting is in person, or if not, virtual, to discuss the questions outlined in this guide. Be persistent, as it may take several contacts, and several weeks to set up a meeting.

During the time that you are setting up the meeting, try to get your USPS contact to invite other USPS personnel to the meeting. In addition to the coordinators, they have marketing and technical people involved in Election/Political mail. You can offer to send your contact a few sample questions to be sure the right people are in the meeting. The main point is be politely persistent.

It's very important that two people attend the meeting. One to ask the questions and one to take notes.

## SECTION FIVE

### The Meeting - Introductions

The meeting will have four parts. Part one is your introduction comments to the USPS attendees.

"We are from citizen groups and we are engaged in getting a better understanding of how the election process in (Your State) works. We are aware of the increase in mail voting, and that is something we want to understand better. We've been working with our local election offices, but now we want to talk with USPS and get a better working knowledge of how it works insofar as the USPS is concerned".

"We have a few questions about how you manage and process political and election mail, and specifically, questions about mass mailings during the recent elections in (Your State)".

### The Meeting – Section I

Section I includes these general questions to the USPS representatives.

1. What's the difference between election mail and political mail? Is political mail always considered marketing mail?
2. What services are provided based on each type of mail (tracking, delivery guarantees, handling undeliverable mail, etc.)?

3. Is election mail only that mail that comes from the official election offices, or only from a voter returning either an application for, or an absentee ballot?
4. Can a mass mailing of absentee ballot applications, like the example that we sent to you (try to send a sample Absentee Ballot Application mailer, if you have one, to your contact before the meeting), by an organization that isn't an official election office, be treated as election mail?
5. The sample mailer that we sent to you was mailed by an organization that is not an Election Office. The mailer contained a partially populated Absentee Ballot Application, so was it considered Election or Political Mail?
6. Does the mailer enter into a written contract with the USPS, and is there a document that confirms the arrangement? (The answer is Form 3602-NZ)
7. Is that written agreement publicly accessible as a government record that could be obtained with a FOIA Request?
8. For Political Mail, is there a report of undeliverable mail that is provided to the mailer, or do you return the undeliverable pieces to them?
9. If you don't return the undeliverable pieces to them, how do you discard them?
10. Since these undeliverable pieces contain personal voter information is there a chain of custody as to their disposition?
11. For Election Mail, does the election office receive the actual undeliverable pieces of mail, or a printout of the bad addresses – anything like that?
12. Is there a different process for tracking mail depending on whether it is political or election – and, if so, what are the differences?
13. In the sample mailer that we sent to you, are both the mailer envelope and return envelope addressed to the election office trackable by the IMb (Intelligent Mail Barcode)?
14. Is there a specific barcode for envelopes that contain ballots?
15. How is the mailer advised of the tracking status?
16. What are the "Tracking Points" from mailing to delivery?
17. Does the Letter Carrier scan the envelope as the piece is being delivered to the voter's address?

18. What does ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED printed on the envelope mean?

19. Do you advise mailers of political and election mail of the reason why each piece wasn't delivered?

20. If an organization mails applications for absentee ballots to voters, and there are undeliverables, is that information provided to the election offices for purposes of notifying them of wrong/bad addresses?

### The Meeting – Section II

Section II questions deal with a specific mass mailing by CVI/VPC.

"In (Your State) last election, we know that this organization mailed out perhaps (???) million absentee ballot applications to registered voters (We sent you an example of this mailer). We have a few questions about the group and their mass mailing:"

1. The organization is The Center for Voter Information (CVI), also known as The Voter Participation Center (VPC). 2. Their corporate address is.

1707 L Street NW Ste #700

Washington, DC 20036

3. The return address on their mailer is a PO Box in (?????) not a physical address in (Your State).

4. Did they work local USPS officials on this mailing?

5. Do you know where this mailing was actually mailed from?

6. Why are they using a Non-Profit, Postage Paid Permit #2227 from Landsdale, PA.? The Sender for this permit is CVI, 815-A Brazos St #381, Austin TX 78701 (A mailbox at a UPS Store).

7. Based on the information you provided earlier, what can you tell us about the class of mail? Is it Bulk? 3d class? 1<sup>st</sup> class?) and what is the per piece cost of the mail?

8. What services are they entitled to receive for the mailing?

9. Do they receive tracking information for the mailing and return envelope?

10. Do they receive address corrections for the undeliverable mail?

11. How long do you retain the file of notifications of address corrections?

12. Are those files publicly accessible as a government record that could be obtained with a FOIA Request?

13. How did you discard the undeliverable mail from this mailing?

14. This mailing contained personal voter information. Do you have chain of custody records for the disposition of the undeliverables?

15. Are the chain of custody records publicly accessible government records that could be obtained with a FOIA Request?

16. Is there a written contract type document for this mailing that shows what the costs are depending on the level of services provided?

### The Meeting – Section III

#### Wrap Up

Bring up any other topics that you think are appropriate to discuss in the meeting.

“Is there any other information that we should know about how Election/Political Mail is handled by the USPS”.

Local Visit – Close to the election Local Task Forces should arrange for a couple of members to pay a visit to the local Post Office, or Mail Processing Center. Introduce yourself to the person in charge and ask for a tour to see how they process Election/Political Mail. We want them to know that we are watching.

The purpose of this Citizens Guide is to provide a framework for Election Integrity Task Forces to identify, investigate and monitor the USPS process of handling Election and Political mail. Just like our Election Officials know that we are closely monitoring their election activities, we have to let the USPS Officials know that we are now closely monitoring their Election/Political Mail processes.

Like we say, “Eyes On Every Ballot” and now, “Eyes On Every Envelope”.