

General Election Outreach to States Strategic Plan

Overview

This strategic plan outlines an approach to work with state elections officials to prepare for the expected surge in absentee ballots for the 2020 general election. Our goal is to educate states on ballot and envelope design to ensure their compatibility with mail processing equipment, which mail products to use to meet state statutory timeframes and Postal Service standards, and how to track ballots. We also intend to develop an operational plan with each state to ensure the timely delivery of ballots to voters and election officials.

While we will outreach to all states and territories, this Strategic Plan prioritizes states and state election officials for targeted outreach, identifies the key messages and content, and outlines the internal resources required to execute this plan effectively.

State Outreach Priorities and Approach

Background

Some of the most significant issues we saw during the 2016 and 2018 elections at the state and local level with absentee ballots included poor mail piece design, supply chain problems, printing problems, unrealistic state statutory timeframes for requesting a ballot, inconsistent approaches to election mail by local boards of election within states, the lack of understanding of service standards for mail class used on outbound ballots, and no intelligent mail barcode to track mail pieces.

These issues will be magnified by the increased volume of election mail ballots expected for the general election as a result of concerns about COVID-19. For example, can printers handle the volume of requested ballots, does the state have the infrastructure to get this volume of ballots out to the voters in a timely fashion, what new messaging to the voters needs to take place.

There are 18 states that maintain excuse absentee voting, requiring voters to provide a valid reason in order to vote by mail with an absentee ballot. State election officials in states with excuse requirements generally have less experience with mailing requirements. These states will have significant challenges in building an infrastructure with the capacity to handle a large volume of absentee ballots. For that reason, we have prioritized our outreach to these states.

Approach

The DPMG and COO have responsibility for the Election Mail efforts and will update the ELT Election Mail Steering Committee, comprised of the DPMG, COO, CCMO, CIO, and VP Corporate Communications. The HQ Election Mail Team, comprised of a cross-functional team from these ELT groups will develop the strategy, briefing materials and oversight to four Election Mail Outreach Program Managers. The Election Mail Outreach Program Managers will lead the Area Election Mail Outreach Teams that will provide recommendations and best practices for the processing and delivery of election mail materials to state and local election officials. The Area Outreach Teams will be comprised of Field dedicated resources to provide support from election mail planning, design, printing, and USPS execution of mail processing and delivery for the general election. The teams will also be responsible for working through issue resolutions that may arise during the election period. The state and local election officials will be provided with the names and contact information for key Postal Service points of contact such as mail piece design analysts.

Outreach Priorities

- Conduct outreach to state level officials of priority states, identified below, over a two-week period
- Conduct outreach to the remaining states in a second wave of outreach
- The DPMG will contact each Secretary of State over a four-week period to get agreement with the Postal Service's election mail strategic plan.
- Communicate through national organizations, such as National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), National Association of State Elections Directors (NASSED) and Election Assistance Commission (EAC)

On February 2020, before any changes to voting rules, 24 states and territories were excuse absentee voting:

1. Alabama
2. Arkansas
3. Connecticut
4. Delaware
5. Indiana
6. Kentucky
7. Louisiana
8. Massachusetts
9. Mississippi
10. Missouri
11. New Hampshire
12. New York
13. Pennsylvania
14. Rhode Island
15. South Carolina
16. Tennessee
17. Texas
18. Virginia
19. West Virginia
20. American Samoa
21. Guam
22. Northern Mariana Islands
23. Puerto Rico
24. U.S. Virgin Islands

The remaining states will also be contacted to ensure that there are no anticipated changes in processes or absentee ballot design planned for the general election.

The briefing sheets for each state will indicate whether the state has already conducted their primary elections, which include state and local elections.

State Election Directors Outreach

The designated Postal Service election mail teams will contact individual state Election Directors over a two-week period to provide recommendations and best practices for the processing and delivery of election mail materials to state and local election officials. The Election Mail Outreach Teams should be knowledgeable about election mail guidance and include an Election Mail Program Manager, the Area and respective District Election Mail Coordinators, and staff with expertise on mail piece design, mailing standards and requirements, intelligent mail solutions, and postage payment options. It is also critical that a designated resource provide program management support, from scheduling of meetings, summarizing meeting discussions, reporting issues to the HQ Election Mail team, tracking deliverables through completion, daily reporting of deliverables and associated status for each of the states.

Briefing documents for each state will be prepared by the HQ Election Mail team that outline each state's upcoming elections, their statutory requirements for absentee balloting and postmarking, any recent or expected changes to those rules and procedures, and any recent Election Mail issues that have been reported in the state. The specific issues to discuss at the meeting are included in the appendix.

Secretaries of State Outreach

The Deputy Postmaster General (DPMG) will lead discussions with each Secretary of State of the priority states over a four-week period. Briefing documents for each state will be prepared that outline each state's upcoming elections, their statutory requirements for absentee balloting and postmarking, any recent or expected changes to those rules and procedures, and any recent Election Mail issues that have been reported in the state. If the State Election Director meeting has already been conducted, a summary of the meeting and agreed next steps will be included in the briefing materials and reinforced during the call. The specific issues to discuss at the meeting are included in the appendix.

National organizations Outreach

The DPMG could hold teleconferences with state elections officials organized by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) and the National Association of State Elections Directors (NASSED). Other opportunities include the periodic meetings with state election officials organized by the Department of Homeland Security and the Election Assistance Commission (EAC).

Workflow and Deliverable Tracking

The HQ Election Mail Team will be responsible for setting outreach strategy, prioritization, and managing the efforts of the Election Mail Outreach Teams. The HQ Election Mail Team will be responsible for developing and sharing State Outreach Briefs to the Election Mail Outreach Teams. The HQ Election Mail Team will also update the ELT Election Mail Steering Committee on progress and concerns.

The Election Mail Outreach Teams are responsible for conducting meetings with elections officials using the briefing materials, assigning deliverables and following up through completion, and documenting the discussions and tracking efforts.

A system to track all outreach meetings, deliverables assigned, and progress to completion is needed and is to be updated by the Election Mail Outreach Teams and accessed by the HQ Election Mail Team.

**ELT Election Mail
Steering Committee**

HQ Election Mail Team

**Election Mail Outreach
Program Manager 1**

**Capital and Northeast Areas
Election Mail Outreach Team**

**Election Mail Outreach
Program Manager 2**

**Eastern Area Election Mail
Outreach Team**

**Election Mail Outreach
Program Manager 3**

**GLA and Western Areas
Election Mail Outreach Team**

**Election Mail Outreach
Program Manager 4**

**Pacific and Southern Areas
Election Mail Outreach Team**

State and Territory Outreach Prioritization

Area	PRIORITY STATES		REMAINING STATES
	Excuse Absentee Voting	New to Vote-By-Mail for 2020 elections	No Excuse Absentee Voting
Capital Metro	South Carolina Virginia		District of Columbia Georgia Maryland North Carolina
Eastern	Delaware Kentucky Pennsylvania Tennessee West Virginia		Ohio New Jersey
Great Lakes	Indiana Missouri		Michigan Illinois Wisconsin
Northeast	Connecticut Massachusetts New Hampshire New York Rhode Island Puerto Rico U.S. Virgin Islands		Maine Vermont
Pacific	American Samoa Guam Northern Marina Islands	California Hawaii	
Southern	Alabama Arkansas Louisiana Mississippi Texas		Florida Oklahoma
Western		Utah	Alaska Arizona Colorado Idaho Iowa Kansas Minnesota Montana Nebraska Nevada New Mexico North Dakota Oregon South Dakota Washington Wyoming

Election Mail Resources

ELT Election Mail Steering Committee

DPMG, COO, CCMO, CIO, VP Corporate Communications

- Establish Election Mail Strategic Plan
- Provide strategic guidance to HQ Election Mail Team

HQ Election Mail Team

Team Member	Functional Area	
		Team Lead
Daniel Bentley	Marketing	Marketing Lead
Emily Matyas	Marketing	Marketing support
Will Hensley	Government Relations/Maketing	Marketing support
Rod Sallay	Government Relations	Government Relations lead
Michael Wilson	Government Relations	Government Relations support
Abby Healy	Law Department	Legal support
Leonetta Jackson	Operations	Operations lead
LaShawn Jones	Operations	Operations support
Helen Manana	Operations	Operations support
Angela Dyer	Mail Entry & Payment Technology	Mail Piece Design
Steve Jones	Enterprise Analytics	Corporate Reporting
Heather Dyer	Digital Integration	Digital Integration
Lucinda Rockemore	Digital Business	Digital Business
Todd Cordray	Engineering	Engineering
TBD		Election Mail Outreach Project Manager
TBD		Election Mail Outreach Project Manager
TBD		Election Mail Outreach Project Manager
TBD		Election Mail Outreach Project Manager

- Establish and manage Election Mail Outreach Project Managers
- Implement Election Mail Strategic Plan
- Develop clear processes on technology support for election mail, including use of Intelligent Mail barcode, prepaid postage options, mailpiece design, etc.
- Ensure appropriate staffing to support states election officials on technology issues such as mailpiece design and prepaid postage, particularly in a compressed timeframe
- Provide system to track Election Mail Outreach Teams efforts, including tracking meetings with election officials, deliverables, assignments, etc. to ensure tracking progress through completion.
- Review state legislative changes to election mail and maintain 50 state statute document current
- Update educational resources, and talking points for the Election Mail Outreach Teams
- Manage Congressional and Media Inquiries/ response status
- Report to ELT Election Mail Steering Committee on a regular basis
 - Deliverables and completion status of Election Mail Outreach team efforts
 - Congressional and Media Inquiries/ response status

Area Election Mail Outreach Teams

Election Mail Outreach Program Manager (4)

- Leads area team efforts assigned
- Experienced in election mail efforts, ideally with 2016 and/or 2018 elections
- Lead outreach to individual state election directors and other state elections officials
- Report progress to HQ Election Mail Program Manager

Area Election Mail Coordinators (some areas may need more than one Area Coordinator)

- Share educational resources, key messages, and talking points to team
- Manage deliverables and follow-up on tasks
- Manage issue resolutions
- Coordinate with Corporate Communications any media inquiries/ response status

District Election Mail Coordinators

- Lead outreach to elections officials in local jurisdictions

Team Program Management Support (at least one per area team)

- Schedule meetings and coordinate logistics
- Take notes during meetings, summarize outcomes, document deliverables, and highlight key issues/concerns
- Track deliverables and follow-up on tasks

Mailpiece Design Analysis (at least one per area team)

- Manage, track and expedite review of all election mailpieces
- Expedite BRM/QBRM sample review

BRM/QBRM and Payment Permitting Support (one per area)

- Project manage all state and local jurisdictions education and onboarding
- In some cases, states may require local jurisdictions to set up their own permit, which may require permitting support at the District level.

General Election Outreach Briefing Materials

STATE ELECTION DIRECTOR VERSION

Meeting Logistics:

State Attendees:

USPS Attendees:

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

- Election Mail Outreach Program Manager (Team x) -
- Area Election Coordinator -
- District Election Coordinator(s) –
- Mailpiece design analyst (include their name or have the point person bring them as needed?)
- Program management support

2. Importance of coordination between State Election Officials and USPS

- Critical to work together early, before any mailpieces are designed or printed
- Explain class of service used, mailing service standards and impact to timelines
- Explain envelope size, design and impact to mail processing and timelines and postmarking
- Mailpiece design review and approval of ALL pieces
- Use of Intelligent Mail barcode for tracking
- Use of Election Mail logo on outbound ballots
- Options for prepaid postage on return ballots
- Joint meeting with printers to discuss printing, mailpiece requirements, and mailing processes
- Highlight previous issues encountered in past elections by other jurisdiction to emphasize the consequence of lack of coordination
 - Poor mail piece design and printing problems caused outbound election ballots being returned to Boards of Election instead of voter
 - State statutory timeframes for when a voter can request a ballot caused outbound election ballots to be delivered on election day or later
 - Use of prepaid postage on return ballots that don't require postmarking by postal equipment without updating legislative statues to accept other postal mail processing markings
 - Inconsistent approaches by local boards of election within states creating confusing instructions for mail processing and delivery
 - Mail class used on outbound ballots and lack of understanding of service standards causing delivery of ballots later than election officials expected
 - Inability to track delivery and return of ballots because no intelligent mail barcode used on lection mail pieces
- Close and ongoing coordination is critical

3. New or anticipated changes to state elections procedures

- Confirm absentee ballot deadlines (postmark vs in-hand)
- Any recent or planned changes

4. Next Steps

- Summary of discussion to be sent letter and email
- Follow up meeting within x days

SECRETARIES OF STATE OUTREACH VERSION

Meeting Logistics:

State Attendees:

USPS Attendees:

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

- DPMG Ron Stroman
- HQ Election Mail Program Manager
- Election Mail Outreach Program Manager (Team X)
- Area Election Coordinator -
- District Election Coordinator(s) –
- Program Management support

2. Importance of coordination between State Election Officials and USPS

- The importance of close coordination with the Postal Service for a successful election by mail so we can align resources to best support the state elections office.
- Critical to work together early, before any mailpieces are designed or printed
- Highlight previous issues encountered in past elections by other jurisdiction to emphasize the consequence of lack of coordination
 - Poor mail piece design and printing problems caused outbound election ballots being returned to Boards of Election instead of voter
 - State statutory timeframes for when a voter can request a ballot caused outbound election ballots to be delivered on election day or later
 - Use of prepaid postage on return ballots that don't require postmarking by postal equipment
 - Inconsistent approaches by local boards of election within states creating confusing instructions for mail processing and delivery
 - Mail class used on outbound ballots and lack of understanding of service standards causing delivery of ballots later than election officials expected
 - Inability to track delivery and return of ballots because no intelligent mail barcode used on election mail pieces
- Close and ongoing coordination is critical
- Determine deliverables, gain agreement, handoff to the State Election Mail Lead

3. Next Steps

- Summary of discussion to be sent letter and email
- Follow up meetings between the Election Mail Outreach team and the State Election Director

Background

Secretary of State NAME
Director of Elections NAME
Assistant Director of Elections NAME
Phone:
Email:

USPS Area Lead:
Phone:
Email:

Number of Boards of Election in State:

State Statutes and Balloting Rules (NEED TO INCLUDE ANY RECENT CHANGES FROM LEGISLATIVE OR EXECUTIVE ORDERS – NOTING DATE OF CHANGE AND SPECIFIC CHANGE, WITH INPUT FROM LEGAL)

(BELOW IS AN EXAMPLE)

Absentee Ballot Application: Requests for an absentee ballot may be made any time between 180 days before Election Day and 4 days before the election.

Postmark Requirement: No express requirements.

Ballot Envelope Design: The size and shape are determined by Secretary of State. The envelope must include elector’s name and voter registration number. The back of the envelope must have the oath of the elector and oath for those assisting with signatures, and penalties for violations of the oath. The front of the envelope must have the name and address of the board of registrars or absentee ballot clerk.

Outbound Ballot Mailing: Absentee ballots must be sent to the voter within 3 business days after receiving the application or not more than 49 days but not less than 45 days prior to any federal election or 22 days prior to any municipal general primary or municipal general election; and as soon as possible prior to any runoff. No absentee ballot shall be mailed to voters on the day prior to a primary or election and no absentee ballot shall be issued on the day prior to a primary or election.

Notable Service Issues
In October, 2018, the Georgia Secretary of State’s office contacted the Atlanta District alleging that ballots for the Wilkinson County Board of Election were being held postage due.
Resolution: Lisa Peyton of the Atlanta District spoke to the Georgia Secretary of State office to assure them that ballots were not being held. She also asked the state to inform county offices that they are expected to pay for postage for ballots postage-free ballots sent to voters.

Upcoming Elections: Primary:
Primary Runoff:
General Election: November 3, 2020
State Election Runoff:
Federal Runoff Election:

2016, 2018 Elections History

- Absentee ballots volume
- Service issues
- Other notable issues

Recent Activity:

On March 14, Secretary of State Raffensperger announced that Georgia's March 24 presidential preference primary will be postponed until May 19 and that the state will [mail](#) absentee forms to all registered voters. On April 6, Secretary Raffensperger announced a companion initiative to create a task force that will investigate absentee ballot voter fraud to protect the integrity of the absentee voting process.