



CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

USPS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How is the Secretary of State's office responding to concerns regarding the United States Postal Service (USPS)?

- ✔ California has extended the time that vote-by-mail ballots can arrive to county elections offices for this election. Vote-by-mail ballots postmarked on or before 8:00 p.m. on Election Day can arrive up to **17 days** after Election Day and be counted.
- ✔ The Secretary of State's "Where's My Ballot?" tracking tool is now available in every county. Voters can sign up to receive automatic notifications by text message, email, or voice call on the status of their vote-by-mail ballot at WheresMyBallot.sos.ca.gov.
- ✔ All completed vote-by-mail ballots sent back to county elections offices are First Class Mail, postage paid, and have an estimate delivery window of 2-5 days. County elections officials use the postal service's Official Election Mail Logo that allows postal workers and carriers to recognize it as essential election mail.
- ✔ County elections officials work closely with the USPS to review and approve the design of vote-by-mail envelopes and other election mail pieces to ensure machine compatibility and the seamless delivery and return of ballots.
- ✔ Our USPS partners communicate with each mail plant throughout the state about the vote-by-mail period and provide examples of what local vote-by-mail ballot envelopes look like to ensure that they are given priority and processed timely.
- ✔ They also conduct daily sweeps of processing areas and require staff to certify no unprocessed ballot mail remains.

Is California working directly with the United States Postal Service to prepare for the Election?

California elections officials have weekly meetings with USPS representatives to ensure the timely delivery and return of vote-by-mail ballots. If issues with mail service are identified, we contact USPS immediately. We have spent years establishing relationships and regular communication with local and state postal representatives to prepare for elections.

Will my vote-by-mail ballot get to me in time?

Vote-by-mail ballots will be mailed to all registered voters beginning 29 days before the election. Voters can return their voted vote-by-mail ballots by mail, at a ballot drop-box location, or at any polling place or vote center throughout the state.

How long after election day will ballots still count if postmarked by Election Day?

California has extended the time that vote-by-mail ballots can arrive to county elections offices for this election. Vote-by-mail ballots postmarked on or before Election Day can arrive up to 17 days after Election Day and be counted.

Do vote-by-mail ballots need stamps?

No, all vote-by-mail ballots in California come with First Class, prepaid postage return envelopes.

What can I do to make sure my ballot arrives back to the county elections office in time?

The Secretary of State recommends returning your vote-by-mail ballot as soon as possible, and signing up for ballot tracking at WheresMyBallot.sos.ca.gov.

There are multiple options for returning your voted vote-by-mail ballot to your county elections official.

By mail: Vote-by-mail ballots must be postmarked on or before 8:00 p.m. on November 3 and received no later than November 20. If there is no postmark, ballots are considered cast on time by county election officials if the date the voter signed the envelope is on or before Election Day, so be sure to sign and date your vote-by-mail envelope.

In person: Vote-by-mail ballots can be dropped off at your county elections office, any vote center or polling place, or any ballot drop-off location or drop box before the polls close at 8:00 p.m. on November 3.

To ensure timely processing once received by your county elections official, please don't forget to seal, sign, and date your vote-by-mail ballot envelope.

Which counties will have drop boxes available to drop off vote-by-mail ballots?

Many California counties will have drop boxes and drop off locations available. Californians can check for drop boxes and locations at Vote.ca.gov once vote-by-mail ballots are out. Ballots can also be dropped off at every polling place and vote center.

How do I know my ballot will get there in time if I use a ballot drop box?

Ballot drop boxes are secure, locked boxes that are clearly marked as an “Official Ballot Drop Box.” They are monitored and emptied daily by authorized county employees and poll workers. Ballots are placed in a sealable or lockable container for secure transport back to the county elections office. You can track your dropped off ballot by signing up for WheresMyBallot.sos.ca.gov.

I don't want to return my ballot by mail. What options do I have?

California voters can return their completed ballot at any ballot drop box, or voting location. Find a location near you at Vote.ca.gov.

Because of issues with USPS, what in-person voting options are available?

Every county in California will offer in-person voting options on Election Day from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and all counties will offer early voting. The times and days of early voting will vary by county. Find a location near you at Vote.ca.gov.

How do I know my vote will be counted?

Voters should sign-up for our “Where’s My Ballot?” tool to receive messages by email, text message, or voice call when their ballot has been mailed, received, counted, and if there are any issues with their ballot. Sign up at WheresMyBallot.sos.ca.gov.

Additionally, the status of your ballot will be uploaded to VoterStatus.sos.ca.gov within 60 days of the election

Is it true that vote-by-mail ballots will not count in California?

County elections officials carefully check and process every vote-by-mail ballot they receive. Please be sure to seal, sign, and date your vote-by-mail ballot envelope. See above about ballot tracking. Voters who sign up will be notified when their ballots are counted or if there is a problem with processing their ballots. In our March 2020 Presidential Primary 98.5% of vote-by-mail ballots counted. Ballots were rejected because they were late, they were missing a signature, or the signature did not match the one on the voter’s registration.

Does the president have a say in what ballots are counted and accepted in California?

No. States and county elections officials are in charge of elections. County elections officials are responsible for printing, mailing and counting votes. The vote count process is open to the public.



For concerns about changes in voting and USPS mail service contact our office at VoteSure@sos.ca.gov



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