

Sept. 25, 2020

# How vote-by-mail envelope design can facilitate elections

Only some of the U.S. uses a standardized design for mail-in ballot envelopes, but the design of vote-by-mail envelopes can influence how voters cast their ballot depending on how clearly sections are marked or laid out. It can also impact the U.S. Postal Service's ability to accurately deliver votes to election officials. The nonprofit organization Center for Civic Design provides envelope design suggestions to state and local election offices nationwide to help facilitate and ease the voting process.

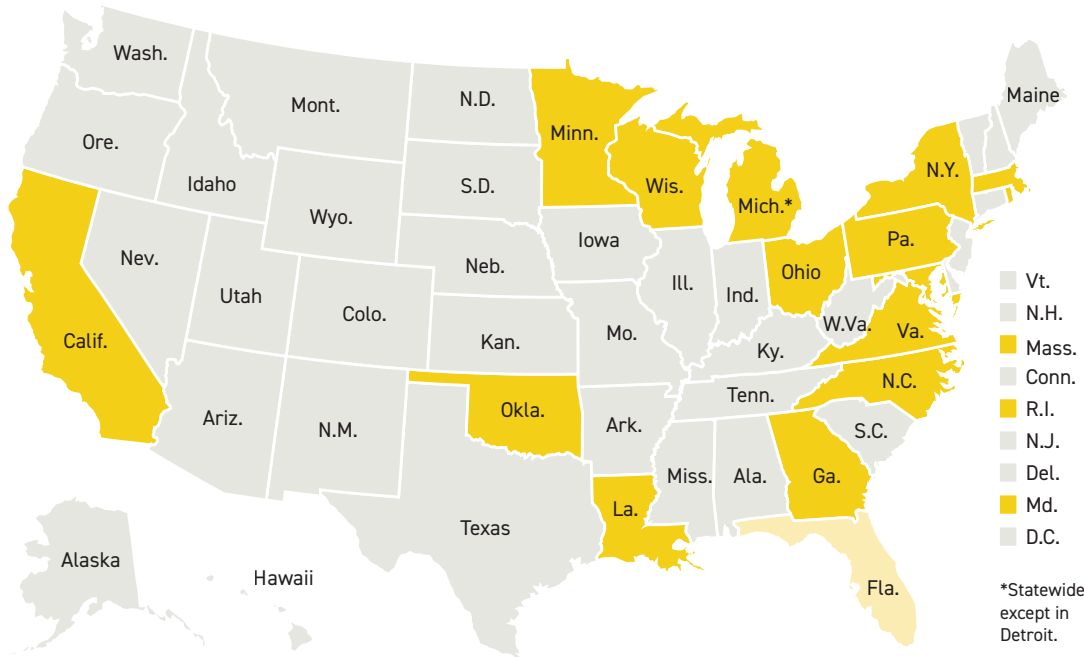
The U.S. Postal Service has its own recommendations and requires that some voter and election office information be included on vote-by-mail envelopes. For instance, it advises that text be printed in black ink on white or pastel-colored paper for legibility. The Center for Civic Design recommends also including design elements that clarify how to vote and indicate the origin and destination of mailed ballots. For example, a color visible on the front and back of envelopes can signify an election district, type of election, type of ballot and political party. Here are some examples of vote-by-mail envelopes created by the Center for Civic Design.

## Moving toward standardizing vote-by-mail envelope design

No national design standard exists for vote-by-mail election envelopes. How election material looks is up to each state's election code. But even if a state develops an envelope standard, there is no guarantee that the design will be applied statewide. In California, for instance, a standardized design is in place but usage is voluntary.

Here are some states the Center for Civic Design has found to have moved toward standardizing the look of vote-by-mail envelopes.

- Standardized ballot envelope design
- Not standardized but a similar design is used across the state
- No state standardization



- Required by U.S. Postal Service
- Required by state board of elections
- Recommended by Center for Civic Design

### ENVELOPE VOTER RECEIVES FROM ELECTION OFFICE

Envelope front

Vote by mail  
Official ballot  
Vota por correo  
Boleta oficial

Franklin County  
Elections Department  
4321 Franklin Avenue  
Franklin, HN 99999-1234

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Return request notice

OFFICIAL ELECTION MAIL

Election mail logo

Window revealing voter address printed on enclosed return envelope

Valentina Q. Voter  
1678 Seventh Ave, Apt 9863  
Franklin, HN 99999-1278

#### Color bar

The color can indicate which county election office is sending the envelope and the type of election.

The Center for Civic Design recommends also including an election office seal and official ballot notice is advised.

#### Intelligent Mail barcode

The voter's address is embedded in the barcode, allowing the envelope to be tracked by USPS.

A three-digit Service Type Identifier also signals that the envelope is election mail.

### ENVELOPE VOTER RETURNS TO ELECTION OFFICE

Envelope front

Return envelope  
Official ballot  
To be opened only by  
Canvassing Board

Sobre de retorno  
Boleta oficial  
Para ser abierto únicamente  
por la Junta de Escrutinio

Drop off your ballot by  
7pm on Election Day.  
Mail your ballot so that it is  
postmarked by Election Day.  
Entregue su boleta electoral hasta  
las 7 pm el Día de las Elecciones.  
Envíe su boleta electoral para que  
sea sellada el Día de Elecciones

Franklin County  
Elections Department  
4321 Franklin Avenue  
Franklin, HN 99999-1234

First class  
postage  
required  
Se requiere  
franqueo de  
primera clase

Postage  
instructions

Election  
office return  
address

Franklin County Elections Department  
4321 Franklin Avenue  
Franklin, HN 99999-1234

#### Color bar

The color can indicate which county election office the envelope is being sent to and the type of election.

The Center for Civic Design recommends also including an election office seal, official ballot notice, canvassing board notice and ballot return information.

#### Facing identification marks

Indicates the front of the envelope to the USPS processing system.

Envelope back

Vote by mail official ballot  
Why wait? Return your ballot  
before election day.

Vota por correo Boleta oficial  
¿Por qué esperar? Devuelva su boleta  
antes del día de las elecciones.

Contact information  
Información de contacto

Franklin County Elections  
4321 Franklin Avenue  
Franklin, HN 99999  
Open Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm  
Abierto de lunes a viernes, 8am a 5pm

www.franklincounty.gov/elections

elections@franklincounty.gov

Information in English: 111-222-3333  
Información en español: 111-222-4444  
若需要多中文資訊: 111-222-5555

Fax: 111-222-6666

TTY: 1-222-555-1222

How to return your ballot / Cómo devolver su boleta

Drop Box  
Drop off your ballot at a secure drop box —  
no postage required.  
Buzón  
Deposite su boleta en un buzón seguro —  
no se requiere franqueo.

Vote by Mail  
Mail your ballot so it is postmarked by Election Day.  
Votar por Correo  
Envíe su boleta por correo para que este  
franqueada el Día de Elecciones.

Vote Center  
Vote at any vote center in the county.  
Centro de Votación  
Vote en cualquier centro de votación en el condado.

To find the Vote Center or Drop Box nearest you  
www.yourcounty.gov/wheretovote  
Para encontrar el Centro de Votación o Buzón más cercano a usted  
www.yourcounty.gov/wheretovote

Election office information

Ballot-casting directions

Color bar

#### Checklist for voter

To help ensure correct casting of ballot.

Envelope back

Did you...  
☐ Sign the voter's declaration in your own handwriting?  
☐ Put your ballot in the envelope?  
Revise si...  
☐ ¿Firmó la declaración del votante con su propia letra?  
☐ ¿Colocó su boleta electoral en el sobre?

I authorize the person below to return my ballot:  
Autorizo a la persona abajo a devolver mi boleta:  
Their name / Su nombre  
Their signature / Su firma  
Relationship to voter / Relación con el votante

Voter's declaration I declare that  
• I am a resident of and a voter in the county, and the person whose name appears on this envelope.  
• I have not applied, nor will I apply for a vote-by-mail ballot from any other jurisdiction in this election.  
• I declare under penalty of perjury that this is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.  
You must sign in your own handwriting. Your signature must match the signature on your voter registration card.  
Voting twice in an election is a crime.

Voter, sign here in ink. Power of attorney is not acceptable.  
Votante, firme aquí con tinta. No se aceptan poderes notariales.

Date / Fecha (MM/DD/YYYY)

Print name / Imprimir nombre

Print your voter registration address / Imprime tu dirección de registro de votante

If you are unable to sign, make your mark and have a witness sign below:  
Si usted no puede firmar, haga una marca y haga que un testigo firme abajo:  
Witness, sign here / Testigo, firme aquí

Declaración del votante Yo declaro que:  
• Soy residente y votante en el condado, y la persona cuyo nombre aparece en este sobre.  
• No he solicitado, ni solicitaré una boleta electoral de voto por correo de ninguna otra jurisdicción en esta elección.  
• Declaro bajo pena de perjurio que esto es verdadero a mi leal saber y entender.  
Debe firmar en su propia letra. Su firma debe coincidir con la firma en su tarjeta de registro de votante.  
Votar dos veces en una elección es un crimen.

Franklin County  
General Election

[Voter information]

Signature box and voter declaration

Color bar