



Get Ready, **VOTE**

Voting by Mail is Safe, Secure, and Reliable

FACTSHEET

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There are many myths about the vote-by-mail process, and information voters hear from politicians may not always be true. The truth is that voting by mail is safe, secure, and reliable.



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Vote-by-mail is used in every state, and by voters of all political parties.

All 50 states already use vote-by-mail to some degree. In many states, this system is known as “absentee voting.” States differ by how broadly they offer mail ballots to voters and how they administer the system. Hundreds of millions of mail ballots have been cast over the last 20 years.

Many states that could be considered politically conservative have a large number of voters who prefer to vote by mail. For example:

- Utah was the fourth state to move to an all vote by mail system.
- In both Montana and Arizona, over 70% of voters are automatically mailed their ballots as “permanent absentee” voters.

Many states with predominantly vote-by-mail systems have elected Secretaries of State who are Republicans – and big fans of this system.



The US Postal Service prioritizes delivery of vote-by-mail ballots, and voters have multiple safe, secure, and reliable options for returning their ballots.

All ballots feature the Official Election Mail Logo to help postal workers and carriers identify ballots, prioritize ballots for delivery, and ensure all ballots are processed. Any voter who doesn’t receive a ballot, or misplaces it, can contact their local election office for a replacement or vote in person.

In addition to returning ballots by mail, vote-by-mail systems offer multiple methods for returning ballots. These options include easily accessible, secure ballot drop boxes, and returning mail ballots to staffed voting centers or polling places.



Ballot tracking enables voters to track their vote at every step in the process.

Many states offer ballot tracking tools (similar to UPS package tracking) so voters can track their ballot’s status in real time. These tools inform voters when their ballot is mailed, delivered to the voter, received by the elections office, signature verified, and counted. If there is a discrepancy, missing signature, or other issue, the system can even notify the voter and help them remedy the problem.



Vote-by-mail best practices include numerous precautions to safeguard the voting process. Election officials carefully verify and process every vote-by-mail ballot.

Voting systems are designed to protect voters, and contain safeguards necessary to keep your vote secure.

Vote-by-mail envelopes and ballots are designed with numerous security features, such as personalized barcodes to ensure that only one ballot is cast per person. Ballots are printed on special, identifiable paper, and every ballot is inspected to ensure it is valid for the election being conducted.

Signature verification: Election officials validate voters' identity in order to ensure that only eligible voters cast a vote. The recommended best practice is to use signature verification, via a robust and demographically blind procedure that includes bipartisan teams of trained signature judges. This eliminates opportunities for unconscious bias or human error by volunteer poll workers.

Under this process, every return ballot envelope is signed by the voter, and each signature is validated by being compared to other official signatures already on file (such as the voter's registration document, prior election ballot envelopes, motor vehicle transactions, etc.). Signature judges can be trained by handwriting experts, including many from law enforcement. The best practice is to include a signature "curing" process, where if the signature doesn't match, and a secondary bipartisan review team cannot determine a match, the voter is contacted immediately and given multiple paths to resolve the discrepancy. This "cure" period extends after Election Day to allow all votes to be counted.



Voter fraud is exceedingly rare.

Voter fraud anywhere is exceedingly rare, and per capita rates of fraud are often lower in states that rely heavily on mail ballots. For example:

- Oregon has seen only two cases of fraud related to mail ballots since it started using 100% vote by mail in 2000.
- Colorado had one absentee ballot fraud prosecution in 2012 and one in 2017, one before and one after they went to 100% mailed-out ballots.

Attempts at voter fraud that get public attention are examples of the system working well. These extremely rare cases are identified and corrected, and the offenders are prosecuted.



There are serious penalties for voter fraud.

Stealing, attempting to steal, or even hiding another person's mail is a federal felony offense. It may also be a state crime. For example, in Oregon, intentionally tampering with or diverting a mailed-out ballot is a felony, punishable by a \$25,000 fine and up to 5 years in jail for every ballot. Stiff penalties deter election fraud because they make the risk of election interference far greater than the potential reward.

Attempting to influence another person's vote is a crime. While it is possible under almost any election system for family members or other individuals to unduly pressure a voter to support a certain candidate or issue, evidence suggests this is no more common under vote-by-mail systems. States deter such behavior with laws that punish bad actors if they attempt to take advantage of voters.



Vote-by-mail ballots are only sent to active registered voters, and cannot be requested by individuals who are not eligible to vote.

Non-citizens: Non-citizens are not eligible to register to vote, so they will not receive a mail ballot.

Deceased voters: States and local jurisdictions with effective vote-by-mail systems have automated processes that regularly match death records to the voter registration lists to prevent ballots going to a deceased voter. Signature verification provides a second level of security.

Voters who have moved: Ballots are non-forwardable, and anyone who tampers with a ballot that is not their own is committing a crime. The signature verification process is designed to detect such cases.

States can use the USPS National Change of Address (NCOA) database and join the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), which shares address change data nationwide. States can also implement policies like automatic voter registration, which helps capture address changes from other government touchpoints like the DMV or social service agencies.

In the highly unlikely chance that a ballot is sent to the wrong person, other failsafe measures will prevent that ballot from being accepted or counted.



Individuals can only vote once under a vote-by-mail system.

Ballot envelopes are barcoded to the individual voter, and ballots in an envelope with no official barcode are rejected. Election officials will accept only one ballot from any voter – the first one they receive. Any other ballots are rejected, and if criminal intent is suspected, the voter could be prosecuted.



Voting is a right, and making voting more accessible for all is good for democracy.

Voting is our right as US citizens, and voting by mail is just another option for voters to exercise that right. All voters are qualified to vote, and there is no need to pass a test or persevere through an overly difficult voting process.

Voting by mail is good for democracy: it is voter-centric and makes voting more accessible for a larger portion of the electorate. Many studies show that vote-by-mail jurisdictions have higher turnout than polling-place-centric jurisdictions. Studies show voters with a ballot in their hands vote farther “down the ballot” as they have more time to research and become informed about the issues and candidates.