

# Guide to Effective Election Mail



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An eBook by BCC Software



# Table of Contents

Section One: An Introduction to Election Season Mailings . . . . . 3

Section Two: The Role of Direct Mail During Election Season . . . . . 5

Section Three: Not All Mail is Created Equal — The Importance of Address Quality . . . . . 7

Section Four: Understanding the Lasting Impacts of Election Season for Your Business . . . . . 10



## An Introduction to Our Authors

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## Section One: An Introduction to Election Season Mailings

The 2022 Midterm Election cycle, as unveiled in the USPS® report “The Growing Impact of Direct Mail,” showed that **political advertising spending had soared to unprecedented heights**. Political mail volume surged by an impressive 34% from 2018 to 2022.<sup>1</sup>

### “The Growing Impact of Direct Mail”

**34%** Percentage of political mail volume surge from 2018 - 2022.<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that the influence of direct mail shaped the fabric of election campaigns. Early projections for the 2024 election forecast a remarkable \$10.2 billion in political advertising spending.<sup>2</sup> **Every message will count.**

According to page 13 of the “USPS Campaign Mail Handbook”, 57% of voters rank political mail to be **a persuasive form of outreach**, but only 37% consider emails to be the same.<sup>3</sup> Mailers should be equipped with insights and strategies to navigate the growth ahead.

BCC Software is here to offer you a deep dive into political mail — to make sure you are making the most out of every mailing for your clients. In this eBook, we discuss how direct mail continues to make an impact during election seasons. **With email fatigue ever increasing** and claims and concerns of “fake news,” **mail remains the most trusted and reliable source** of marketing communications. In fact, 63% of voters rank direct mail as one of the most credible sources of political information, **double the number** of those who view email the same way.<sup>4</sup>

As a mailer, you need to be prepared to **lend your expertise** to your election-minded clients during this critical period. This eBook will help you maximize the opportunity by understanding what types of election season mail the USPS offers, the role direct mail can play with the various types of election driven customers you will encounter, the trusted role of direct mail in combatting the fake news epidemic, and **how to maximize results by leveraging our data and your expertise**.

**Election Mail vs. Political Mail: What’s the Difference?** While the names sound similar, Election Mail and Political Mail are two distinct types of mail. Make sure you understand the difference before election season really heats up!

## Election Mail

This type of mail is specifically for information on the election process — it is not for individual campaign information or information about a political candidate. Contrary to the name, it may not even be about a specific election. The content of the mailpiece must be of concern to the addressee in terms of voting information — including where, how, and when the recipient can vote. Additionally, **it must come from authorized election officials**. Examples include voter registration, polling location information, absentee ballots, applications, and other such materials. Any information concerning a specific election candidate, opinion, or leaning is **expressly forbidden** for Election Mail.<sup>5</sup>

## Political Mail

This type of mail is sent from a specific candidate, political party, or committee. It can be anything from endorsements, information on a specific candidate to push for certain initiatives, or registration information for a political party. In general, **these mailings cover most political mail** you will see during election season.

## The Importance of Correct Identification

Being able to qualify and correctly identify your mailing as either Election Mail or Political Mail comes with a number of benefits. While these benefits do not include a monetary incentive, you will gain access to specific Election Mail and Political Mail tags — **Tag 191**<sup>6</sup> and **Tag 57**<sup>7</sup> respectively. These tags **mark your mail as a high priority, affording heightened visibility** in the mailstream and specific handling requirements designed to make sure your mail arrives in a timely fashion.





## Section Two: The Role of Direct Mail During Election Season

### Delivering Your Message – Making Mail a Priority

When it comes to delivering election season messaging, mail continues to be a leading form of communication. This is particularly true thanks to a phenomenon known as **Digital Fatigue** – people are so continually digitally connected that they are beginning to grow tired so digital messages aren't being seen by the intended recipient. In the largest study of its kind surveying more than 600 marketing professionals across 45 states, 67% said digital returns have diminished even after scaling up programs; 60% said growing customer digital fatigue and distrust of digital ads are factors.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, voters take action act after receiving Direct Mail. **After seeing a mailpiece, 70% of voters read it.**<sup>9</sup>

Research has found that direct mail remains the most credible political advertising channel for 63% of surveyed voters – with a majority (56%) also continuing to believe direct mail includes more facts than other channels.<sup>10</sup>

Direct mail continues to play a **trusted and influential role** during every phase of a campaign, from introduction to persuasion to voting decision for all kinds of voters.

As showcased by a multitude of studies conducted by the USPS, direct mail works for all constituents. These studies show that **voters take more action** after receiving direct mail regardless of voter type or demographics.<sup>11</sup>

## Establishing Trust – The Sanctity of the Mailbox

Delivering election messaging can feel like a difficult task, especially in the face of the current fake news mantra. Establishing trust with recipients is a key ingredient to ensuring the success of your political mailings. By utilizing direct mail to communicate your message, you are taking advantage of the earned trust that is associated with the United States Postal Service. Mail has an edge that digital and other forms of media do not – the **USPS’ Postal Inspection Service**. The United States Postal service through its Postal Inspection Service is dedicated and required to make sure everything that is being sent in the mail is truthful. One of its primary purposes is to uphold the sanctity of the mailbox. **Mail fraud is a serious crime**. When mail fraud is identified, the Postal Inspection Service will investigate, arrest, and prosecute people for violating the trust and sanctity of the mailbox.

No other form of communication has the same type of inherent trust or their own inspection service. If somebody does not tell you the truth in an email, there is little to nothing that can be done about it. Social media is another medium where trust is hard to come by. In recent years, big name social media giants such as Facebook and X have come under fire for violating the trust of the general public. Their ability to police the content posted on their platforms is limited, and many have called into question their desire to try. The general public has become frustrated and are **distrustful of the information they read online**.

By contrast, the Postal Service is required by law as codified in Title 18 Crimes and Procedures § 1341 to ensure that what is being sent in the mail is truthful. These codes state that legal action will be sought against those “having devised or intending to devise any scheme or artifice” through the United States Postal Service, and perpetrators could face up to 20-30 years in jail depending on the severity of their crime. And unlike other mediums, the USPS is backed up by the Postal Inspection Service, with over 1,200 inspectors enforcing the approximately 200 federal laws that cover the fraudulent use of the postal system.<sup>12</sup> **That level of trust and enforcement cannot be found anywhere else.**

## Direct Mail Remains the Most Credible Political Advertising Channel

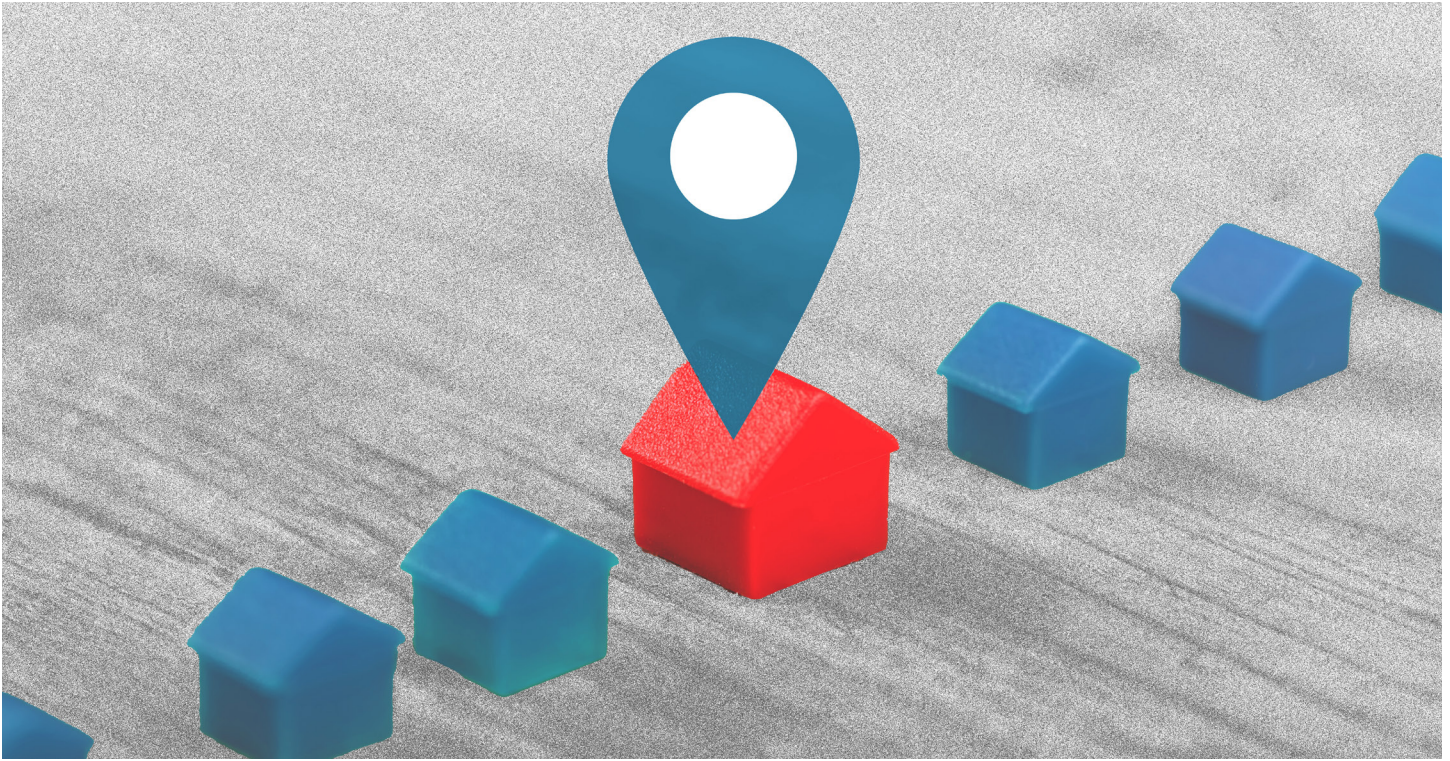
**64%** Percentage of surveyed voters agreed that political mail reinforced information they saw on television and online political advertising.<sup>13</sup>

Percentage of surveyed voters that view direct mail as the most credible form.<sup>13</sup> **63%**

**56%** Percentage of surveyed voters believe direct mail includes more facts than other channels.<sup>13</sup>

Percentage of GEN Z fact check information on the internet after reading mailpieces.<sup>14</sup> **67%**

**77%** Percentage of voters that say they check their mail box at least 4 days a week immediately.<sup>14</sup>



## Section Three: Not All Mail is Created Equal — The Importance of Address Quality

Election Mail and Political Mail cover a wide variety of mailings, and it is necessary to understand what kinds of address and data quality solutions are right for the specific jobs you are fulfilling. Having a **complete, current, and correct address** will ensure your message is delivered to the **intended recipient every time**, which is the goal for some types of political or election mail. Other efforts are focused on reaching a **specific address, regardless of whoever lives there**, with **saturation mailings** — where you are simply trying to target as many doors as possible.

These different types of campaigns that require reaching out to donors, sending out voter registration information, or informing recipients of their polling locations all need to be prepared a little differently. **Employing the right combination of address quality solutions can provide growth areas for mailers** to take advantage of during election season and beyond.

In this section, we cover specifics on how to utilize **[BCC Software solutions](#)** to easily and effectively categorize your election season mailings — and how to take advantage of their unique qualities. Any issues with these types of mailings are handled quickly and efficiently by the USPS.



Listed below are an array of election season mail scenarios, and how industry leading solutions from BCC Software can be utilized to help ensure the success of your mailpieces.

### Change of Address

In any case where you need to reach an individual, [NCOALink®](#) and [PCOA \(Proprietary Change of Address\)](#) services can be leveraged. How and when to use these services may differ in practice. According to a study conducted by Democracy Fund, 41% of people answered incorrectly when it came to knowing they need to file a change of address when they change address.<sup>15</sup> Voter registration lists can be processed through [NCOALink](#), which will notify the mailer of any potential moves and follow up actions can be performed. A move notice may inform a board of elections center to remove this prior voter from their outreach efforts. This is a critical tool for ensuring recipient addresses are current, and postage fees are not misallocated. For the 40% of the nation that does not file a change of address with the USPS, [PCOA](#) enables mailers to potentially pick up these moves. BCC Software's [PCOA](#) service utilizes commercial data sources including magazine & catalog subscriptions, financial institutions, & online sources. Mailers of political mail or election mail may find this service helpful in improving the quality of their lists.



### Polling Place Information

A voter's polling place information could be an **area of opportunity** for political mailers. While Political Mail typically focuses on telling voters who they should vote for, Political Parties should consider utilizing Political Mail to help voters know where they go to vote. According to the USPS and American Association of Political Consultants' report titled "Voters and Mail", they state that "voters are particularly engaged with mail about early voting, absentee ballot, and voter registration details." In fact, 67% of registered voters will immediately read a piece of mail from a campaign sharing registration deadlines or details on early voting. Additionally, when analyzing what voters want to be receiving in their mailbox, 81% of voters want to receive mail with information regarding absentee ballot deadlines and 69% want information regarding voter registration deadlines.<sup>16</sup> Instead of just sending typical saturation mailpieces where everybody gets the same mailpiece, **personalize the postcard** with a map to the voting location to help voters go to the right polling place. Let people know when and where they are supposed to vote and **give them guidance**. Well-designed mailpieces could even **inform recipients about the key issues** as well as where they are supposed to go to vote.

Providing this helpful information can easily done with BCC Software's mailing solutions such as [BCC Mail Manager™](#) and [Delivery Point Validation \(DPV® Processing\) products](#), which return congressional district information to mail service providers. Additionally, BCC Software is proud to have a support staff that is comprised of **USPS Certified Mailpiece Design Professionals (MDPs)**. Our certified professionals can advise you on USPS standards for letter and flat-size mail, including addressing standards, mail classification, and Intelligent Mail® barcode (IMb) specifications, Reply Mail, move update requirements, and more to help **make sure you are making the most of your mailpiece every time**.



## Vote-by-Mail

In 2020, total volume surpassed 4.6 billion mailpieces for Political and Election Mail. This represented a **114% increase** versus the last general election. The USPS holds a strong role in the credibility of Vote-by-Mail, and according to the Democracy Fund, **“Tens of millions of American voters have their ballots handed to them by their USPS Postal Carrier, not a poll worker.”**<sup>17</sup>

Today, technologies allow increased security through tools such as Informed Delivery®, which lets voters know when their ballot can be expected in their mailbox.

**Timing is a huge key to the success of Vote-by-Mail, especially when it comes to recipients who live abroad.** For the 3-5 million America voters living abroad, many of them in the United States military, timing and distance are the two biggest challenges they face when attempting to cast their vote.<sup>18</sup> Getting these ballots in the mailstream early enough, and in some cases strategically inducted into the mailstream to ensure timely delivery for participation, is essential. Having a business partner like BCC Software that has **CASS™** certified software with **proven capabilities** and address quality, and continued progress with the postal service through channels like the Mailers Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC) and others, enables mail service providers to improve address quality for critical election mailings.

## Local Elections

If you're producing a mail campaign for a localized election, where the campaign is to encourage voters to vote for or against a specific proposition, then you will need a service that helps you reach the **entire household, not the individual.** For these saturation mailings, you will need [DSF<sup>2</sup>® Processing](#), which uses the **Delivery Sequence File** to maximize postal discount qualifications and better target your marketing efforts. BCC Software's DSF<sup>2</sup> Processing updates your lists by identifying known addresses and specific address attributes and returning a Walk Sequence and a Business/Residential Flag for each record that matched. This information can be used to hone your mailing lists and produce mailings that are targeted more precisely.



## Contacting Donors

Donors are a vital piece of any campaign, and it is easier to retain donors than to attract new ones, so data quality is critical. **Due to the infrequency of elections, it is easy for mailing lists to become outdated.**

A donor may not have updated their address since the previous election years ago, so they are no longer in the [NCOA Link](#) database. It is also possible that donors who have always contributed in the past have suddenly stopped responding. Investing in tools to keep in contact with donors will pay for themselves. When you are trying to reach a person at all costs, that is where a service like BCC Software's [COMPLIANCE+™](#) comes into play.

[COMPLIANCE+](#) is exclusively offered from BCC Software and combines three powerful data quality tools in one easy step. It allows you to update your lists of records with clean data to ensure messages are getting into the right hands. Going beyond traditional compliance found with **CASS™** and [NCOA Link](#), [COMPLIANCE+](#) combines these effective solutions with powerful industry tools — [PCOA](#) and [ARS \(Address Resolution Services\)](#) — to get the most accurate data possible.



## Section Four: Understanding the Lasting Impacts of Election Season for Your Business

Thanks to its high volume of mailings, election season is known for giving a boost to the mail service provider industry. Given the contentious nature of the overall political climate at all levels of government, **this is expected to be especially true for the 2024 election season.** It is important for mail service providers to take advantage of lingering impacts from election season years to ensure continued growth even after the season ends.

Don't just produce a mailing and then forget about it until the next election cycle. **Follow up with customers to review the mail campaign results.** For example, act as a consultant and review and discuss the mail tracking results.

### Ask Your Customers

- Was this helpful?
- Did it help to see when mail arrived or knowing when responses would arrive?
- If they saw increases in donations, attendance at town halls, voter turnout, etc?
- Did they see a decrease in wasted postage and an increase in ROI?
- How did the mail responses compare to digital, radio or TV?

Mail tracking provides measurable results that are not always easily provided from other channels such as digital, radio or TV.

Providing **measurable results will show the value of mail** to ensure that customers continue to keep it as a significant part of their marketing efforts.

### Expertise Matters

Adding or upgrading solutions from BCC Software can pay off immediately this election season. Working with a postal expert or using postal solutions such as BCC Software's offerings will help you capture all the savings that are possible.

[Talk with the experts at BCC Software](#) today to see what's possible.

### Resources

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.deliverthewin.com/research-center/the-growing-impact-of-direct-mail/>
- <sup>2</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1182410/political-advertising-spending-election-cycle-united-states/>
- <sup>3</sup> USPS Campaign Handbook, USPS, January 2023 (page 13) [https://usps-dtw-staging.centralus.cloudapp.azure.com/wp-content/uploads/Campaign\\_Mail\\_Political\\_Handbook\\_Digital.pdf](https://usps-dtw-staging.centralus.cloudapp.azure.com/wp-content/uploads/Campaign_Mail_Political_Handbook_Digital.pdf)
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- <sup>5</sup> <https://www.usps.com/business/political-mail.htm>
- <sup>6</sup> [https://about.usps.com/kits/kit600/kit600\\_v02\\_027.htm](https://about.usps.com/kits/kit600/kit600_v02_027.htm)
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- <sup>10</sup> <https://www.uspis.gov/about/how-we-do-it/>
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- <sup>13</sup> <https://www.deliverthewin.com/research-center/the-growing-impact-of-direct-mail/>
- <sup>14</sup> [https://www.deliverthewin.com/wp-content/uploads/2023-Annual-Whitepaper\\_508-Compliance-NoFPO.pdf](https://www.deliverthewin.com/wp-content/uploads/2023-Annual-Whitepaper_508-Compliance-NoFPO.pdf)
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- <sup>16</sup> <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2021/0119-usps-releases-updated-2020-post-election-analysis-report.pdf>
- <sup>17</sup> <https://issuu.com/whattheythink/docs/2020-08-pn>
- <sup>18</sup> <https://www.fvap.gov/info/reports-surveys/overseas-citizen-population-analysis>



ISSUE DATE: 01/30/24 (BW)

BCC Software creates innovative postal software solutions and provides extensive Data Marketing Services (DMS) for thousands of customers across the United States. The company was founded in 1978 and is headquartered in Rochester (NY) with offices in Seattle (WA) and La Crosse (WI).

To learn more about BCC Software, please visit [bccsoftware.com](https://bccsoftware.com).



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