

# VOTING BY MAIL

PRESENTATION TO DARIEN MEN'S ASSOCIATION  
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# Origins of Voting by Mail

- Remote voting was allowed by virtually all states for Union soldiers in the 1864 election. Field commanders mailed in tallies accumulated by voice vote.
- CT did not allow absentee voting for non-military personnel until 1932.
- In 1964, CT expanded absentee voting eligibility to include those physically able to vote, but unwilling to do so because of religious observances on election day.
- World War II formalized process of enabling military personnel to receive ballots with postage prepaid return envelopes.

# Basic facts about election management

- Each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia set its own rules and processes for voting. Some states delegate some decisions to counties.
- CT: The Secretary of State sets most rules; State Election Enforcement Commission enforces rules; local administration is shared between Registrar of Voters and Town Clerk.
- The legislature has given the governor the ability to issue Executive Orders relative to special processes due to Covid19 emergency.
- In many states, county referenda can be on ballot, in addition to separate candidates in each county and town or city.
- Some states require that, if a county has a particular language spoken by more than 5% of the population, ballots must be printed in that language. (e.g. Santa Clara county, CA: 6 languages meet this target.

# Many Stakeholders are involved in election process, among them

- US Postal Service
- Production equipment vendors for printing and mailing ballots
- Voting machine hardware and software vendors
- Tabulating equipment vendors
- Address database management vendors
- State political party organizations
- Referendum proponents and opponents
- Envelope and paper manufacturers
- State and local election officials

# Rules governing voting by mail: three basic approaches

- Five states have 100% mail-in balloting: Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Utah and Hawaii
- Many states give voters a choice between mail-in voting and appearing in person to vote.
- Six states require a voter to affirm that he or she cannot appear in person to vote: Texas, Tennessee, South Carolina, Mississippi, Indiana and Louisiana.
  - Four of these states allow early in-person voting: TX, TN, IN, and LA
- Some states require voters to request ballots; others send them to all registered voters.

# Voting by mail process: six components

- Voter identification and residential qualification
- Notification to voter of rules associated with voting by mail
- Printing and mailing of ballots
- Tracking of ballot mailing and returns
- Signature verification on signed, returned ballots, along with checking ballot for compliance with election requirements.
- Tabulating of votes

# Voter Identification and Residential Qualification

- Voter ID laws vary:
  - Some states require photos on government-issued cards, such as TSA-compliant drivers' licenses
  - Others, like CT, accept non-photo IDs
  - Still others allow ballots to be cast with a presentation of cumulative proof of ID
- Residency
  - Postal Service Change of Address database, or comparable private sector databases are best evidence of residency, although never completely current;
  - Challenge: Postal Service does not have street addresses on file for 10-15% of US population, which uses PO Box or “general delivery” addresses; other forms of residence verification, such as utility bills, are needed.

# Creating and mailing ballots

- Ballot printing and inserting is a complex process; it requires
  - Preparation of ballot for every registered voter;
  - Adherence to local or state requirements for printing in additional languages;
  - Database cleansing to correct address format and verification, if address exists
  - Strict security and privacy protocols;
  - Complete ballot tracking from data creation through both outbound and inbound mailing; and
  - Mastery of complex postal payment and mail lodging processes, including prepayment for return envelopes.
- Understanding mail forwarding rules is critical;
  - In general, only first-class mail can be forwarded; standard mail (which costs far less) is not forwarded
  - In many states, laws prohibit forwarding of ballots



# Ballot Tracking

- The Postal Service Intelligent Mail Barcode (see next slide) is the best method for ballot tracking.
  - One to one tracking such as a package- each ballot is given a unique number that is tracked from production:
  - Unique number for outgoing ballot envelope
  - Unique number for incoming ballot envelope
- Information from the carrier utilizing Address Change Service in the barcode will have an electronic database created showing why any piece of mail was not delivered utilizing NIXIE Codes. **Election officials can determine who no longer resides at the address on file by sending a piece of first-class mail, and getting it returned as undeliverable.**

# Intelligent Mail Barcode: Example in Pennsylvania

## INTELLIGENT MAIL BARCODES

The Department of Revenue has started to use Intelligent Mail Barcodes to increase efficiency and reduce costs



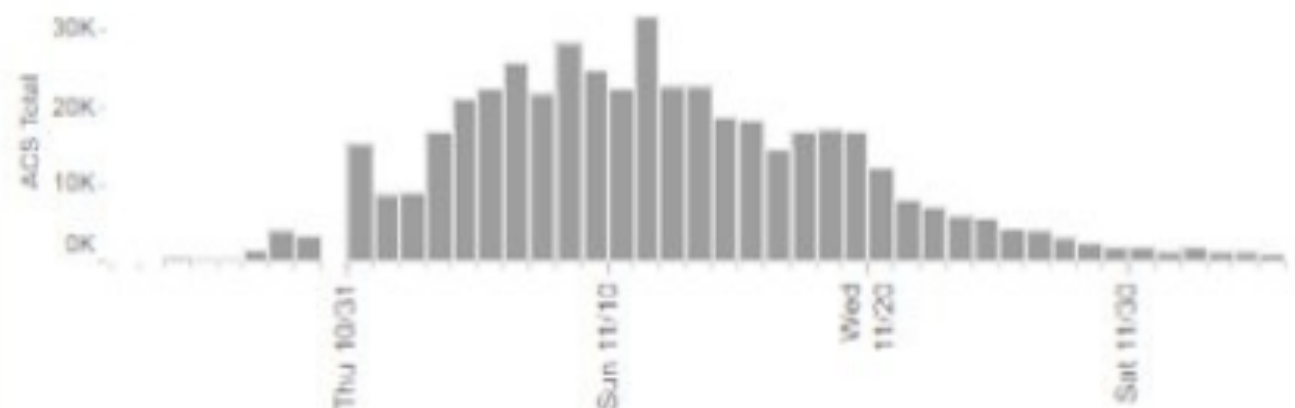
### Which campaigns had the most address changes?



### Which Move Types were listed for the changes?



### When did the most address changes happen?



### What address change reasons happened the most?



# Informed Delivery

- Utilize Informed Delivery emails for email from USPS notifying mail piece such as: application and ballot
- Includes line to URL customized by election office that can include a link with further instructions
- Citizen receiving ballot can notify if ballot was not received and a new ballot can be sent while eliminate previous ballot tracking number from system so that if both are turned in- one or both can be sorted out of the system



OFFICE OF THE OHIO SECRETARY OF STATE  
22 N 4th ST  
Columbus, OH 43215-3668

NONPROFIT  
US POSTAGE PAID  
HEBRON OH  
PERMIT NO. 440

**Open immediately!**  
Your official absentee ballot application is enclosed!



 **Make your voice heard!**

**For more information about voting in Ohio visit:**



**VoteOhio.gov**

FROM Ohio Secretary of State

[Learn More >](#)

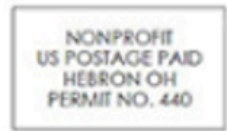
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/>

# Submit Missing Mailpieces

Check the box to indicate that you did not receive the physical mailpiece represented by the image. For more information on delayed or missing mail, please refer to our [FAQs](#).



OFFICE OF THE OHIO SECRETARY OF STATE  
22 N 4th ST  
Columbus, OH 43215-3668



**Open immediately!**  
Your official absentee ballot application is enclosed!



I didn't receive this mailpiece 

# Verification and matching of signatures on ballots to signatures on file

- Signature verification is a complex task for which training is required and practice improves performance. Following is a training video on the topic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKiYGONnNT0&feature=youtu.be>

- This video trains election workers to use what is called a “combination of shared characteristics” to verify a signature.

# Checklist of Signature Verification Process

These include:

- Style (cursive vs. handprinted)
- Skill
- Spacing between characters and words
- Proportion among characters
- Fluency (line quality)
- Alignment to a horizontal line
- Slope
- Size
- Continuity



# Steps After Signature Verification

- Processing and counting incoming ballots
- Creating an end-to-end audit trail that complies with the state's laws and regulations for validating votes.

# Challenges in Postal Service

- The issues about sorters, mail collection boxes and overtime are “red herrings.” The Postal Service has ample capacity to collect and process mail inside its facilities because of declining letter volumes.
- But
  - The Postal Service has serious problems with mail transport because it has relied on commercial airlines to move mail more than 1,000 miles.
  - The Postal Service relies on long-haul truckers driving heavy-duty tractor trailers on trips of less than 1,000 miles. There is a chronic shortage of drivers for this segment.

# The Problem of Ballot “Harvesting/Collecting”

- This happens when 3<sup>rd</sup> parties, such as volunteers, state party loyalists, or contract workers outside the Postal Service distribute and/or collect ballots.
- Absentee ballots were collected from senior citizens’ homes in Bridgeport in 2019 Democratic primary; State Senator Marilyn Moore was ahead after all in-person votes were tabulated; Mayor Joe Ganim loyalists collected and submitted 1,200 ballots which put him ahead.
- Ballot harvesting should be banned because
  - Ballots can be lost in the collection and return process
  - Some voters can be coerced into supporting the ballot harvester’s preferred candidate
  - Harvesting, especially if the harvester directs the voter not to sign the ballot, lends itself to fraud.

# Challenges Residing in Election Administration

- Distrust of voter identification and registration processes (voter fraud vs. voter suppression)
- Complexity of processes, which are patchwork of responses to past process deficiencies.
- Challenges for state and local governments:
  - Budgetary restrictions on purchases of election infrastructure .
  - Local autonomy and variation vs. more standardized statewide approach
  - More direct democracy adds work (e.g. more referenda on ballots)
  - Frequent verification of voter qualification which increases cost vs. less costly single mailing of ballots to voters already on voter rolls
  - Mastery of existing processes vs. risky improvements

# Covid19 Issues

- Separate voters at in-person polling locations: early voting can reduce crowds on election day, but crowd management through mask wearing and physical distancing is critical.
- Separating election workers from one another in signature matching and processing and tabulating ballots.
- Outbreak that causes multiple election workers to stay at home on election day or during vote tabulating and counting operations.
- Processes for ensuring that quarantining individuals get ballots on a timely basis and have access to opportunity to return them (letter carriers can take outbound mail if left in collection box)
- Processes for educating voters to take initiative if they have chosen to live temporarily somewhere other than the residence on their voter registration record.