

417 Million Pieces of 2020 Election Mail Have Already Been Sent. Vote Correctly

Americans worried about catching the coronavirus are staying home. They're working from home, attending school online, wearing masks outside and practicing social distancing in grocery stores. Millions of them are also voting from home. What that means is voting by mail is already four times more popular in 2020 than it was during the entire 2016 U.S. general election cycle, according to data compiled by the U.S. Elections Project.

But that also means those 60 million additional mail-in voters may be addressing this voting channel for the first time. And some of them don't know what they're doing. To alleviate voters' confusion, entities ranging from the U.S. Postal Service to the nonprofit Center for Voter Information are sending out educational direct mail that's teaching recipients how to apply for, fill out and return mail-in ballots.

"With Covid-19 impacting elections, we have a responsibility to do all we can to safely increase voter turnout and make sure voters are informed of their voting options amid this uncertain time. We feel it is vital to keep voters safe and to bring democracy to eligible voters' doorsteps," CVI President and CEO Tom Lopach told Adweek. "Since we are nonpartisan, we do not send mailers based on party affiliation. We care if you vote, but not how you vote."

Lopach says the group has produced 5 million vote-by-mail applications across the country this year. Between Sept. 4 and Oct. 7, 2020, USPS mailed 117% more election mail than it did in the 2016 general election cycle. Also during that timeframe

in 2020, USPS sent 64 million ballots to and from voters.

The nonpartisan piece of educational direct mail that USPS sent to nearly every home in the nation around September 2020 contained five informational bullet points about how to effectively vote by mail.

“The intention of the mailer was to send a single set of recommendations that provided general guidance allowing voters who choose mail-in voting to do so successfully, regardless of where they live and where they vote,” Martha S. Johnson, the USPS staffer working on election mail said. “Each state has its own approaches, rules and deadlines, and we provide the following link for voters to determine their local relevant information.”

Johnson says to date, that link has seen 1.7 million total page views from 1.5 million visitors.

Other educational direct mail, such as that of the Voter Project, similarly offers mail-in voting how-tos, trackable phone numbers and websites. The links on all of the mail pieces tend to redirect mail recipients to their state’s voter information pages and forms. Despite the educational direct mail efforts, it’s hard to blame voters who are still lost.

President Trump continues to express concern about the safety of mail-in voting, while saying absentee voting is reliable. But the USPS says it treats the ballots the same way in the mailstream and that the safety of the ballots and their timely delivery to boards of election are the postal service’s top priority through November.

What about Using DHL, FedEx or UPS?

That's a bad idea, say many boards of election that require USPS postmarks on mail-in ballots. UPS notified voters on Aug. 17 that "all eligible voters should speak with state authorities who set the rules to see if they will accept a ballot if delivered by a private express carrier."

For their part, Philadelphia City Commissioners say they're accepting and processing ballots arriving via FedEx and UPS. City commissioners also report that of the 120,598 ballots received as of Oct. 13, most were filled out correctly. But the ballots with problems have "pretty much normal mistakes—[they're] not properly filled out, not using the Voter Declaration envelope, or not signing the Voter Declaration."

Continue Reading

Pages: 1 2

Recommended articles

<https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/417-million-pieces-of-2020-election-mail-have-already-been-sent-vote-correctly/>