

Your Vote, Your Plan.

What the courts decided about mail voting this year, and how to make sure your ballot counts.

 Election Day: Tuesday, November 3, 2026

THE SHORT VERSION

Voting by mail for November 3 is safe and works the way it always has. The courts sided with voters this year. **The biggest risk now is timing, not the law.** Don't wait until the last minute.

What Happened

Dec. 2025

Postmark “clarification.” USPS said a postmark shows when mail is processed, not always when you dropped it off. A ballot mailed on time can still get a late date.

March 2026

An executive order. The President directed federal agencies to take new steps on mail voting, framed as fighting voter fraud.

June 2026

States fight back. Twenty-three states and D.C. sued in federal court in Massachusetts, and a judge temporarily blocked parts of the order.

June 29

Grace periods protected. In *Watson v. RNC*, the Supreme Court ruled that states can count ballots postmarked by Election Day that arrive shortly after.

August

The administration pushes forward. The Supreme Court let it move ahead, saying the states had sued too early. USPS then issued a rule on ballot envelopes and voter lists, and the Massachusetts judge blocked it.

Sept. 14

The final word, for now. The Supreme Court kept the block in place, saying the government is unlikely to win. **States will mail and count ballots this fall the way they always have.**



NEED TO KNOW: STAY ALERT

This win covers **this election only**. Courts will decide later whether the USPS rule is legal, and it could come back before 2028. The separate December 2025 postmark change is still in effect, so **timing matters**. Check your state's election website for updates before you vote.

Don't Wait Until the Last Minute

Eight steps to protect your ballot. Start today.

1

Check your registration

Confirm your name and address are current with your state or county election office.

2

Request your mail ballot

If your state requires a request, do it now. Don't wait for the deadline.

3

Know your state's deadline

Is it "postmarked by" or "received by" Election Day? In states like Pennsylvania and North Carolina, a postmark won't save a ballot that arrives late.

4

Review your whole ballot

Look past the top races to state and local contests, judges, school boards, and ballot measures.

5

Return it 7+ days early

That's USPS's own advice. Better yet, use an official drop box or your county election office.

6

Get a hand postmark

If you mail it, hand it over at the post office counter and ask for a manual postmark. It's free.

7

Track your ballot

Sign up for your state's ballot tracking if it's offered, so you know when it's received.

8

Fix problems fast

Missing signature or other issue? Follow your state's instructions to correct it right away.



Why early? Mail is often processed at a regional center, so a ballot dropped in a mailbox on Election Day can be postmarked a day or more later.

A Voting Plan for Every Voter

Every voter's path is a little different. Find yours, then fill out your plan on the next page.

College students

Vote from your school address or your home address, never both. Request absentee ballots early, check your campus mailbox often, and use a drop box if you vote where you go to school.

Seniors

Request early and read every instruction, especially witness or notary rules. Line up a trusted helper now for rides or reading support, and check who may return your ballot for you.

Voters with disabilities

Ask your election office about accessible mail ballots. You have the right to help from a person of your choice, with limited exceptions such as your employer or union representative.

Rural voters

Your mail may travel far to a regional center before it's postmarked. Mail even earlier than 7 days, or plan one trip to a drop box or your county office.

First-time voters

Some states require ID information with your first mail ballot. Read every line before you seal the envelope, and sign exactly where it says to sign.

Working families

Shift workers and busy parents: put a date and time on your calendar to fill out your ballot, and set a phone reminder for your return date.

Military and overseas voters

Service members, their eligible family members, and U.S. citizens living abroad can register and request a ballot with one form, the Federal Post Card Application, at [FVAP.gov](https://www.fvap.gov). Request early, check whether your state lets you return your ballot electronically, and use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot as a backup if yours doesn't arrive in time.

TOOLS TO GET READY

Vote.org

Check your registration, look up your state's deadlines, and request your mail ballot.

VOTER PROTECTION

866-OUR-VOTE

Having trouble voting or facing voter suppression? Call the nonpartisan Election Protection hotline at 866-687-8683 or visit [866ourvote.org](https://www.866ourvote.org).

My Voting Plan

Fill it out, put it on your fridge, and share it with a friend.

ELECTION DAY
Nov. 3, 2026

How I'm voting

☐ By mail ☐ Early in person ☐ On Election Day

My state's mail ballot deadline

☐ Postmarked by Election Day ☐ Received by Election Day ☐ Other _____

I confirmed my registration on

I requested my ballot on

I'll fill out my ballot on (date and time)

I'll return it by (7+ days before Nov. 3)

How I'll return it

☐ Official drop box ☐ County election office ☐ Mail, with a hand postmark

What my state requires

☐ Witness signature ☐ Notary ☐ ID number ☐ None of these

Where I'll track my ballot

My voting buddy

My backup plan if something goes wrong

Who I'll call for help

What's on my ballot that matters most to me

**Don't wait until the last
minute.**

Make your plan today.

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