

Access the Vote 2026

Mail-In Voting Advocate Toolkit



1. Advocate Explainer: What to Know About Mail-In Voting in 2026

What's Happening Now?

On September 14, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to allow the implementation of proposed, new requirements from the U.S. Postal Service around mail-in ballots. As a result, those requirements will **not** take effect for elections occurring on or before November 3. **Voters can continue preparing for the midterms under the mail-in voting procedures currently in place in their states and local jurisdictions.**

Why Is This an Issue?

If allowed to go forward, the USPS rule would have created new mandatory requirements for the handling of ballot mail in federal elections, including requirements involving state voter information, USPS review of ballot envelopes and participation in a federal ballot-mail portal. Courts reviewing the rule concluded that the Final Rule was likely unconstitutional because the United States Constitution assigns to the States the authority to administer elections subject to alterations imposed by Congress. The courts determined that Congress had provided no authority for the Postal Service to create a rule that regulates the manner of elections, and that implementing these requirements so close to the November election could create serious administrative problems and put voters at risk of not receiving or returning ballots successfully.

The Supreme Court's September 14 action means advocates do not need to prepare for these new mandatory USPS requirements for the November 3 midterms. The broader litigation and rulemaking may continue beyond this election, but the immediate focus for voters should return to the mail-in voting rules, deadlines and instructions that apply where they live.

Even though these new rules for mail-in voting were blocked, advocates should still make a voting plan since current regulations around mail-in voting can cause confusion.

Why Mail-In Voting Matters for Voters with Disabilities

For many people with disabilities, mail-in voting is more than a matter of convenience. It can provide an important way to participate when transportation, inaccessible polling locations, mobility limitations, fatigue, health needs, communication barriers or other disability-related circumstances make voting in person more difficult.

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission reports that voters with disabilities are more likely to vote by mail than voters without disabilities. At the same time, the mail-in voting process itself can present accessibility barriers, including requesting a ballot, completing required materials, signing or handling envelopes and returning a ballot. Clear information, adequate time and accessible options are therefore especially important for the disability community.

Launching this toolkit in recognition of National Voter Registration Day on September 15 is an opportunity to move from uncertainty to readiness: make sure your voter registration is current, understand the mail-in voting options available where you live and make a plan for how and when you will cast your ballot.

What Can You Do Now?

- Check your state or local election office for current mail-in voting rules, deadlines and instructions.
- Know whether you need to request a mail-in ballot and, if so, the deadline for doing so.
- Read the instructions that come with your ballot carefully and complete all required steps.
- If you plan to return your ballot through the mail, allow adequate time. The U.S. Election Assistance Commission notes the USPS recommendation to mail completed ballots at least one week before the applicable state deadline.
- Check whether your jurisdiction offers ballot tracking or accessible options for requesting, marking or returning a mail-in ballot.
- Rely on your state or local election office for the mail-in voting procedures and deadlines that apply to you for the November 3 election.

2. Make Your Mail-In Voting Plan — Then Share It

With the new USPS requirements blocked for the November 3 midterms, advocates can focus on the practical steps that help every voter be ready. If you intend to vote by mail, take a few minutes now to identify the steps and deadlines that apply to you. Then encourage two or three people in your circle to check their registration, make their voting plans and pass the reminder along.

Your Mail-In Voting Plan

- Confirm whether and how you can vote by mail in your state.
- Know any deadline for requesting your mail-in ballot.
- Know the deadline and accepted methods for returning your completed ballot.
- Decide when you will complete and return your ballot, leaving additional time if you plan to use the mail.
- Know where to find official state or local election information if you have questions.

Share Your Plan

Choose two or three family members, friends, neighbors, or coworkers and ask whether they have made their voting plans. You are not telling anyone how to vote. You are simply encouraging people you know to understand their options, check their deadlines and be prepared.

Sample message: *“I’m making my mail-in voting plan and checking my deadlines early this year. Have you made your voting plan yet? Take a few minutes to check the rules and deadlines where you live, and then pass the reminder along to someone else.”*

3. Letter to the Editor: Why Mail-In Voting Matters to Voters with Disabilities

A letter to the editor gives advocates an opportunity to move beyond deadlines and procedures and explain what access to mail-in voting means in real life. The strongest letters will use a personal experience to help readers understand why having an accessible way to cast a ballot matters to voters with disabilities. Use the template below as a starting point, but make the personal section your own. Launching this resource on National Voter Registration Day provides a timely opportunity to connect being registered and vote-ready with the need for accessible voting options throughout the election process.

How to Use and Submit This Template

Personalize the template before submitting it. Editors are most interested in your own voice and experience, so replace the bracketed prompt with a specific example of why mail-in voting matters to you as a voter with a disability.

Keep it concise. Many outlets set their own word limits, often in the range of about 150 to 300 words. Check the publication's requirements before submitting.

Choose a local newspaper, community publication or other outlet that accepts letters to the editor. Look on its website for a "Letters to the Editor," "Opinion" or "Contact Us" page and follow the submission instructions provided there.

Include the information the outlet requests, which may include your full name, city or community, email address and phone number for verification. Editors may contact you before publication.

Submit the letter to one outlet at a time unless the publication's guidelines say otherwise, and keep a copy of what you send.

If your letter is published, share the link with MDA so we can celebrate and amplify advocate voices.

Sample LTE Template

Dear Editor:

As a voter with a disability, I know that casting a ballot is not always as simple as showing up at a polling place on Election Day. For many people with disabilities, mail-in voting provides an important way to participate in our democracy when transportation, mobility, inaccessible polling locations, fatigue, health needs or other barriers can make voting in person difficult.

[PERSONALIZE — THIS SHOULD BE THE HEART OF YOUR LETTER: In three to five sentences, describe what mail-in voting means to you. You might share a barrier you have experienced when voting in person; how transportation, mobility, stamina, accessibility or the need for assistance affects your voting experience; or how being able to vote from home gives you greater independence, privacy, flexibility or confidence that you can participate. Be specific enough that a reader can understand why this option matters in your life.]

For voters with disabilities, preserving meaningful access to mail-in voting is about having a practical and accessible way to exercise the same fundamental right as every other voter. The U.S. Election Assistance Commission has found that voters with disabilities are more likely to vote by mail, underscoring how important this option can be to our community.

The recent court decisions provide greater clarity for the November election: the new mandatory USPS ballot-mail requirements will not take effect for the November 3 midterms. That clarity matters, but preparation alone cannot eliminate every accessibility barrier. Voters should still check the mail-in voting rules and deadlines where they live, and voters with disabilities need voting options that allow us to participate fully and independently.

Mail-in voting is one of those important options. As we approach November, I hope our communities will recognize that accessible voting is not a special accommodation — it is part of ensuring that voters with disabilities can make our voices heard.

Sincerely,

[NAME] [CITY, STATE, ZIP]

[Phone Number] [Email Address]