



# Mail Tracking and Political Mail

Essential Intelligence  
and Enhancement of  
Your Campaign and  
Fundraising Mail

**By**  
**Dave Lewis**  
**President, SnailWorks**





## Essential Intelligence and Enhancement of Your Campaign and Fundraising Mail

### KEEPING AN EYE ON YOUR MAIL

The US Mail remains essential to political campaigns, political parties, candidates, advocacy groups, and fundraising. Billions of pieces of mail are sent every election cycle for presidential candidates, state seats, local officials, and ballot measures. Direct mail remains the most targetable channel at every level with the deepest penetration and reach.

Of course, billions of mail pieces result in many millions of dollars in expense – primarily postage and production costs. With that kind of investment on the line, it's crucial that all stakeholders have insight into its progress. The complex relationship between candidates, PACs, consultants, agencies, printers, and mailers can make even a simple mailing complicated.

### POLITICAL MAIL STRATEGY 101

We will provide an overview of the unique characteristics of political mail and the basic mechanics behind the tracking of USPS mail and why leveraging mail tracking should be a critical part of your direct mail strategy. We've also included specific political mail-related applications for using mail tracking data, as well introductions of some special USPS products and programs that political mailers can leverage in unique ways.

## Political Mail & Mail Tracking

### POLITICAL MAIL VS. ELECTION MAIL – HOW THE USPS SEES IT

These two words may seem similar to the layperson, but they have very different meanings to the Postal Service.

- Political Mail is sent on behalf of a candidate, political party, or advocacy position. These direct mail efforts support and encourage voters to elect a candidate. This includes mail from organizations advocating for a position on the ballot.
- Election Mail is sent directly from official election boards – voter guides, sample ballots, registration information, and of course ballots. Election mail also includes the return of ballots to election officials.

Both election and political mail are generally delivered with greater urgency than regular marketing mail. Because the rules of political mail are rather strict, campaign managers and consultants need to be mindful of how their political mail is identified and adhere to the proper guidelines. Election mail, however, isn't much of a concern for them.

### IDENTIFYING POLITICAL MAIL

For the untrained eye, there is no visible difference between political mail and ordinary marketing mail. However, the Postal Service can identify political mail via two identifiable methods: the Intelligent Mail® barcodes (IMbs) that are printed on each mail piece and the eDocs that are submitted to the Postal Service along with the mail. One of the numeric components of the IMb is known as the Service Type ID (STID). The STID identifies the class of mail and requested services. Political mail has its own set of STIDs. Identifying your mail as political becomes very important as Election Day approaches because the Postal Service will take great measures to ensure political mail is delivered before the election. Mail service providers should know how to properly generate the eDoc and create the correct barcode so the Postal Service can easily identify their mail pieces as political mail. SnailWorks often assists mail service providers to ensure they use the correct STID for easy identification.



## Mail Tracking 101 – and Why Tracking is So Important

### THE BASICS

As mail travels through the Postal system, it is sorted and sequenced each step of the way via barcode sorting machines. The machines read the Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb) on each piece of mail and determines the next route for the mail piece. IMbs include address information to determine where to sort and send the mail, as well as information on who initiated the mail. The barcode may also direct the post office to share scan data with the mailer, providing real-time insight on the mail location and various mail processing stages. The scanning of barcodes and sharing of scan data is considered the heart of mail tracking and is known as Informed Visibility™. SnailWorks takes this raw data and converts it into a variety of reports and notifications, giving mail service providers in-depth knowledge of the path their mail is following and offering them a chance to react appropriately. Of course, there is much more to mail tracking than just scanning mail pieces. Mail containers and trays are also scanned, providing additional insight and visibility on the handling of your mail.

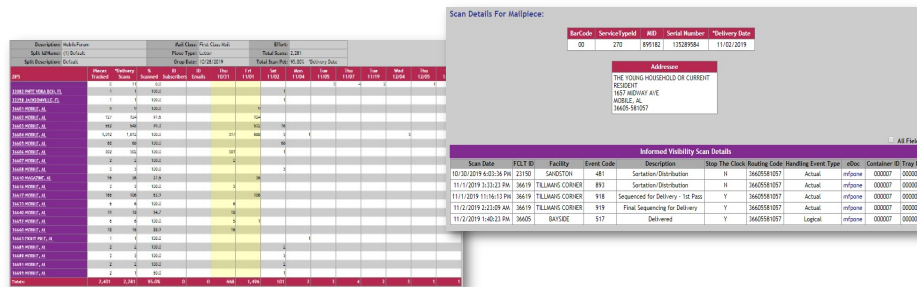
Mail Tracking - Job Summary		Scan Type	Delivery Date	Report Type	Informed Delivery	id
campaign:	Paris Halling	Estimated Qty:	71,467	Date Created:	10/23/2019	eDocs
job Id/Name:	(237359) J103653 - J103655	Tracked Qty:	71,467	Campaigns:		
description:	J103653 - J103655	Mail Class:	Standard Mail	Effort:		
plt Id/Name:	All Splits	Piece Type:	Letter	Total Scans:	70,497	
plt Description:	Multiple	First Drop Date:	10/23/2019	Total Scan Pct:	98.64% *Delivery Date	

Informed Delivery Campaign Summary						
Campaign(s) for Job J103653 - J103655						
Campaign Code	Campaign Title	Mailed Quantity	Subscribers	Emails Sent	Emails Opened	Emails Clicked
T 237359 J103655	Paris	38,652	5,247 13.6%	3,047 7.9%	1,684 55.3%	17 0.3%
T 237359 J103653	Paris	18,637	2,775 14.9%	2,368 12.7%	1,240 52.4%	17 0.6%
T 237359 J103654	Paris	14,178	1,921 13.6%	1,850 13.1%	985 53.2%	10 0.5%
<b>Totals:</b>		<b>71,467</b>	<b>9,943 13.9%</b>	<b>7,265 10.3%</b>	<b>3,909 53.8%</b>	<b>44 0.4%</b>

## WHY MAIL TRACKING IS ESSENTIAL

- Knowing when and where mail is being delivered ensures messages are being delivered on time. As campaign milestones and election dates approach, candidates and campaigns want to know that their mail investment is arriving as planned. By working with the Postal Service, delivery problems can be identified early in the process, and mail can be located and expedited.
- Knowing when mail is being delivered allows other marketing channels to be coordinated. From radio and TV to social media, and telemarketing to in-person canvassing, knowing who has received a mailing and who has not can help the coordination efforts across an entire campaign.
- Just as important as knowing when mail has been delivered, is knowing that your pieces have been mailed. Agencies and campaigns work together on tight deadlines and need to know that their timing requirements are being met. Printers and mail houses are held accountable and must often prove they have met the imposed deadlines. SnailWorks uses Informed Visibility to show when the Postal Service has accepted mail, giving campaign managers the peace of mind they need of a timely message.



**Scan Details For Mailpiece:**

MailCode	Sender/Type	PIID	Sortal Number	Delivery Date
00	270	69012	11328956	11/02/2019

**Address:**

THE YOUNG HUNTERS OR CURRENT  
RESIDENT  
165 HUNTER AVE  
MOBILE, AL  
36684-1001

**Informed Visibility Scan Details**

Scan Date	FEEL ID	Facility	Event Code	Description	Stop The Check	Routing Code	Handling Event Type	eDoc	Container ID	Tray ID
10/30/2019 6:52:39 PM	21250	SHANNON	481	Sortation/Distribution	N	3662581021	Actual	informe	000001	000001
11/1/2019 1:12:13 PM	36619	TULLAHGOMER	893	Sortation/Distribution	N	3662581021	Actual	informe	000001	000001
11/1/2019 11:06:13 PM	36619	TULLAHGOMER	918	Sequenced for Delivery - 1st Pass	Y	3662581021	Actual	informe	000001	000001
11/2/2019 12:12:09 AM	36619	TULLAHGOMER	919	Final Sequencing for Delivery	Y	3662581021	Actual	informe	000001	000001
11/2/2019 1:40:37 PM	36605	BARBEE	937	Delivered	Y	3662581021	Legal	informe	000001	000001

## Why Mail Acceptance is So Important

The postal service is constantly modifying mail acceptance and processing to build efficiency, and much has changed since the last election. The previous process of mail acceptance was laborious. Typically, a mail house would present the mail with a postal form (paper or electronic) and a postal clerk would check the mail to ensure it was properly prepared. The clerk would weigh the mail to confirm the accurate number of pieces, verify the date and quantity, and accept the mail. The postal form, once certified by the postal clerk, is proof that the project was mailed and mailed on time. With newly implemented acceptance rules known as Seamless Acceptance, the mailer uploads postal forms electronically to the Postal Service and submits the mail, without being weighed. Often, mailers drop the mail off on a USPS loading dock with no verification. If the mailer tries to mail more than claimed in their documents, the USPS will assess them.

If less mail is found, it is not accounted for. Informed Visibility provides assurance to the mail owner that every single piece is tracked and accounted for, and provides detailed information on the acceptance of mail via Seamless Acceptance.

Below are some real-life scenarios where mail tracking can benefit your campaign management:

**APPLICATION: KEEP VENDORS AND CAMPAIGNS ORGANIZED.**

Political consultants typically work with several candidates and even more printing and mailing vendors. Knowing with confidence that each vendor is meeting their deadlines can get very complicated, and Postal Service confirmations may not be available with new mailing methods. With SnailWorks' mail tracking software, consultants can easily access a single dashboard and view detailed information about each mailing from each vendor, and pinpointing when it is entering the mail stream.

**APPLICATION: COORDINATE CAMPAIGN WORKERS WITH YOUR MAIL.**

As canvassers are dispatched to precincts across their district as the election approaches, campaign organizers can utilize mail tracking to their advantage. With information on when and where campaign mailings have been delivered, canvassers can prioritize areas that haven't yet received their mail piece, ensuring their message is delivered to their constituents.

**APPLICATION: FINDING AND FIXING MISSING MAIL.**

When a mailing targeted to several key precincts is delayed, using SnailWorks' mail tracking software, you can identify where each piece is within the mail process. It provides you the data to locate the missing mail and allows you to work with the postal service to get it delivered without any further delay.

**APPLICATION: MEASURE AND OPTIMIZE VOTER REGISTRATION MAILINGS.**

Voter registration mailings can benefit greatly from mail tracking for follow-up efforts. When advocacy groups execute a voter registration campaign to unregistered constituents, registrations are mailed directly to voting authorities. With mail tracking and modern digital printing, each mailpiece can have its own unique Intelligent Mail barcode, providing the data to discern which constituents did and did not return their voter registration. This is crucial information when evaluating the effectiveness of the mailing effort and provides the data for accurate and appropriate follow-up by campaign organizers.

**APPLICATION: PROVE THE MAIL WAS PRODUCED.**

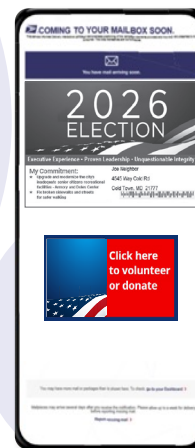
With the new USPS acceptance methods, it can be hard to get effective postal receipts confirming the promised mail delivery date for your campaign clients. Informed Visibility gives you the tools to create simple and sophisticated mail entry reports to satisfy all the stakeholders up the line, from mailer to candidate.

## Enhancing Your Mail

In addition to providing the necessary tools for maintaining control of your mail, the Postal Service has added affordable and exciting new services that make a huge impact on the effectiveness of your campaign.

### INFORMED DELIVERY® – FREE IMPRESSIONS AND POSTAGE DISCOUNTS

More than one in three households subscribe to Informed Delivery, the USPS service that delivers an email to users each morning showing them images of their incoming mail that day. Mailers have the option of replacing the grayscale image with a full-color digital ad and a link to their website. This service provides another opportunity to get an additional image of the candidate in front of voters, while providing a link where donors and volunteers can take action. The Postal Service places great importance on this program and considers it as the future of mail.

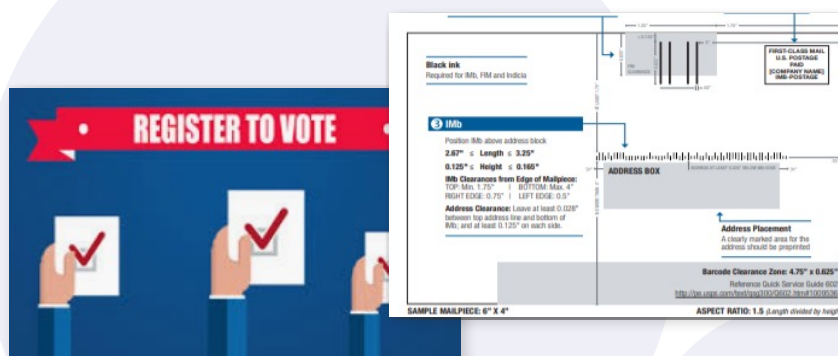


### SHARE MAIL

The USPS Share Mail® service allows campaigns to include postcards or letters in their mailings that constituents can “share” with others without affixing a stamp. This program allows the campaign to pay the postage on only the pieces actually “shared” without opening a postal permit.

Political mail campaigns use the service in the following ways:

- Postcards are issued to a strong supporter of a candidate or party for mail distribution to friends with a personal note. Cards can be pre-addressed or left blank for addressing by constituent.
- Voters can receive letters with a “reply card” addressed to their representative and/or senator and send a personalized note without affixing postage.
- Voter registration campaigns can become more successful. When the mailer addresses the registration form to the appropriate registration site, Share Mail allows the prospective voter to mail the form without affixing postage. This removes one more barrier to registering voters and gives you data on the effectiveness of your campaign.



The advantage of Share Mail is its trackability. You receive all the data you need to identify who responded, and when they responded, in great detail. The information can then be used for mail campaign analysis and retention efforts.

## REPLY MAIL

Reply mail is a favorite tool used in direct mail packages by fundraisers and includes a preprinted return envelope, allowing the donor to easily mail in a contribution. It is not often feasible to digitally print these return envelopes with unique barcodes, but with some planning, tracking the number of reply mail pieces returned to campaign headquarters is easy. Although you will not know specifically which contributor is sending a donation, you can easily view the number of contributions that were placed in the mail the previous day. Testing different messages on new contributor mailings is made simple, by printing a different IMb on the reply envelope for each panel. The data will show which package is pulling in the largest number of new contributors. Campaign managers can then roll that package out for their next acquisition mailing.

## **Personalized QR Codes**

Personalized QR Codes enable you to identify who scanned the QR Code on your direct mail piece along with the time of the visit, and the IP address. You know their name and address and possibly other information about them. The process is easy. You provide the website you want voters to visit, SnailWorks provides a unique weblink for each record in your mailing that can be printed as a QR code. It's built into the mail tracking report type selections and can be requested on demand whenever you want to use QR codes. No need to add additional time to your mail production process.

## **Choose the Right Partner: SnailWorks**

Mail tracking and Informed Delivery are essential for all political mail. However, it's not always easy to bring it all together. SnailWorks has tracked hundreds of millions of pieces of political mail, along with billions of other types of mail. We have tracking solutions designed to work with anyone in the mail value chain - campaigns, parties, political consultants, and print and mail providers. Every mail effort has unique requirements and can benefit from the intelligence mail tracking provides.

SnailWorks is the perfect partner, offering:

- World-class mail tracking
- Unmatched expertise in all phases of mail and mail tracking
- Account organization, including views that allow each party to see their data
- Affordable plans
- Informed Delivery support, creating and tracking campaigns, and helping clients save on costs with USPS discounts
- Unparalleled service, reporting, and proficiency



### **Additional Resources:**

**USPS Political Web Page** - [Deliver the Win - USPS](#)

**Informed Visibility** - [Informed Visibility® Mail Tracking & Reporting \(IV®-MTR\) Fact Sheet | PostalPro \(usps.com\)](#)

**Informed Delivery** - <https://www.usps.com/business/informed-delivery.htm>

**Share Mail** - <https://postalpro.usps.com/node/3594>