



# **The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Elections Division

Report to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
And to the Joint Committee on Election Laws

By:

Office of Secretary of the Commonwealth

December 18, 2024

## **PURPOSE**

Pursuant to Section 25B(k) of Chapter 54 of the General Laws, the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth submits the following report on the costs of implementing certain requirements of the mail-in voting in the September 3, 2024 State Primaries and the November 5, 2024 State Election.

As required by law, this report includes: (i) the number of ballot applications with postage guaranteed mailed to voters; (ii) where available, the number of ballot applications with postage guaranteed returned requesting a ballot; (iii) the total number of ballots cast by mail; (iv) total cost and amounts paid for using federal funds; and (v) where available, the number of ballot applications that were returned as undeliverable and a description of the reasons why each application was returned, including, but not limited to, a change of address or the intended recipient being deceased.

## **MAILING**

As required by Section 25B(a) of Chapter 54, the Elections Division conducted mailings in July and September of 2024 to all registered voters who had not already applied for an absentee or early ballot for the State Primary or State Election, respectively. Like the mailing conducted in January 2024, ahead of the Presidential Preference Primaries, these applications permitted the voter to apply for ballots for any and all state elections being held in 2024.

All voters who had not already applied for an absentee or early primary ballot by July 5, 2024, the sixtieth day before the primary, were mailed an application for an early vote by mail ballot. In total, 3,853,025 applications were mailed to voters on or before July 20, 2024.<sup>1</sup> The cost of printing these applications, including the cost of paper, was **\$965,192.00**. The total cost of outgoing postage for these applications was **\$2,024,690.66**.

All voters who had not already applied for an absentee or early election ballot by September 6, 2024, the sixtieth day before the election, were mailed an application for an early vote by mail ballot. In total, 3,515,566 applications were mailed to voters on or

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to the Act, applications were mailed to the mailing addresses of registered voters, if the voter had designated a mailing address in their voting record.

before September 21, 2024.<sup>2</sup> The cost of printing these applications, including the cost of paper, was **\$884,206.68**. The total cost of outgoing postage for these applications was **\$1,901,140.34**.

## **RETURNED APPLICATIONS**

As is the case with any bulk mailing, a number of applications mailed to voters were unable to be delivered to the mailing addresses on file for some number of recipients for each mailing.

Applications are sent by non-forwardable mail, in order to ensure they are not received by voters no longer eligible to vote from the address listed on the application. The United States Postal Service (USPS) has once again confirmed that it is unable to provide data or statistics on the number of undeliverable mail pieces or the reasons therefor.

## **POSTAGE**

In order to allow ballots and applications to be returned to each of the 351 local election offices at no cost to the voter, the Elections Division was required to fund 352 separate USPS Business Reply Mail (BRM) accounts. One master account for the Elections Division was used, with 351 subaccounts for each local election office.

Each BRM subaccount required the payment of a \$930 annual permit fee before mail could be processed. These permits were renewed in May of 2024, to cover all ballots and applications returned by voters from July 8, 2024 through July 8, 2025. The total cost of the permit renewals was **\$326,430**.

The same subaccounts are used for returned early vote by mail applications and returned ballots. Because USPS does not distinguish between different types of mail pieces weighing less than 3 ounces, billing all applications and envelopes under the same category, the Elections Division is not able to segregate the costs and amounts of returned applications and returned ballots.

Further, because the cost of postage on local election ballots is also required to be pre-paid, the amount of postage paid by the Elections Division during the period of time

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<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to the Act, applications were mailed to the mailing addresses of registered voters, if the voter had designated a mailing address in their voting record.

covering the mailing and return of applications and ballots for the Presidential Primaries likely also includes a small amount for the return of ballots for local special elections.

The total amount of postage deducted from the Elections Division BRM accounts for this time period<sup>3</sup> was **\$1,904,016.75**.

### **VOTING BY MAIL**

In the September 3, 2024 State Primaries, a total of 841,940 ballots were cast by Massachusetts voters, representing an overall turnout of 16.7% of registered voters.

Of the 841,940 ballots cast, 520,056, or 61.8%, were cast by mail. An additional 28,908, or 3.4% of ballots were cast in person during the early voting period, while 292,976, or 34.8% were cast in polling places on September 3, 2024.

In the November 5, 2024 State Election, a total of 3,512,930 ballots were cast by Massachusetts voters, representing an overall turnout of 68.3% of registered voters.

Of the 3,512,930 ballots cast, 1,203,106, or 34.2%, were cast by mail. An additional 597,029, or 17.0% of ballots were cast in person during the early voting period, while 1,712,795, or 48.8% were cast in polling places on November 5, 2024.

### **FEDERAL FUNDS**

As no federal funds were appropriated by Congress for the purpose of conducting voting by mail in the 2024 federal elections, no federal funds were used or expended for such purpose.

### **TOTAL COSTS**

In total, the combined cost of administering the requirements of Section 25B(a) of chapter 54 of the General Laws for the September 3, 2024 State Primaries and the November 5, 2024 State Election, excluding the costs of printing ballots and envelopes, assembling ballot kits, and reimbursing local election officials for unfunded local mandates, was **\$8,005,676.43**.

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<sup>3</sup> These costs include all postage deductions from the Elections Division accounts from July 1, 2024 through December 10, 2024.