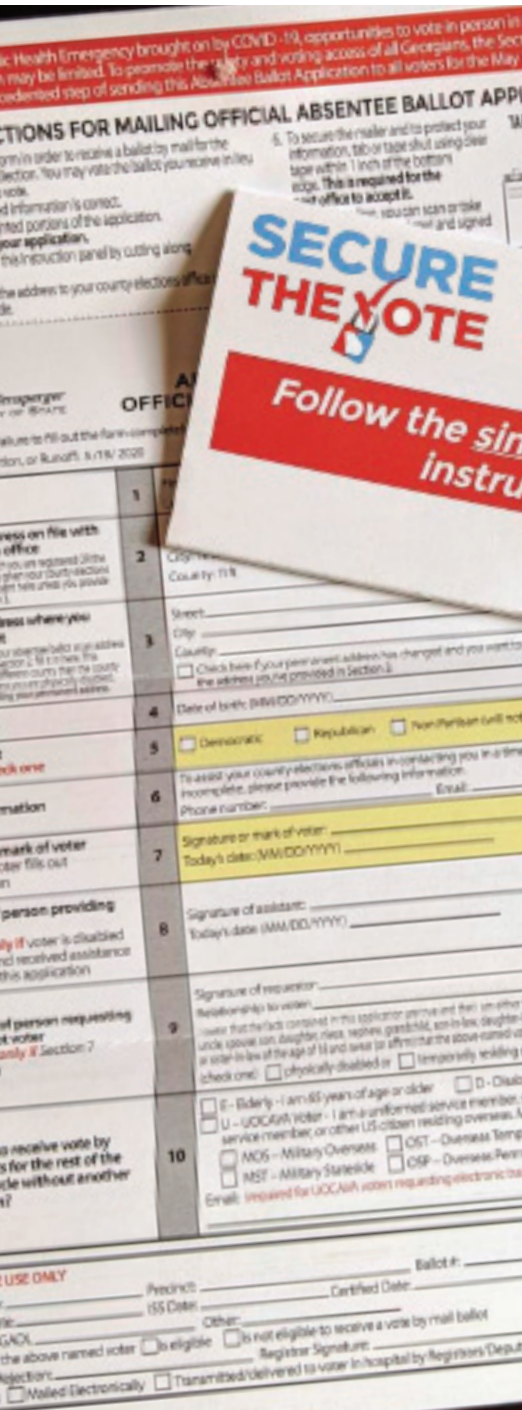


# States seek to restrict or expand voting by mail



Since the 2020 elections, many states have seen bills introduced in their legislatures to either make voting by mail more restrictive or make it more accessible.

The best-known legislation is Georgia's SB 202, signed into law by Gov. Brian Kemp (R) on March 25. The law requires voters to provide a state identification number or photocopy of an identifying document with their absentee ballot application, bars election officials from automatically sending out ballot applications (making it easier to remove voters from the permanent early voting list), gives voters less time to apply for an absentee ballot, and sharply restricts the availability and hours of ballot drop boxes.

But Georgia's new law is far from unusual. New York University's Brennan Center for Justice compiled a list of about 360 bills with restrictive voting provisions in 47 states as of March 24, most of which include vote-by-mail restrictions by such measures as eliminating the automatic mailing of ballots to registered voters, eliminating or restricting no-excuse absentee balloting, or reducing the number or hours of access to drop boxes for returning absentee ballots.

Restrictive voting laws weren't the only bills moving forward in state legislatures. As of March 24, about 840 bills with expansive provisions had been introduced in 47 states. Fewer than half of those bills address vote-by-mail, by moving to make no-excuse absentee balloting permanent, extend automatically mailing out ballots, expanding the time of access and location of ballot drop boxes and make absentee voting easier for people with disabilities.

While far from a comprehensive list, the following are examples of bills

moving forward in state legislatures around the country.

## Restrictive bills

- In Iowa, SF 413 would give voters less time to apply for absentee ballots, bar local officials from automatically sending out absentee ballot applications, limit election officials' discretion to provide ballot drop boxes, and restrict who can assist absentee voters in returning their ballots.
- In Arizona, four bills prohibit election officials from sending mail ballots to voters without a request, requiring further identification information on absentee ballots, and limiting the time that voters have to supply a signature for their mail ballots if they had forgotten to sign them.
- In New Hampshire, three bills would require more identification information at various points in the absentee voting process.
- In Texas, SB 7 seeks to limit mail voting by enacting comprehensive restrictions, including prohibitions on state or local election officials sending unsolicited mail ballot applications to voters and on the use of any unstaffed drop boxes.
- In Florida, SB 90 targets the state's absentee voting process. The bill would ban ballot drop boxes, limit assistance with ballot delivery to immediate family members, and shorten the length of time a person can stay on the absentee voter list.
- In Michigan, eight bills with different provisions would combine to establish a photo ID requirement for both in-person and mail

voting, make it harder to request a mail ballot by eliminating online requests and by barring election officials from automatically sending out applications, and limit the use of mail ballot drop boxes.

- In Wisconsin, SB 204 would prohibit election clerks from sending absentee ballot applications and absentee ballots to voters who did not request them, and create a felony offense for violation.

### Expansive bills

- In Massachusetts, HB 73 extends no-excuse early voting and absentee voting through June 30, 2021. It also requires election administrators to grant reasonable vote-by-mail accommodations for disabled voters who are unable to vote by paper ballot.
- In Montana, SB 15 makes absentee voting easier for people with disabilities.
- In Virginia, under SB 1097, if an absentee ballot was not signed by

a witness, this would not render the ballot void during “any election held during a state of emergency related to a communicable disease of public health threat.” The state also is forming a work group to consider and evaluate alternatives to the witness signature requirement.

- Among New York’s 12 proposed bills are provisions to expand eligibility for absentee voting and absentee ballot drop boxes.
- In New Jersey, the combination of five bills would allow for absentee ballots with missing or illegible postmarks to be accepted up until 48 hours after Election Day and also would provide absentee voters with notice and an opportunity to cure ballot defects, such as forgotten signatures.
- Bills in six states—Connecticut, Indiana, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and Rhode Island—would extend or create no-excuse absentee voting. All but

Indiana offered no-excuse absentee voting as a temporary measure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the November 2020 election.

- Bills in 11 states would require that voters be notified of and given an opportunity to cure absentee ballot defects, in some cases even after Election Day.
- Bills in seven states would create or expand access to permanent absentee voting lists (voters on the lists would automatically receive an absentee ballot for every election without having to reapply).

Voting rights is an issue that will continue to make waves in state legislatures. “NALC has long stood in favor of allowing citizens to vote by mail,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “It’s a safe and convenient way to allow voters to cast their ballots, placing their trust in the Postal Service and their letter carrier to make sure their vote is delivered.” **PR**

## Task force created in new contract off to a great start

**I**n the recently ratified 2019-2023 National Agreement, the parties agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Re: City Delivery and Workplace Improvement Task Force that was established for the purpose of jointly seeking methods to improve the cultural and operational environment in city delivery offices. Within the MOU, NALC and USPS reconfirm their commitment to modernizing delivery methods and processes to ensure that the Postal Service remains the provider of choice for our customers and

that the parties continue their joint objective of creating an improved work environment for all employees.

Serving on the task force are NALC President Fredric Rolando, Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe, Director of City Delivery Christopher Jackson, Special Executive Assistant to the President Tim McKay and Assistant to the President for City Delivery Michelle McQuality.

For the term of the 2019-2023 National Agreement, the City Delivery and Workplace Improvement Task Force

will, at a minimum, jointly explore, develop and test new work methods and concepts related to:

- Establishment of a positive work environment/culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect
- Efficiency and use of space
- Staffing and scheduling
- Route evaluation
- Safety
- Contractual compliance

## Task force (continued)

- Mentorship/improving the onboarding experience and retention rate of city carrier assistants (CCAs)
- Business growth

Immediately upon ratification of the National Agreement, the task force, consisting of members from NALC and USPS, went to work discussing ideas related to these topics. Joint subcommittees working under the direction of the task force have also been established to meet and work toward achieving our mutual goals. So far, subcommittees working on route evaluation, office time/activities, office space, complement/staffing and improving CCA retention rates are up and running.

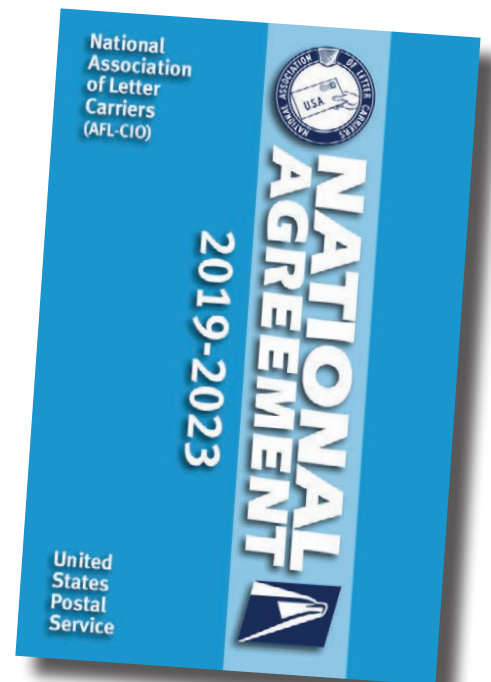
The route evaluation subcommittee meets on a weekly basis to jointly discuss the current route evaluation and adjustment process, as well as potential changes that may need to be made, and the exploration of the use of technology to improve operations, route evaluation, adjustment and optimization, delivery capabilities and visibility. During these meetings, the subcommittee agreed to a joint process using the principles contained in the 2014-2015 City Delivery Route Alternate Adjustment Process to facilitate evaluation and adjustment of routes in a limited number of delivery units. The subcommittee then selected two teams comprised of one NALC member and one USPS member experienced in route adjustments to evaluate and adjust routes in the chosen delivery units. The two teams also are exploring the applicability and use of certain technological advances in regard to a potential future alternate route adjustment process. The subcommittee will continue to meet weekly to oversee this process and the progress of the teams.

For more information on this topic, see Director of City Delivery Christopher Jackson's article on page 40.

Two additional joint subcommittees were established to address the parties' joint exploration of office efficiency and use of space. One of the committees is focused on city carriers' office activities, while the other committee is reviewing office space constraints and how to best accommodate increases in parcel volume and changing mail mix. Both committees recently began meeting; they will meet weekly to discuss these issues. The office activities and efficiency subcommittee will focus on reviewing current office activities and processes, route evaluation line items, and whether potential changes need to be made to these processes. The office use and space committee will review things like work floor setup and flow, case configuration and any other variables that may restrict space on the workroom floor. The committee will use this information to potentially develop new ideas for a more efficient office space for the future.

The complement/staffing subcommittee has been meeting weekly since ratification. Its focus has been on the hiring of CCAs, career conversions and voluntary transfers in understaffed installations identified by the main task force. It has identified and alleviated several bottlenecks in the onboarding process for CCAs, increased the frequency of carrier academies and authorized the processing of conversions to career and processing of voluntary transfers.

The subcommittee formed to explore improving CCA retention rates also meets at least weekly, and generally several times per week, to work on



these ideas. In April, after much discussion and planning, this subcommittee submitted a draft of a pilot program to the task force with some changes to how CCAs are used, mainly in the beginning stages of their USPS careers, with the intent of improving the new employee experience and increasing retention rates.

On April 15, the parties agreed to conduct the pilot program with the signing of MOU RE: New Employee Experience and Retention Program. The pilot program involves various new and modified practices for all CCAs and part-time flexible city letter carriers in two selected offices. The pilot began on May 15 in the Warren, MI, post office and the West Milwaukee, WI, station, and will last approximately one year, unless the time frame is modified by the parties. For a detailed explanation of everything the pilot program entails, see M-01949 in NALC's Materials Reference System in the "Resources" section of the NALC website or at [nalc.org/mrs](http://nalc.org/mrs).

The City Delivery and Workplace Improvement Task Force meets regularly to discuss the progress of the subcommittees and explore ideas to address each of the elements of the MOU. Additional subcommittees are in the process of being formed to further explore how we can best achieve our mutual goals. **PR**