



A Nevada U.S. Senate Race Was Decided by 7,928 Votes. 95,556 Ballots Were Sent to ‘Bad’ Addresses.

Result Determined Party Control of U.S. Senate

March 2023 – As states expand mail voting, Nevada’s 2022 midterm elections offer an alarming case study of close results as they relate to rejected, unreturned, and undeliverable ballots. Nevada’s U.S. Senate race was ultimately called four days lateⁱ on a margin of 7,928 votes,ⁱⁱ which determined party control for the chamber.ⁱⁱⁱ In 2023, the Secretary of State finally published figures showing that 95,556 ballots were sent to undeliverable or “bad” address and another 8,036 were rejected upon receipt. Another 1.2 million ballots never came back to officials for counting.^{iv}

Nevada Automatically Sent 95,556 Ballots to ‘Undeliverable or Bad Addresses’

State law requires that county election officials automatically mail ballots to all “active” registrants on the voter rolls. In the 2022 General Election, nearly 100,000 were found to be undeliverable or “bad,” regardless. This means that, at the time of mailing, five percent of Nevada’s active voter roll was not capable of receiving a ballot as mailed to the recipient/address.

Ballots at ‘Bad’ Addresses	
Democrats	24,496
Republicans	18,369
Other	37,785
TOTAL^v	95,556

More Nevada Ballots Were Rejected than the Difference Between Winner/Loser in Senate Race

A total of 8,036 rejected ballots out of nearly 513,000 returned may not seem significant, but in this context, it is a reasonable question as to what can be done to reduce the failure rates. The Silver State relies on signature verification when processing mail ballots. This means human eyes compare marks on file against return envelopes to determine which get rejected.

Rejected Ballots	
Democrats	2,133
Republicans	2,307
Other	3,596
TOTAL	8,036

The signature system has a double-edged problem: how do you reject the ballots deserving such an outcome while not accepting those which should have been kicked out? In 2022, a *Las Vegas Review-Journal* columnist reported on how he successfully tricked signature reviewers into accepting six ballots with his signature affixed.^{vi} In the 2020 Election, the columnist got eight ballots accepted.^{vii}

Nevada has reform options available. A growing collection of states including Florida and Minnesota require that a unique element of ID like partial Social Security number be included in return envelopes to better determine legitimacy.

Mass Mail Elections Invite Massive Postage Waste

Nevada county election officials mailed 1.8 million ballots to active registrants for the 2022 General Election. Of those, 1.2 million went on one-way trips. Last year, the USPS recommended that America’s election officials plan to send ballots via First-Class Mail® for outbound traffic.^{viii} Based on the weight of an envelope, First-Class can run between \$0.63 to \$4.75 each.^{ix} Assuming, for the sake of argument, that each outbound mailing was charged for the minimum weight, Nevada spent a lot of tax dollars for ballots sent to bad addresses or were never returned. Making matters even more expensive, state law requires that outbound ballot envelopes contain First-Class postage-paid return envelopes,^x essentially doubling the postage budget.

<u>Minimum Estimated Postage Waste</u>	
Undeliverable	\$120,400
Unreturned	\$1,500,000
TOTAL Expense	\$2,270,000

71.5% of Nevada’s Mail Ballots Went Unaccounted for in November 2022

What happens to the millions of ballots that never come back for counting is a significant challenge to mail voting advocates. Worse, merely pointing out flaws in mail voting can lead to censoring by social media platforms. Still, Nevada government data show that a sizable number of mail ballots were sent out and never came back, and nobody knows where they are -- more than 1.2 million total.



There are plausible explanations for these disappearing ballots, ranging from harmless to harmful. It is still fair to *assume* that the bulk of these were ignored or ultimately thrown out by the intended recipients. Still, the information gap naturally occurring in mass-mail elections remains— the public cannot *know* how many ballots were disregarded, delivered to wrong mailboxes, or even withheld from the proper recipient by someone at the same address.



PILF President, J. Christian Adams

“Mass-mail elections disenfranchise. Nevada can do a better job in reducing rejected ballots. Auto mass-mail will continue to waste money and disenfranchise voters until it is fixed.”

ⁱ Associated Press; 2022 Race Calls, <https://apnews.com/hub/2022-race-calls>

ⁱⁱ NBC News; Cortes Masto defeats Laxalt (November 8, 2022), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2022-elections/nevada-senate-results>

ⁱⁱⁱ Associated Press; Why AP called Nevada Senate race for Mastro (November 12, 2022), <https://apnews.com/article/2022-midterm-elections-senate-nevada-call-explainer-2326fcb308e7a22bedff05631672da4c>

^{iv} NVSOS; 2022 General Election Mail Ballots Turnout report (2023), <https://www.nvsos.gov/sos/home/showpublisheddocument/11487/638144795715470000>

^v The official Nevada report gives the following footnote related to totals: “*These numbers represent the most current totals as provided by the counties. Depending on the time the counties transmit their files, the total numbers may vary. These are unaudited totals. Washoe does not have data available of party breakdown of ballots mailed.*”

^{vi} *Las Vegas Review-Journal*; VICTOR JOECKS: Clark County accepted my signature on 6 mail ballot envelopes (2022), <https://www.reviewjournal.com/opinion/opinion-columns/victor-joecks/victor-joecks-clark-county-accepted-my-signature-on-6-mail-ballot-envelopes-2674184/>

^{vii} *Las Vegas Review-Journal*; VICTOR JOECKS: Clark County accepted my signature on 8 mail ballot envelopes (November 12, 2020), <https://www.reviewjournal.com/opinion/opinion-columns/victor-joecks/victor-joecks-clark-county-election-officials-accepted-my-signature-on-8-ballot-envelopes-2182390/>

^{viii} USPS; Your 2022 Official Election Mail Kit 600 (January 2022), <https://about.usps.com/kits/kit600.pdf>

^{ix} USPS; First-Class Mail Features & Pricing (2023), <https://www.usps.com/ship/first-class-mail.htm>

^x Nev. Rev. Stat. 293.323

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