TITLE 39.—POSTAL SERVICE

Part IV.—MAIL MATTER

Chapter 32.—PENALTY AND FRANKED MAIL

§ 3201. Definitions.

As used in this chapter—
(1) "penalty mail" means official mail, other than franked mail, which is authorized by law to be transmitted in the mail without prepayment of postage;
(2) "penalty cover" means envelopes, wrappers, labels, or cards used to transmit penalty mail;
(3) "frank" means the autographic or facsimile signature of persons authorized by sections 3210–3216 and 3218 of this title to transmit matter through the mail without prepayment of postage or other indicia contemplated by sections 733 and 907 of title 44;
(4) "franked mail" means mail which is transmitted in the mail under a frank;
(5) "Members of Congress" includes Senators, Representatives, Delegates, and Resident Commissioners; and

§ 3210. Franked mail transmitted by the Vice President, Members of Congress, and congressional officials.

(a)(1) It is the policy of the Congress that the privilege of sending mail as franked mail shall be established under this section in order to assist and expedite the conduct of the official business, activities, and duties of the Congress of the United States.
(2) It is the intent of the Congress that such official business, activities, and duties cover all matters which directly or indirectly pertain to the legislative process or to any congressional representative functions generally, or to the functioning, working, or operating of the Congress and the performance of official duties in connection therewith, and shall include, but not be limited to, the conveying of information to the public, and the requesting of the views of the public, or the views and information of other authority of government, as a guide or a means of assistance in the performance of those functions.
(3) It is the intent of the Congress that mail matter which is frankable specifically includes, but is not limited to—
(A) mail matter to any person and to all agencies and officials of Federal, State, and local governments regarding programs, decl-
sions, and other related matters of public concern or public service, including any matter relating to actions of a past or current Congress;

(B) the usual and customary congressional newsletter or press release which may deal with such matters as the impact of laws and decisions on State and local governments and individual citizens; reports on public and official actions taken by Members of Congress; and discussions of proposed or pending legislation or governmental actions and the positions of the Members of Congress on, and arguments for or against, such matters;

(C) the usual and customary congressional questionnaire seeking public opinion on any law, pending or proposed legislation, public issue, or subject;

(D) mail matter dispatched by a Member of Congress between his Washington office and any congressional district offices, or between his district offices;

(E) mail matter directed by one Member of Congress to another Member of Congress or to representatives of the legislative bodies of State and local governments;

(F) mail matter expressing congratulations to a person who has achieved some public distinction;

(G) mail matter, including general mass mailings, which consist of Federal laws, Federal regulations, other Federal publications, publications purchased with Federal funds, or publications containing items of general information;

(H) mail matter which consists of voter registration or election information or assistance prepared and mailed in a nonpartisan manner;

(I) mail matter which constitutes or includes a biography or autobiography of any Member of, or Member-elect to, Congress or any biographical or autobiographical material concerning such Member or Member-elect or the spouse or other members of the family of such Member or Member-elect, and which is so mailed as a part of a Federal publication or in response to a specific request therefor and is not included for publicity purposes in a newsletter or other general mass mailing of the Member or Member-elect under the franking privilege or

(J) mail matter which contains a picture, sketch, or other likeness of any Member or Member-elect and which is so mailed as a part of a Federal publication or in response to a specific request therefor and, when contained in a newsletter or other general mass mailing of any Member or Member-elect, is not of such size, or does not occur with such frequency in the mail matter concerned, as to lead to the conclusion that the purpose of such picture, sketch, or likeness is to advertise the Member or Member-elect rather than to illustrate accompanying text.

(4) It is the intent of the Congress that the franking privilege under this section shall not permit, and may not be used for, the transmission through the mails as franked mail, of matter which in its nature is purely personal to the sender or to any other person and is unrelated to the official business, activities, and duties of the public officials covered by subsection (b)(1) of this section.
(5) It is the intent of the Congress that a Member of or Member-elect to Congress may not mail as franked mail—

(A) mail matter which constitutes or includes any article, account, sketch, narration, or other text laudatory and complimentary of any Member of, or Member-elect to, Congress on a purely personal or political basis rather than on the basis of performance of official duties as a Member or on the basis of activities as a Member-elect;

(B) mail matter which constitutes or includes—

(i) greetings from the spouse or other members of the family of such Member or Member-elect, unless it is a brief reference in otherwise frankable mail;

(ii) reports of how or when such Member or Member-elect, or the spouse or any other member of the family of such Member or Member-elect, spends time other than in the performance of, or in connection with, the legislative, representative, and other official functions of such Member or the activities of such Member-elect as a Member-elect; or

(iii) any card expressing holiday greetings from such Member or Member-elect; or

(C) mail matter which specifically solicits political support for the sender or any other person or any political party, or a vote or financial assistance for any candidate for any public office.

The House Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards and the Select Committee on Standards and Conduct of the Senate shall prescribe for their respective Houses such rules and regulations and shall take such other action, as the Commission or Committee considers necessary and proper for the Members and Members-elect to conform to the provisions of this clause and applicable rules and regulations. Such rules and regulations shall include, but not be limited to, provisions prescribing the time within which such mailings shall be mailed at or delivered to any postal facility to attain compliance with this clause and the time when such mailings shall be deemed to have been so mailed or delivered and such compliance attained.

(6)(A) It is the intent of Congress that a Member of, or Member-elect to, Congress may not mail any mass mailing as franked mail—

(i) if the mass mailing is mailed fewer than 60 days (or in the case of a Member of the House, fewer than 90 days) immediately before the date of any primary election or general election (whether regular, special, or runoff) in which the Member is a candidate for reelection; or

(ii) in the case of a Member of, or Member-elect to, the House who is a candidate for any other public office, if the mass mailing—

(I) is prepared for delivery within any portion of the jurisdiction of or the area covered by the public office which is outside the area constituting the congressional district from which the Member or Member-elect was elected; or

(II) is mailed fewer than 90 days immediately before the date of any primary election or general election (whether regular, special, or runoff) in which the Member or Member-elect is a candidate for any other public office.

(B) Any mass mailing which is mailed by the chairman of any organization referred to in the last sentence of section 3215 of this title which
relates to the normal and regular business of the organization may be mailed without regard to the provisions of this paragraph.

(C) No Member of the Senate may mail any mass mailing as franked mail if such mass mailing is mailed fewer than 60 days immediately before the date of any primary election or general election (whether regular, special, or runoff) for any national, State or local office in which such Member is a candidate for election.

(D) The Select Committee on Ethics of the Senate and the House Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards shall prescribe for their respective Houses rules and regulations, and shall take other action as the Committee or the Commission considers necessary and proper for Members and Members-elect to comply with the provisions of this paragraph and applicable rules and regulations. The rules and regulations shall include provisions prescribing the time within which mailings shall be mailed at or delivered to any postal facility and the time when the mailings shall be deemed to have been mailed or delivered to comply with the provisions of this paragraph.

(E) As used in this section, the term “mass mailing” means, with respect to a session of Congress, any mailing of newsletters or other pieces of mail with substantially identical content (whether such mail is deposited singly or in bulk, or at the same time or different times), totaling more than 500 pieces in that session, except that such term does not include any mailing—

(i) of matter in direct response to a communication from a person to whom the matter is mailed;

(ii) from a Member of Congress to other Members of Congress, or to Federal, State, or local government officials; or

(iii) of a news release to the communications media.

(F) For purposes of subparagraphs (A) and (C) if mail matter is of a type which is not customarily postmarked, the date on which such matter would have been postmarked if it were of a type customarily postmarked shall apply.

(7) A Member of the House of Representatives may not send any mass mailing outside the congressional district from which the Member was elected.

(b)(1) The Vice President, each Member of or Member-elect to Congress, the Secretary of the Senate, the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate, each of the elected officers of the House of Representatives (other than a Member of the House), the Legislative Counsels of the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Law Revision Counsel of the House of Representatives, and the Senate Legal Counsel may send, as franked mail, matter relating to their official business, activities, and duties, as intended by Congress to be mailable as franked mail under subsection (a) (2) and (3) of this section.

(2) If a vacancy occurs in the Office of the Secretary of the Senate, the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate, an elected officer of the House of Representatives (other than a Member of the House), the Legislative Counsel of the House of Representatives or the Senate, the Law Revision Counsel of the House of Representatives, or the Senate Legal Counsel any authorized person may exercise the franking privilege in the officer’s name during the period of the vacancy.

(3) The Vice President, each Member of Congress, the Secretary of the Senate, the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate, and each of the elected
officers of the House (other than a Member of the House), during the 90-day period immediately following the date on which they leave office, may send, as franked mail, matter on official business relating to the closing of their respective offices. The House Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards and the Select Committee on Standards and Conduct of the Senate shall prescribe for their respective Houses such rules and regulations, and shall take such other action as the Commission or Committee considers necessary and proper, to carry out the provisions of this paragraph.

(c) Franked mail may be in any form appropriate for mail matter, including, but not limited to, correspondence, newsletters, questionnaires, recordings, facsimiles, reprints, and reproductions. Franked mail shall not include matter which is intended by Congress to be non-mailable as franked mail under subsection (a) (4) and (5) of this section.

(d)(1) A Member of the Congress may mail franked mail with a simplified form of address for delivery within that area constituting the congressional district or State from which the Member was elected.

(2) A Member-elect to the Congress may mail franked mail with a simplified form of address for delivery within that area constituting the congressional district or State from which he was elected.

(3) A Delegate, Delegate-elect, Resident Commissioner, or Resident Commissioner-elect to the House of Representatives may mail franked mail with a simplified form of address for delivery within the area from which he was elected.

(4) Any franked mail which is mailed under this subsection shall be mailed at the equivalent rate of postage which assures that the mail will be sent by the most economical means practicable.

(5) The Senate Committee on Rules and Administration and the House Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards shall prescribe for their respective Houses rules and regulations governing any franked mail which is mailed under this subsection and shall by regulation limit the number of such mailings allowed under this subsection.

(6)(A) Any Member of, or Member-elect to, the House of Representatives entitled to make any mailing as franked mail under this subsection shall, before making any mailing, submit a sample or description of the mail matter involved to the House Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards for an advisory opinion as to whether the proposed mailing is in compliance with the provisions of this subsection.

(B) The Senate Select Committee on Ethics may require any Member of, or Member-elect to, the Senate entitled to make any mailings as franked mail under this subsection to submit a sample or description of the mail matter to the Committee for an advisory opinion as to whether the proposed mailing is in compliance with the provisions of this subsection.

(7) Franked mail mailed with a simplified form of address under this subsection—

(A) shall be prepared as directed by the Postal Service; and

(B) may be delivered to—

(i) each box holder or family on a rural or star route;

(ii) each post office box holder; and

(iii) each stop or box on a city carrier route.

1Name changed to the Select Committee on Ethics by S. Res. 4, 95–1, Feb. 4, 1977.
For the purposes of this subsection, a congressional district includes, in the case of a Representative at Large or Representative at Large-elect, the State from which he was elected.

(e) The frankability of mail matter shall be determined under the provisions of this section by the type and content of the mail sent, or to be sent.

(f) Any mass mailing which otherwise would be permitted to be mailed as franked mail under this section shall not be so mailed unless the cost of preparing and printing the mail matter is paid exclusively from funds appropriated by Congress, except that an otherwise frankable mass mailing may contain, as an enclosure or supplement, any public service material which is purely instructional or informational in nature, and which in content is frankable under this section.


§ 3211. Public documents.

The Vice President, Members of Congress, the Secretary of the Senate, the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate, each of the elected officers of the House of Representatives (other than a Member of the House) during the 90-day period immediately following the expiration of their respective terms of office, may send and receive as franked mail all public documents printed by order of Congress. (Aug. 12, 1970, Pub. L. 91–375, §2, 84 Stat. 754; Dec. 18, 1973, Pub. L. 93–191, §2, 87 Stat. 741; Oct. 26, 1981, Pub. L. 97–69, §5(a), 95 Stat. 1043.)

§ 3212. Congressional Record under frank of Members of Congress.

(a) Members of Congress may send the Congressional Record as franked mail.

(b) Members of Congress may send, as franked mail, any part, of, or a reprint of any part of, the Congressional Record, including speeches or reports contained therein, if such matter is mailable as franked mail under section 3210 of this title. (Aug. 12, 1970, Pub. L. 91–375, §2, 84 Stat. 754; Dec. 18, 1973, Pub. L. 93–191, §3, 87 Stat. 741.)
For extracts from Congressional Record furnished Members of Congress and the Resident Commissioner in envelopes ready for mailing, see section 907 of title 44, United States Code (Senate Manual section 657).

§ 3213. Seeds and reports from Department of Agriculture.

Seeds and agricultural reports emanating from the Department of Agriculture may be mailed—

(1) as penalty mail by the Secretary of Agriculture; and

(2) during the 90-day period immediately following the expiration of their terms of office, as franked mail by Members of Congress.


§ 3215. Lending or permitting use of frank unlawful.

A person entitled to use a frank may not lend it or permit its use by any committee, organization, or association, or permit its use by any person for the benefit or use of any committee, organization, or association. This section does not apply to any standing, select, special, or joint committee, or subcommittee thereof, or commission, of the Senate, House of Representatives, or Congress, composed of Members of Congress, or to the Democratic caucus or the Republican conference of the House of Representatives or of the Senate. (Aug. 12, 1970, Pub. L. 91–375, § 2, 84 Stat. 754; Dec. 18, 1973, Pub. L. 93–191, § 10, 87 Stat. 746.)

§ 3216. Reimbursement for franked mailings.

(a) The equivalent of—

(1) postage on, and fees and charges in connection with, mail matter sent through the mails—

(A) under the franking privilege (other than under section 3219 of this title), by the Vice President, Members of and Members-elect to Congress, the Secretary of the Senate, the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate, each of the elected officers of the House of Representatives (other than a Member of the House), the Legislative Counsels of the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Law Revision Counsel of the House of Representatives, and the Senate Legal Counsel; and

(B) by the survivors of a Member of Congress under section 3218 of this title; and

(2) those portions of fees and charges to be paid for handling and delivery by the Postal Service of Mailgrams considered as franked mail under section 3219 of this title,

shall be paid by appropriation for the official mail costs of the Senate and the House of Representatives for that purpose and then paid to the Postal Service as postal revenue. Except as to Mailgrams and except as provided by sections 733 and 907 of title 44, envelopes, wrappers, cards, or labels used to transmit franked mail shall bear, in the upper right-hand corner, the sender's signature, or a facsimile thereof.

(b) Postage on, and fees and charges in connection with, mail matter sent through the mails under section 3214 of this title shall be paid each fiscal year, out of any appropriation made for that purpose, to the Postal Service as postal revenue in an amount equivalent to the
postage, fees, and charges which would otherwise be payable on, or in connection with, such mail matter.

(c) Payment under subsection (a) or (b) of this section shall be deemed payment for all matter mailed under the frank and for all fees and charges due the Postal Service in connection therewith.

(d) Money collected for matter improperly mailed under the franking privilege shall be deposited as miscellaneous receipts in the general fund of the Treasury.

(e)(1) Not later than two weeks after the last day of each quarter of the fiscal year, or as soon as practicable thereafter, the Postmaster General shall send to the Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives, the House Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards, the Secretary of the Senate, and the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration a report which shall contain a tabulation of the estimated number of pieces and costs of franked mail, as defined in section 3201 of this title, in each mail classification sent through the mail for the quarter and for the preceding quarters in the fiscal year, together with separate tabulations of the number of pieces and costs of such mail sent by the House and by the Senate.


§ 3218. Franked mail for survivors of Members of Congress.

Upon the death of a Member of Congress during his term of office, the surviving spouse of such Member (or, if there is no surviving spouse, a member of the immediate family of the Member designated by the Secretary of the Senate or the Clerk of the House of Representatives, as appropriate, in accordance with rules and procedures established by the Secretary or the Clerk) may send, for a period not to exceed 180

496.2 § 3219. Mailgrams.

Any Mailgram sent by the Vice President, a Member or Member-elect to Congress, the Secretary of the Senate, the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate, an elected officer of the House of Representatives (other than a Member of the House), the Legislative Counsel of the House of Representatives or the Senate, the Law Revision Counsel of the House of Representatives, or the Senate Legal Counsel, and then delivered by the Postal Service, shall be considered as franked mail, subject to section 3216(a)(2) of this title, if such Mailgram contains matter of the kind authorized to be sent by that official as franked mail under section 3210 of this title. (Added Dec. 18, 1973, Pub. L. 93–191, §12, 87 Stat. 746; Oct. 26, 1978, Pub. L. 95–521, §714(c), 92 Stat. 1884; Sept. 24, 1982, Pub. L. 97–263, §1, 96 Stat. 1132.)

496.3 § 3220. Use of official mail in the location and recovery of missing children.

(a)(1) The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, after consultation with appropriate public and private agencies, shall prescribe general guidelines under which penalty mail may be used to assist in the location and recovery of missing children. The guidelines shall provide information relating to—

(A) the form and manner in which materials and information relating to missing children (such as biographical data and pictures, sketches, or other likenesses) may be included in penalty mail;

(B) appropriate sources from which such materials and information may be obtained;

(C) the procedures by which such materials and information may be obtained; and

(D) any other matter which the Office considers appropriate.

(2) Each executive department and independent establishment of the Government of the United States shall prescribe regulations under which penalty mail sent by such department or establishment may be used in conformance with the guidelines prescribed under paragraph (1).

(b) The Senate Committee on Rules and Administration and the House Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards shall prescribe for their respective Houses rules and regulations, and shall take such other action as the Committee or Commission considers necessary and proper, in order that purposes similar to those of subsection (a) may, in the discretion of the congressional official or office concerned, be carried out by the use of franked mail sent by such official or office.

DOMESTIC MAIL MANUAL PROVISIONS RELATING TO THE CONGRESSIONAL FRANKING PRIVILEGE

Part E050—Official Mail (Franked)

1.0 Basic Information

1.1 Members of Congress. Official mail of Members of Congress is sent without prepayment of postage and bears instead a written or printed facsimile signature, or a specified marking. Exhibit 1.1 shows what is accepted under frank and who is authorized its use.

1.2 Former President and Spouse. Any former President of the United States and any surviving spouse of a former President may send non-political mail as franked mail if it bears the sender’s written or facsimile signature and the words “Postage and Fees Paid” in the upper right corner of the address side.

1.3 Surviving Spouse of Member of Congress. When a Member of Congress dies during the term of office, the Member’s surviving spouse may send correspondence relating to the death without prepayment of postage, for a period not to exceed 180 days after the death of the Member. The mail must bear the sender’s written or facsimile signature in the upper right corner of the address side. If there is no surviving spouse, this privilege may be exercised by an immediate family member of the deceased Member of Congress designated by the Secretary of the Senate or the Clerk of the House of Representatives, as appropriate.

1.4 Use. A person entitled to use franked mail may not lend this frank or permit its use by any committee, organization, association, or other person. This restriction does not apply to a committee of the Congress.

1.5 Criteria. Franked mail must be addressed to the recipient by name, except under A040 and must meet the mailability criteria in C010, C020, and C030, and the physical standards for the class of mail being used.\(^1\)

1.6 Handling. Franked mail is entitled to all special services for which it is properly endorsed, and is handled and forwarded as ordinary mail, except that after delivery to the addressee, it may not be remailed.

1.7 Package to One Addressee. A person entitled to use franked mail may send a package of franked mail to one addressee, who may open the package and on behalf of such person address the franked articles and mail them.

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\(^1\)Part A040 describes alternative addressing formats. Part C010 gives general mailability standards (such as requisite dimensions, packaging, and containers). Part C020 describes articles and substances prohibited because they may be injurious to life, health or property (such as liquor or firearms). Part C030 refers to restricted forms of printed materials (such as deceptive solicitations or sexually oriented advertisements).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User entitled</th>
<th>Matter permitted</th>
<th>Marking required</th>
<th>Period authorized</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vice President of the United States, Members of Congress, Resident Commissioners, Secretary of the Senate, Sergeant at Arms of the Senate, and each elected officer of the House of Representatives</td>
<td>Public documents printed by order of Congress</td>
<td>Public Document and the letters U.S.S. or M.C. must appear on address side</td>
<td>During 90 days immediately after expiration of term of office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of Congress and Resident Commissioners</td>
<td>Congressional Record or any part of it (including reprints of any part, speech, or report contained in it) if for official business, activities, or duties</td>
<td>Congressional Record or Part of Congressional Record and U.S.S. or M.C. must appear on the address side</td>
<td>During term of office only</td>
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<td>Members of Congress</td>
<td>Seed and agricultural reports from Department of Agriculture</td>
<td>Signature and title (written or printed facsimile) of person entitled to frank must appear on address side</td>
<td>During 90 days immediately after expiration of term of office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President-elect</td>
<td>Official correspondence including Mailgrams</td>
<td>Mailgrams may be sent in standard Mailgram envelopes. For other correspondence, signature and title (written or printed facsimile) of person entitled to frank must appear on address side</td>
<td>During term of office only. When position of Secretary, Sergeant at Arms, elected officer, Legislative Counsel, Law Revision Counsel, or Senate Legal Counsel is vacant, privileges may be exercised in officer’s name by authorized persons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Former Vice President, each former Member of Congress, former Secretary of the Senate, former Sergeant at Arms of the Senate, each former elected officer of the House of Representatives, and each former Delegate or Resident Commissioner</td>
<td>Matter on official business about closing of offices</td>
<td>Signature and title (written or printed facsimile) of Vice President-elect must appear on address side</td>
<td>Until assumption of duties as Vice President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Speakers of the House</td>
<td>Public documents, seeds, and agricultural reports from Department of Agriculture, official correspondence including Mailgrams</td>
<td>Signature and title (written or printed facsimile) of former Speaker, or Mailgram or public document marking as shown above, must appear on address side</td>
<td>For as long as the former Speaker determines necessary</td>
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