

Public Service Center Building  
240 N. Stone Ave., First floor  
Tucson, AZ 85701

Document Recording: (520) 724-4350  
Voter Registration: (520) 724-4330



ADDENDUM MATERIAL

DATE 2/17/26

ITEM NO. ADD 3

Mailing Address:  
PO Box 3145  
Tucson, AZ 85702-3145

Social: @PimaRecorder  
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Gabriella Cázares-Kelly, Recorder

## One-envelope ballot-return solution aims to reduce voter confusion

Since taking office in 2021, my staff and I have worked very hard to answer questions voters have about their voting materials. We wanted the designs to be intuitive and easy to understand.

We recently combined two separate envelopes into one. The decision was made over a two-year period in consultation with our colleagues across the state. The Ballot Affidavit Return Envelope has the voter's basic information, a legal statement that requires a signature and the option for the voter to include their phone number, and now also has return information. We also introduced 24/7 secure Ballot Drop Boxes in conjunction with this change. Twenty-five percent of all ballots dropped off by voters have been deposited in our drop boxes.

Voters who have received a Mail Ballot for the Congressional District 7 Special Primary Election are the first to experience this change.

Why did we make the change?

One reason was to reduce voter confusion. In addition to the time-consuming process of separating a Ballot Affidavit from a return envelope, the two envelopes are confusing. Voters often send ballots back without the legally required Ballot Affidavit, with no name or return address. This leaves us with a ballot without a voter to attribute it to and no way for us to inform the voter of their mistake. We call these "naked ballots," and by law, they must be disqualified. During the 2024 Presidential General Election, we received 765 naked ballots. Of that total, we were able to contact 584 voters, who were then able to correct their mistake by voting a new ballot, but 181 voters could not be identified, and their ballots were disqualified.

Voters who place two ballots into a single Affidavit Envelope can also result in ballot disqualification. Our staff has no way of knowing which ballot belongs to the voter who signed the affidavit. We contact the voter and inform them that we cannot process the ballots. If there's time, we can send new ballots to both voters. But if we don't discover the mistake until after Election Day, there's no option for the voter.

There are also "household mix-ups" when multiple voters in a household sign the wrong Ballot Affidavit Envelopes. If both Affidavit Envelopes are sent to us, this can be resolved. Pima County's largest household mix-up involved six family members mistakenly signing the Ballot Affidavit of another household member. That family would have received 12 envelopes: six affidavits and six returns. More envelopes can mean more mistakes.

Another reason for the change was in response to growing public demand to process ballots faster. A big part of the delay under the old system was needing two-person bi-partisan teams just to manually separate the two envelopes before ballots could be signature verified and turned over to the Elections

FEB 17 2 58 PM '26 Pima County Clerk of SO

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Department for tabulation. The reporting of Arizona's election results has been under severe scrutiny, not only within the state but also nationally. This rhetoric has fueled conspiracy theories and furthered the distrust of elections. The public's fixation over "delayed" results raised safety concerns for election officials, leading to changes in our security procedures.

The perception of delays also resulted in proposals to the Arizona State Legislature to reduce the time allowed for returning Mail Ballots and eliminate Early Voting. Of the 723,000 registered voters in Pima County, nearly 500,000 are on the Active Early Voting List and automatically get their ballots mailed to them. The new system eliminates the need for more than half a million envelopes, saving costs on materials, printing and postage. With longer and longer ballots, including the two-page ballot in the 2024 Presidential Election cycle, more voters are choosing to vote by mail. Voters need more time with their ballots.

We considered a "flap design" to conceal voters' signatures and phone numbers, consulting with other Arizona counties already using it. They reported that the flaps tear easily during transit, often causing jams in ballot processing equipment. Many voters tape the flaps closed using duct or packing tape making removal difficult. Each flap must then be cut away by hand, increasing processing time, risk of injury and potential damage to the affidavit or ballot.

Arizona already uses Ballot Affidavit Return Envelopes with visible signatures, a process that nearly 3.8 million voters will follow in 2026. We work closely with the U.S. Postal Service to ensure all election mail is handled with privacy, respect and professionalism. Tampering with mail is a federal crime, and "Official Election Mail" receives added protections. Voters uncomfortable mailing their ballots can drop them off at a Voting Site or secure Ballot Drop Box. State law also allows certain individuals to assist with ballot return.

Pima County voters have embraced the change, and the number of ballots returned has been what we expected for a special election. For more information, visit [recorder.pima.gov](https://recorder.pima.gov) or call our Voter Line at (520) 724-4330.

**Gabriella Cázares-Kelly,**  
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