



State-funded Postage

What is State-funded Postage?

Proposal 2022-2 provides each voter the right to state-funded postage to return their absent voter ballot application and absent voter ballot. Once it takes effect, Public Act 82 of 2023 (Senate Bill 370), will further expand that to include the return of the Presidential Primary party selection form and return of signature cure materials.

To facilitate implementation, the Bureau of Elections worked with the United States Postal Service to establish a permit process by which each municipal jurisdiction will be able to print postage for applications and ballot envelopes with a permit that will be billed to the state. Establishment of this permit took several months, as separate billing details had to be established for each of the 1,520 municipal jurisdictions in the state. Permits were established based on mailing address information in the Qualified Voter File as of February 2023. Any change to the mailing address for a municipal jurisdiction requires a new permit to be established.

How was the permit established?

First, the State of Michigan established a new master Business Reply Mail (BRM) permit, permit #185. This was not an existing permit, and any permit established previously by the state should not be utilized for this process. Once the master permit was established, a sub-account was created for each jurisdiction to ensure all costs incurred were billed directly to the master permit (the state). On the back end, each jurisdiction has a cost center; however, this does not impact the jurisdiction and is needed for USPS billing purposes. Once the sub-accounts were established, USPS then identified the current mailing address for each jurisdiction and assigned a new business reply zip code made up of the original 5-digit zip code and unique set of 4 digits applied to mail sent using the master permit. This means that every jurisdiction has the new zip code as well as a pre-existing mailing address with a zip + 4 that they will use for all other mail that does not qualify for state-funded postage. The zip + 4 for the state-established permit will begin with a 9 while all the other details of the mailing address are the same.

For example:

Your existing permit before Prop 22-2 may have been:



1234 Oscar Lane SE
Marlette, MI 48911 – **4451**

This permit is still valid and can be used; however, to have state funded postage covered, you must use the new permit established by the state:

1234 Oscar Lane SE
Marlette, MI 48911-**9900**

The state-funded permit is established based on the mailing address of your jurisdiction and not the physical location of your jurisdiction's office. If your mailing address changes, a new permit must be established. This can be done by notifying the Bureau of this change by emailing MDOS-BOEOperations@Michigan.gov, Subject Line: *Permit Correction Needed*. A new clerk does not impact the permit as long as the mailing address remains the same. It is also recommended that a business address or PO BOX be used for this permit whenever possible.

How do I utilize the State-funded permit?

The permit information established by USPS must be turned into artwork, approved by a mail design analyst, and printed on a return envelope. This is not information that can be printed from QVF onto a stamp or affixed to existing envelope stock. The permit should be printed by a professional that can meet all the requirements of USPS to ensure the mail piece is machinable and billable to the master permit account. For a vendor to print using your permit, they must have:

- ✓ Your established permit mailing address
 - The mailing address including the zip + 4 beginning with a 9
- ✓ A mailer ID
 - 903419785 – This number is standard; however, if you jurisdiction wants an individualized mail tracker, you can work with your vendor to establish a unique number.
- ✓ The master permit number and location
 - 185 – Lansing MI – This will not be the location of your jurisdiction because the master account is established and maintained in Lansing.
- ✓ The size of your mail pieces
 - This will vary depending on what size mail you send out.



- ✓ Artwork submitted and approved by a USPS Mail Design Analyst
 - If your vendor cannot create artwork for you but can print it onto your envelope, contact the Bureau at MDOS-BOEOperations@Michigan.gov to have artwork created via USPS. This is typically a longer process than using vendor-created artwork.

If there are any issues with any of the 5 elements above, contact the Bureau of Elections for resolution. Once the permit is printed on the mail piece, it can go in the mail. A complete business reply piece will look similar to Figure 1:

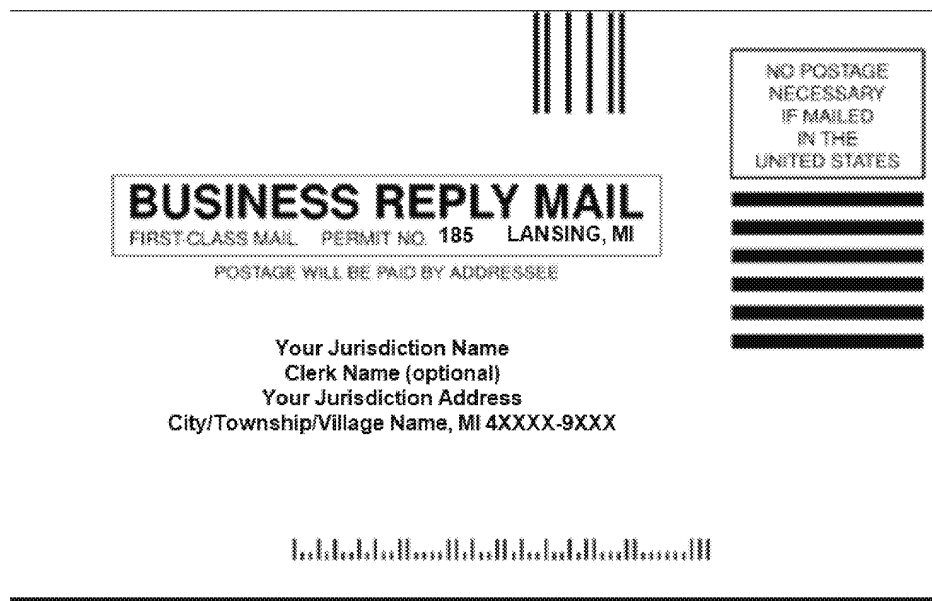


Figure 1 – Business Reply Example

When using a permit, USPS will send an invoice (see Figure 2 below) to your jurisdiction indicating the postage cost incurred, the postage amount due and that the above amount has been deducted from your advance deposit account. The advance deposit account is the master account established by the State of Michigan. Your jurisdiction should not incur actual charges from this mailing. If you do find that your account has been charged, please email the invoice and proof of the debit from your account to MDOS-BOEOperations@Michigan.gov. You can keep these invoices for your records if you wish, however, no action is required and you will continue to receive them for the life of the permit.



BRM Invoice Type: Basic BRM
Mailing Date: 09/15/2023

Final
TRANS# 2023166032944438M

Letter Prices						
Line Seq#	Description	Weight Not Over (Ounces)	Number of Pieces	Postage per Piece	Per Piece Handling Charge	Postage
A1	Postcards	0	0	0.450	1.000	0.000
A2	1 oz.	1	1	0.630	1.000	17.930
A3	2 oz.	2	0	0.870	1.000	0.000
A4	3 oz.	3	0	1.110	1.000	0.000
A5	3.5 oz.	3.5	0	1.350	1.000	0.000
A6	Nonmachinable Surcharge	3.5	0	0.400	0.000	0.000

Total cost of mailings

Seq#	Description	Number of Pieces	Postage per Piece	Per Piece Handling Charge	Postage
A128	Postage Due	0	0.000	0.000	0.000

Postage due from your jurisdiction
Total Due: \$17.93

Customer Reference ID: _____

The above amount has been deducted from your advance deposit account.
Clerk Initials: KNW

Confirmation money was debit from master account

Figure 2 - BRM Invoice

Where can I find my permit information?

The Bureau of Elections maintains the master reference of all established permits for each jurisdiction. This information is regularly distributed to all known print vendors utilized by jurisdictions via secure file transfer when new information is updated. The Bureau also sent all current permit information to county clerks to distribute to their jurisdictions in July 2023. If any corrections were needed, BOE submitted those changes and sent the updated information back to the jurisdiction. If you do not know your permit information, email MDOS-BOEOperations@Michigan.gov and a copy of the information will be provided.

How do I submit a reimbursement?

Jurisdictions should transition to the state-funded permit as soon as possible; however, a reimbursement claim can be submitted on postage paid for any mail covered under Proposal 22-2 and Public Act 82 of 2023 (Senate Bill 370) for all elections in 2023 and 2024 as clerks utilize their existing stock, excluding the Presidential Primary. After 2024, all clerks should have transitioned to the state-



funded permit, as there is no guarantee the reimbursement program for postage will be active and reimbursement will be awarded.

1. Complete the Postage Reimbursement form. You can access this form [here](#) or by logging into eLearning and entering "Postage" in the search bar.
 - a. Fields required:
 - i. *Date of Election* – Election Date you are submitting claim for. e.g. August 2, 2023 or November 7, 2023
 - ii. *Name of county, name of jurisdiction, name of local clerk, phone number and email*
 - iii. *Number of AV ballot applications sent with stamps or postage meter to be reimbursed, number of AV ballots sent with stamps or postage meter to be reimbursed, total cost*
 - iv. *Sigma vendor customer #, vendor name, address, city, state and zip.* This information is not accessible to the Bureau staff, so please ensure this information is documented. The address listed in SIGMA is the address the reimbursement will be issued to. Ensure this address is accurate. The state does not issue to the address listed in Qualified Voter File.
 - v. *Signature of clerk, date*
2. Documents supporting your reimbursement claim. You can submit documents that meet the criteria is Option 1 OR Option 2.
 - a. Option 1: (When receipts are available, no other proof of payment is required)
 - i. The official reimbursement claim form
 - ii. Receipt for purchase. Receipt MUST include:
 1. Name of vendor
 2. Transaction date (when you paid)
 3. Detailed description of goods or services (postage, stamps, etc.)
 4. Amount
 5. Form of payment (Credit card, cash, etc)
 - b. Option 2: (If receipts are NOT available, proof of payment is required)
 - i. The official reimbursement claim form
 - ii. Copy of invoices
 - iii. Proof of payment
 1. A copy of the front and back of a cancelled check
 2. A bank statement, or
 3. A credit statement showing payment along with proof of payment for the credit card itself in the form of check or bank statement



For any proof of payment, redact the bank routing and account numbers printed on the bottom of the check, leaving any numbers in the lower right corner visible. Check the endorsement side of the check and redact any legible numbers.

Metered postage run through ACH is reimbursement as long as the payment is clearly showing on statement.

3. Submit these documents to the Bureau of Elections. Any applications that are incomplete are subject to longer processing times and will require follow up. If the Bureau is unable to read and/or a document submitted does not meet the criteria, we will follow up.
 - a. Via Email
 - i. Email – BOEReimbursement@Michigan.gov
 - ii. Subject Line – Postage: [County name] – [Jurisdiction name]
[Month Year]
 - iii. Attachment(s) – All required documents listed above
 - b. Via Mail
 - i. Michigan Department of State
Bureau of Elections
ATTN: Reimbursements
PO Box 20126
Lansing, Michigan 48901-0726
 - c. Via Fax
 - i. 517-335-3235
4. Once documentation is verified by the Bureau, it is submitted to our Finance department for payment. Once payment is finalized, payment is issued to the address listed within SIGMA.

Frequently Asked Questions

- *How does the permit interact with international mail?*

Return postage for international mail is not covered under this permit. USPS covers the return of UOACAVA mail through an existing process. Each jurisdiction should work with their vendor to create artwork referenced in 8.8.5 for an envelope and 8.8.6 for a postcard in [this USPS guide](#). Vendors



should use a STID of 780.

Exhibit 8.8.5 Ballot Mail Formats—Envelope

Exhibit 8.8.6 Balloting Material Formats—Postcard

- *Would we reimburse if a voter doesn't have time to put it in the regular international mail, but sent it back expedited somehow?*
We would reimburse for that. If the returned document indicates the state-funded permit number, the permit should cover the cost automatically. If the permit number is not indicated, we should be able to reimburse once we receive the invoice, proof of payment, and any other necessary documents.
- *Do clerks get an inbox notice or a regular report flagging whenever a clerk mailing address is updated in Clerk Contacts?*
No. However, if a clerk changes a mailing address, they should notify the Bureau of Elections (via MDOS-BOEOperations@Michigan.gov) as soon possible as this may impact their state-funded permit.
- *Where is the postage reimbursement form?* The [Postage Reimbursement Form](#) is located in eLearning. There is only one form; it is not specific to an election.
- *If a voter prints a form online and mails that to us, do we need to reimburse for their postage?* No, prepaid postage is only included when returning materials mailed from an election official. If a voter initiates the mailing, they are responsible for the postage incurred.
- *Does reimbursement cover the cost of printing new envelopes?* No, reimbursement and prepaid postage only covers the cost of the postage incurred for the return of the AV ballot or AV ballot application. The cost to print and acquire envelope stock is the jurisdiction's financial responsibility.
- *My local post office won't release my mail.* Contact the Bureau of Elections ASAP via MDOS-BOEOperations@Michigan.gov



- *Did the state establish business reply permits at the county level?* No. The State established business reply permits for all local jurisdictions only. Any counties that are doing mailings on behalf of their jurisdiction should use the local jurisdictions business reply permit information. If the county is handling the return of ballots or ballot applications on behalf of the local jurisdiction for any reason, the county should use their county's existing mailing information and submit a reimbursement request to the Bureau of Elections.
- *I received a postage due invoice?* Usage of the state funded business reply permit will generate an invoice to each jurisdiction to show the postage costs that are charged to the state. You can keep these for your records, or you can discard. If you find that your account is actually charged and not the state, email MDOS-BOEOperations@Michigan.gov, Subject Line: Permit Billed Incorrectly, as soon as possible with a copy of the USPS invoice.