

PUBLIC INTEREST

— LEGAL FOUNDATION —

2020: Biden Won Georgia by 11K Votes. 27K Mail Ballots Bounced Off Bad Addresses.

Another 217K Mail Ballots Are Unaccounted

SEPTEMBER 2021 – While most places broke records with total amounts of ballots in the mail, Georgia’s 2020 count was slightly less than what it circulated in 2012. Yet in 2020, the Peach State broke records for undeliverable and unaccounted-for mail ballots. The state’s recent close election results make clear the importance of voter roll list maintenance operations. **One of the most consequential stories to come out of Georgia is how the number of mail ballots directed to faulty addresses (returned undeliverable) was greater than the ultimate difference between winning and losing 16 Electoral College votes.** Like in Wisconsin and other states, political candidates would be wise to factor in the sloppiness of mail balloting when forecasting their voter turnout needs for victory. Georgia’s recently passed election integrity reforms are a positive step forward in addressing the multitude of mail ballot risks, even if the Biden DOJ is trying to shut them down in court.

2016 Election - GA

-236,925 ballots sent
-1,622 undeliverable
 -13,677 rejected
 -21,976 “unknown”

2020 Election - GA

-1.7 million ballots sent
-27,287 undeliverable
 -4,804 rejected
 -217,677 “unknown”

Election	Undeliverable + Unknowns	Loser	L Votes	Winner	W Votes	Difference
2012	544	Obama	1,761,761	Romney	2,070,221	308,460
2014	2,478	Nunn	1,154,388	Perdue	1,355,392	201,004
2016	23,598	Clinton	1,837,300	Trump	2,068,623	231,323
2018	38,577	Abrams	1,923,685	Kemp	1,978,408	54,723
2020	244,964	Trump	2,461,854	Biden	2,473,633	11,779

Just What Does ‘Unknown’ Mean in General and for Georgia?

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission asks local officials how many ballots were not returned as voted, were undeliverable, or were otherwise “unable to be tracked.” The USPS Inspector General most recently reported that only 13 percent of mail ballots in the 2018 General Election used the official tracking system. This means a wide variety of things that can happen to a ballot in the “unknown” column. A ballot can be mis-delivered. It can be thrown out with your unpaid bills. It can be left on the floor of apartment mail rooms (like seen in Nevada in 2020). Election officials simply do not know what happened. Unknown ballots are one of the greatest weaknesses in the American electoral system. The unknown ballots that fail to reach their intended destinations are naturally susceptible to mischief if voter

identification safeguards are not present. If the Biden DOJ is ultimately successful in blocking the state's recent ID reforms, the problems experienced in 2020 can only get worse if the current volume of absentee ballots holds in future contests.

PILF President J. Christian Adams

“Now you see why Georgia lawmakers passed mail ballot integrity laws. You can't ‘vote from home’ with confidence when you learn how many mail ballots failed. The fact that the Biden Justice Department is committed to interrupting Georgia's integrity law demonstrates the level to which Washington bureaucrats will sink to preserve system weaknesses.”

Sources & Notes

U.S. Election Assistance Commission; Election Administration and Voting Surveys for 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020

USPS Inspector General; Processing Readiness of Election and Political Mail During the 2020 General Elections (August 31, 2020)

Certified 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 General Election Results for Georgia via CNN (2021)

Las Vegas Review Journal; Primary underway, but argument over mail election continues (May 19, 2020)

U.S. v. Georgia, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia (1:21-cv-02575)

*The EAC data is not without its challenges. First, the EAC has a history making subtle edits to its data well after publication and without conspicuous editorial notes or changelogs. The version relied upon for this research brief, “2020_EAVS_for_Public_Release[1],” shows in its file metadata to have been created on August 16, 2021. Second, after publication, some voter registration jurisdictions have made changes to the EAC data by changing their responses to the federal survey that were hardly obvious to regular observers (see *Judicial Watch v. Pennsylvania*, No. 1:20-CV-708, 2021 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 42496, at *13-15 (M.D. Pa. Mar. 8, 2021)). Finally, national totals reflected in this brief are subject to change with the EAC. As of publication, more than 680 jurisdictions have not responded to the survey question related to undeliverable ballots; 400 jurisdictions have not provided “status unknown,” data, and 120 did not provide ballot-rejection numbers. Georgia's historical EAC record shows gaps in reporting “unknown” mail ballots in 2012.*