Preliminary Report

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Were as many as 300,000 Florida voters disenfranchised in the 2026 Election by Problems with the U.S. Postal Service? An Investigation is needed

The extraordinary intervention of one Florida Supervisor of Elections has revealed that tens of thousands of vote-by-mail ballots that were requested by voters but not returned likely resulted from unusually long delivery delays by the U.S. Postal Service. Further, these problems with postal service delays disproportionately disenfranchised registered Democrats who relied heavy on this voting method in the 2026 General Election. Consequently, the delivery delays may have affected the outcome of at least three close Congressional races in the 2026 General Election.

Shortly before Election Day, Joe Scott, Supervisor of Elections in Broward County, FL, began receiving numerous complaints from Broward voters that their mail ballots were taking 10-12 days to be delivered, even when the ballot was mailed from a location within county! Scott went to local media and the *New York Times* to advise voters in his county to hand-deliver their ballots rather than mail them. Apparently as a result of these warnings, Broward County ended up with the lowest rate of unreturned ballots among the state's largest counties, just 8,717 unreturned vote-by-mail ballots for a nonreturn rate of 5.31%. Neighboring Miami-Dade County's nonreturn rate was vastly higher. Of the 252,178 vote-by-mail ballots requested by Miami-Dade voters, 55,346 ballots were unreturned, or 21.94%--more than 4 times the nonreturn rate in neighboring Broward.

The striking disparity in return rates for vote-by-mail ballots between these neighboring South Florida counties raises questions about whether tens of thousands of Florida voters were disenfranchised by extraordinary delays in mail delivery by the U.S. Postal service. Why were such a high percentage of Miami-Dade's requested mail ballots unreturned when Broward, its neighbor immediately to the north, had such a dramatically lower rate of nonreturns? The huge difference demands investigation, especially since the problem seems to have occurred statewide and had a disparate impact on Democratic voters.

Although Miami-Dade had the highest rate of unreturned mail ballots in the state, all of Florida's largest counties had unacceptably high percentages of unreturned mail ballots. Statewide, Florida had nearly 400,000 unreturned ballots, an extraordinary number considering that voters had to specifically request a vote-by-mail ballot every two years. It seems likely that most of those who requested vote-by-mail ballots intended to vote and have their votes counted. This huge number of unreturned ballots disproportionately affected Democrats because Democratic voters relied heavily on voting by mail in the 2026 General Election. In contrast, Republican voters had been advised by the Trump Administration to refrain from using vote by mail. The following chart lists the state's 20 largest counties and their percent of unreturned ballots in descending order. Note the tremendous difference between the high rate of unreturned ballots in the first 19 counties listed and Broward County's low rate at the end.

Number of returned and unreturned vote-by-mail ballots in Florida's 20 largest counties, in descending order of percentage unreturned. Note Broward County's low percentage at end.

County	Voted by mail	Unreturned	Status subtotal	Unreturned share
Miami-Dade	**196,887**	**55,291**	**252,178**	**21.93%**
Orange	104,780	22,457	127,237	17.65%
Palm Beach	161,067	34,398	195,465	17.60%
Duval	41,011	8,719	49,730	17.53%
Brevard	63,610	13,543	77,153	17.55%
St. Johns	23,108	4,711	27,819	16.93%
Volusia	64,073	12,489	76,562	16.31%
Polk	56,841	10,929	67,770	16.13%
Hillsborough	144,279	26,690	170,969	15.61%
Seminole	42,981	7,957	50,938	15.62%
Pinellas	184,517	32,383	216,900	14.93%
Pasco	52,438	9,028	61,466	14.69%
St. Lucie	35,074	5,916	40,990	14.43%
Lake	30,639	5,186	35,825	14.48%
Manatee	52,002	8,375	60,377	13.87%
Sarasota	78,628	11,985	90,613	13.23%
Collier	53,398	8,024	61,422	13.06%
Lee	127,218	18,164	145,382	12.49%
Marion	31,095	4,029	35,124	11.47%
Broward	**155,323**	**8,716**	**164,039**	**5.31%**
Top 20 total	**1,698,969**	**308,990**	**2,007,959**	**15.39%**
Statewide	**2,080,734**	**380,058**	**2,460,792**	**15.44%**

The almost 400,000 unreturned ballots statewide included 151,955 unreturned Democratic ballots, compared to 125,903 unreturned Republican ballots. This is a difference of just 26,052 unreturned ballots statewide, so both Democratic and Republican voters were potentially disenfranchised by problems with ballot return. However, since mail voting was the primary method of voting for Democrats, unreturned ballots would have had a disproportionate effect on election results in Democratic-leaning counties such as Miami-Dade. (Statewide, there were also 90,518 unreturned ballots with no party affiliation (NPA) and 11,682 "other.")

The only Congressional District contests we have found so far that may have been or were likely affected by unreturned ballots are Congressional Districts 26, 27 and 7, analyzed on Pages 4, 5, and 6 of this report. We will continue to review election data to determine whether other Florida contests might also have been affected.

Statewide Totals

2026 General Election **Election Date - 11/03/2026**

Stats Type	Republican	Democrat	Other	NPA	Total
Vote-by-Mail Provided (Not Yet Returned)	125,903	151,955	11,682	90,518	380,058
Voted Vote-by-Mail	725,141	885,902	51,834	417,857	2,080,734
Voted Early	1,497,468	1,210,445	90,996	668,397	3,467,306

These Were Voters Who Had Specifically Requested Mail Ballots

One of the most important aspects of Florida's vote-by-mail system is that ballots are NOT mailed automatically to every registered voter, but only to those who specifically request them. Florida Statute 101.62, which became effective in the 2024 election cycle, states that voters must specifically request vote-by-mail ballots. Each request remains effective through the end of the next regularly scheduled general-election year.

That means the unreturned ballots in Miami-Dade had been specifically requested by 55,346 voters who had taken an affirmative step to receive a mail ballot but whose ballots were not received in time to be counted. Clearly, most were voters who wanted to vote. The critical question is this: Were tens of thousands of Floridians who intended to vote prevented from doing so because of unusual delivery delays with the U.S. postal service? What makes this even more compelling is the Trump Administration's attempts prior to the election to have the Postal Service involved in determining if some vote-by-mail ballots should not be delivered to intended recipients.

The high percentage of unreturned ballots in Miami-Dade County likely hurt Democratic Congressional candidates

The voted and unreturned Vote-by-Mail records linked at the end of this report show that, of the 55,291 unreturned VBM ballots in Miami-Dade County, 22,144 unreturned were Democratic; 15,565 unreturned were Republican; 16,313 unreturned were No Party Affiliation (NPA), and 1,269 were "other." Although it cannot be certain that all Democrats voted for Democratic candidates and all Republicans voted for Republicans, it is very likely that unreturned VBM ballots

would have had a disproportionate, negative effect on the vote totals for Democratic candidates, depending on where the voters live and which Congressional Districts they are in. With those congressional races that were decided by narrow margins, even a relatively small number of additional votes could have made a difference. The consequences could have been particularly important in Florida's 27th, 26th, and 7th Congressional Districts, although we have not analyzed all congressional races in the state as of the date of this preliminary report.

Congressional District 27

In Congressional District 27, which is contained entirely within Miami-Dade County, Democratic candidate Eliott Rodriguez conceded after a machine recount indicated that he had lost by 1,086 votes. However, Rodriguez won by a substantial margin in mail voting, receiving 41,161 mail-in votes versus just 27,186 mail-in votes for Republican Maria Elvira Salazar, a difference of 13,975 votes in favor of Rodriguez. Thus, it is likely that the unreturned ballots would have boosted his totals sufficiently to change the results of this election, or at the very least to a narrower margin that would have required a hand recount rather than a machine recount,

Miami-Dade County*[1] *CD 27

Choice	Election Day	Early Votes	Vote By Mail	Total Votes	Percentage
REP Maria Elvira Salazar (REP)	38,566	58,776	27,186	124,528	50.22%
DEM Eliott Rodriguez (DEM)	30,990	51,287	41,161	123,438	49.78%

Congressional District 26

In Congressional District 26, which encompasses portions of Broward and Miami-Dade counties, Democratic candidate Nicole Locklin's published totals showed her losing to Republican incumbent Mario Diaz-Balart by just 1,704 votes. While Locklin won easily in Broward County, where the number of unreturned Democratic vote by mail was lower, she was shown as losing in Miami-Dade County, which had much higher numbers of unreturned Democratic vote-by-mail ballots. A question remains whether Locklin might have gained enough votes in Miami-Dade County to change election results if a greater percentage of mai ballots had been delivered on time.

CD 26 - Broward County results

Choice	Election Day	Early Votes	Vote By Mail	Provisional	Total Votes	Percentage
REP Mario Diaz-Balart (REP)	14,976	20,144	7,329	–	42,451	38.52%
DEM Nicole Locklin (DEM)	15,941	32,549	18,080	–	66,580	60.42%
NPA Deborah Ann Meidinger Hosey (NPA)	436	455	269	–	1,161	1.05%

[1] The Miami-Dade totals in this graph for the Congressional District 27 race are prior to the recount, which gained Rodriguez an additional 4 votes.

CD 26 - Miami-Dade County results

Choice	Election Day	Early Votes	Vote By Mail	Total Votes	Percentage
Mario Diaz-Balart (REP)	25,126	32,806	14,198	72,130	60.28%
Nicole Locklin (DEM)	14,029	18,304	13,998	46,331	38.72%
Deborah Ann Meidinger Hosey (NPA)	448	394	349	1,191	1.00%

Congressional District 7

Congressional District 7 encompasses all of Seminole County, which reported 7,057 unreturned mail ballots, and the southern portion of Volusia County, which reported 12,501 unreturned mail ballots for the whole county. The total for both counties equals 19,558 unreturned ballots, again from voters who had specially requested a ballot and therefore, logically, wanted to vote.

Republican Ryan Elijah garnered 161,300 votes (49.71%) to defeat Democrat Bale Dalton by 1,631 votes. Dalton received 159,669 (49.21%) votes. Dalton, however, won heavily in the vote-by-mail category, with a total of 27,344 mail votes to Elijah's 14,892 mail votes. How many more votes might Dalton have received if Seminole's rate of unreturned ballots had been 5.34% like Broward County, instead of Seminole's 15.62%? Also, we know that Seminole County's supervisor of elections reported long delays with the delivery of vote-by-mail ballots to voters and the return of voters' ballots to the elections office.

CD 7 - Seminole County results

Choice	Election Day	Early Votes	Vote By Mail	Provisional	Total Votes	Percentage
REP Ryan Elijah (REP)	33,455	38,744	14,892	0	87,091	44.69%
DEM Bale Dalton (DEM)	28,563	49,916	27,344	0	105,823	54.30%
LPF Christopher Dennison (LPF)	937	655	362	0	1,954	1.00%

Volusia County has far more registered Republicans than Democrats. So it is no surprise that Dalton lost there but he still received 3,861 more vote-by-mail votes than Elijah did in Volusia County. How many more mail votes might Dalton have received if Volusia's unreturned rate for mail ballots had been close to or the same as Broward's 5.34% instead of Volusia's 16.32%?

CD 7 - Volusia County results

Choice	Election Day	Early Votes	Vote By Mail	Provisional	Total Votes	Percentage
REP Ryan Elijah (REP)	28,786	30,429	14,997	0	74,212	57.26%
DEM Bale Dalton (DEM)	14,542	20,466	18,858	0	53,866	41.56%
LPF Christopher Dennison (LPF)	740	446	346	0	1,532	1.18%

The records that can provide some answers must be requested prior to Dec. 31

The records needed to analyze what happened to hundreds of thousands of unreturned mail ballots in Florida are only available to "*the voter requesting the ballot, a canvassing board, an election official, a political party or official thereof, a candidate who has filed qualification papers and is opposed in an upcoming election, and registered political committees for political purposes,"* according to Florida Statute 101.62(2). Furthermore, these records are only available until the end of 2026, so they must be requested as soon as possible. Florida Administrative Rule 1S-2.043(3)(d)(1)(a) states, "…authorization for access is only valid through the "*earlier of the end of the general election year in which authorization was initially granted or until the person or entity is no longer statutorily entitled to the information, whichever is applicable*."

These records are essential to obtain reliable data for determining voters addresses (to identify their Congressional District) and the partisan breakdown of these unreturned ballots. Identifying voter addresses will also help determine which U.S. Postal facility handled (or mishandled) their ballots.

The Role of the U.S. Postal Service

Despite the problems experienced in Broward County, its Supervisor of Elections Joe Scott was denied access to the U.S.P.S. Royal Palm mail distribution center, located in Opa Locka, Florida, which serves portions of both Broward and Miami-Dade counties. County Supervisors of Elections in Seminole and Monroe counties also reported receiving complaints about delayed delivery of voters' vote-by-mail ballots. Election offices in Brevard, Lake, Orange, Osceola, and Volusia counties also reported some vote-by-mail delays or other mail-ballot problems. But we have not yet undertaken any survey of Florida Supervisors of Elections about problems with postal service delivery. Miami-Dade's Supervisor of Elections only commented that no "unusual" complaints about postal service delays had been received.

The extraordinary disparity in vote-by-mail ballot returns in Florida's November 3 election raises questions about mail delivery, the role of the U.S. Postal Service, and possible consequences for skewing the results of closely contested Congressional races. For this preliminary report, we are relying on information from newspaper articles and a past government inspection of a postal distribution facility in Miami-Dade County. But a meaningful investigation requires access to actual records relating to the unreturned ballots. That must be done quickly to meet the December 31st deadline set by the state. Action is required now to prevent disenfranchisement of Florida voters in future elections and preserve the integrity and accuracy of our election results.

USPS issues worth investigating

Location or scope	Problem	Relevance to 2026 elections
USPS Royal Palm facility, Opa-Locka, FL	USPS Inspector General identified staffing and mail-processing problems in a May 2026 audit	Further investigation required to potentially explain South Florida delays

Florida statewide	USPS implemented transportation changes affecting when mail reaches processing facilities	Potentially affected how quickly completed ballots reach county election offices
Broward, Seminole, and Monroe Counties	Voters complained about slow ballot delivery and slow ballot returns to election offices.	Investigation required into the cause of these severe delays, including never-delivered and never-returned ballots..
Leon County	USPS initially rejected ballot envelopes over a 9.914-inch spacing issue.	Attempted federal postal intervention before the November general election
National USPS operations	Inspector General identified shortcomings in handling ballots during 2026 primary elections	Further investigation required

Resources

Articles:

NYTimes: A Florida Election Chief Urges In-Person Voting Over 'Serious' Postal Delays https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/31/us/elections/florida-early-voting-usps-delays.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share

Broward Supervisor urges in-person voting

Significant ballot delays in Monroe County (Florida Keys) -
Delayed delivery of mail-in ballots concerns voters

Seminole among Florida counties seeing vote-by-mail delays
https://www.clickorlando.com/election-2026/2026/10/30/seminole-among-florida-counties-seeing-vote-by-mail-delays/

U.S.P.S. Inspector General Reports:

Efficiency of Operations at Royal Palm Processing & Dist. Ctr, Opa Locka, FL, May 2026
https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2026-05/26-065-r26.pdf?cb=a6751bfa

District 3 Operations
https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2026-08/26-066-r26.pdf?cb=ef70062f

Florida Division of Elections, tabs for unreturned and returned mail ballots by county:
https://countyfilesvbm-ev.floridados.gov/VoteByMailEarlyVotingReports/PublicStats