



Postal Voting in the USA

Why in News

Many states in the USA are making **postal voting options** more easily accessible, as the **USA presidential election** is set to take place in **November 2020** amid the [Covid-19 pandemic](#).

Key Points

▪ Election in USA:

- In the USA, all elections—federal, state, and local— are directly organised by the governments of individual states.
- Unlike India, there is no Election Commission independent of the government in the USA to conduct elections at the national (federal) level.
- The USA Constitution and laws grant the states wide latitude in how they administer elections, this has resulted in varying rules across the country.

▪ Postal Voting in USA:

- Every single state allows postal voting, but they have different rules for this.
 - In some states voters are provided **absentee ballots** if they provide an **excuse** as to why they cannot be present in person on election day.
 - **Absentee voting** allows a person to **vote by mail**.
 - However, in some states there is **“no-excuse absentee voting”**, where voters can get an absentee ballot without providing justification.
 - Some states also have **“vote-by-mail”** facilities, where every registered voter is sent a ballot without a request.
- In 2016 around 24% of voting happened through postal ballots. In 2020, the proportion is expected to surge significantly.

▪ Issues involved:

- Mr. Trump and his supporters allege that the expansion of postal voting in the November 2020 elections will lead to malpractices. However, Democrats and a section of the Republicans disagree with Mr. Trump, saying he is deliberately disrupting the postal voting.

Postal Voting in India

- **Ballot papers** are distributed electronically to electors and are returned to the election officers via post.
- Currently, only the **following voters** are allowed to cast their votes through postal ballot:
 - **Service voters** (armed forces, the armed police force of a state and government servants posted abroad),
 - **Voters on election duty.**
 - **Voters above 80 years of age** or **Persons with Disabilities (PWD).**
 - **Voters under preventive detention.**

- The exception to the above-mentioned category of voters is provided under Section 60 of the [Representation of the People Act, 1951](#).

Way Forward

- The postal voting can be conducted in the USA by introducing stricter identity checks for voting, so that no malpractice occurs in the voting. However, stricter rules should be introduced taking consideration of the fact that it could disenfranchise minority populations and the less educated and further suppress voting.

[Source: TH](#)

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