

MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: RAGNAR RESEARCH PARTNERS
SUBJECT: VOTING METHODS
DATE: APRIL 12th, 2023

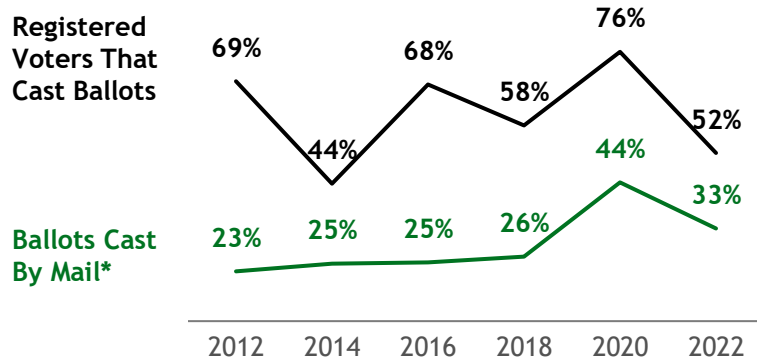
After observing some fundamental mistakes in 2022, we've decided to weigh in on a controversial topic - what exactly is vote by mail doing to our elections? A lot of people have hunches, but we wanted to put some hypotheses up against hard data. After analyzing a wide range of data - from 2012 to 2022, adoption by party, etc. - here's our key findings:

- **Voting by mail isn't going away.** It was not a pandemic novelty, which means campaigns need to be prepared for how it impacts voter contact timelines.
- Democrats are dominating vote by mail, but that **hasn't always been the case.**
- **Voting by mail doesn't mean doom for Republicans.** There are clear cases from 2022 that show Republican candidates can win in high vote by mail areas.

Vote By Mail Is Trending Upwards

The increase of vote by mail and absentee ballots used by voters in the last six cycles increased dramatically in 2020 due to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Voter turnout was lower in 2022 than the last midterm election in 2018, but the percentage of voters mailing in their ballots was 6% higher than 2018. **The steady growth of vote by mail suggests it will continue to rise as more states either become no-excuse absentee or statewide vote by mail.**

Nationwide Turnout & Vote By Mail

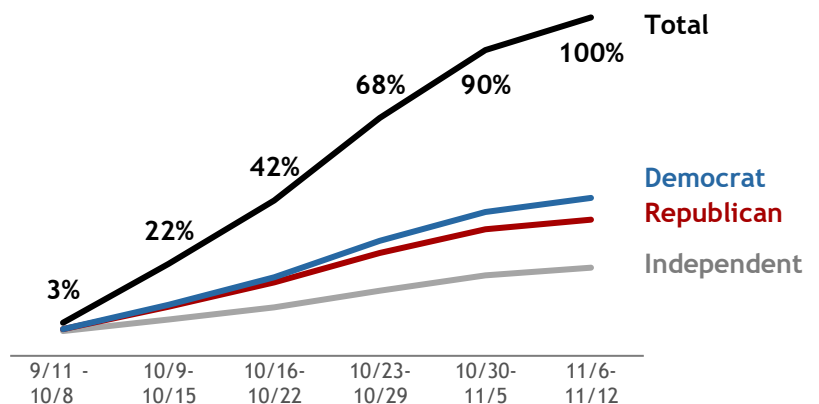


*Numbers may vary slightly from official reports. Data does not include results from states that have not fully reported turnout for 2022 (AL, KS, KY, & MO).

Nearly Half of Ballots are Returned Weeks Before Election Day

Voters in Florida vote by mail at a similar rate (36%) as the national vote by mail rate. In Florida, a plurality of ballots are returned weeks before E-Day. This is consistent regardless of party registration. As vote by mail becomes more popular nationwide, we can expect **the window of time candidates have to reach voters to close as well.**

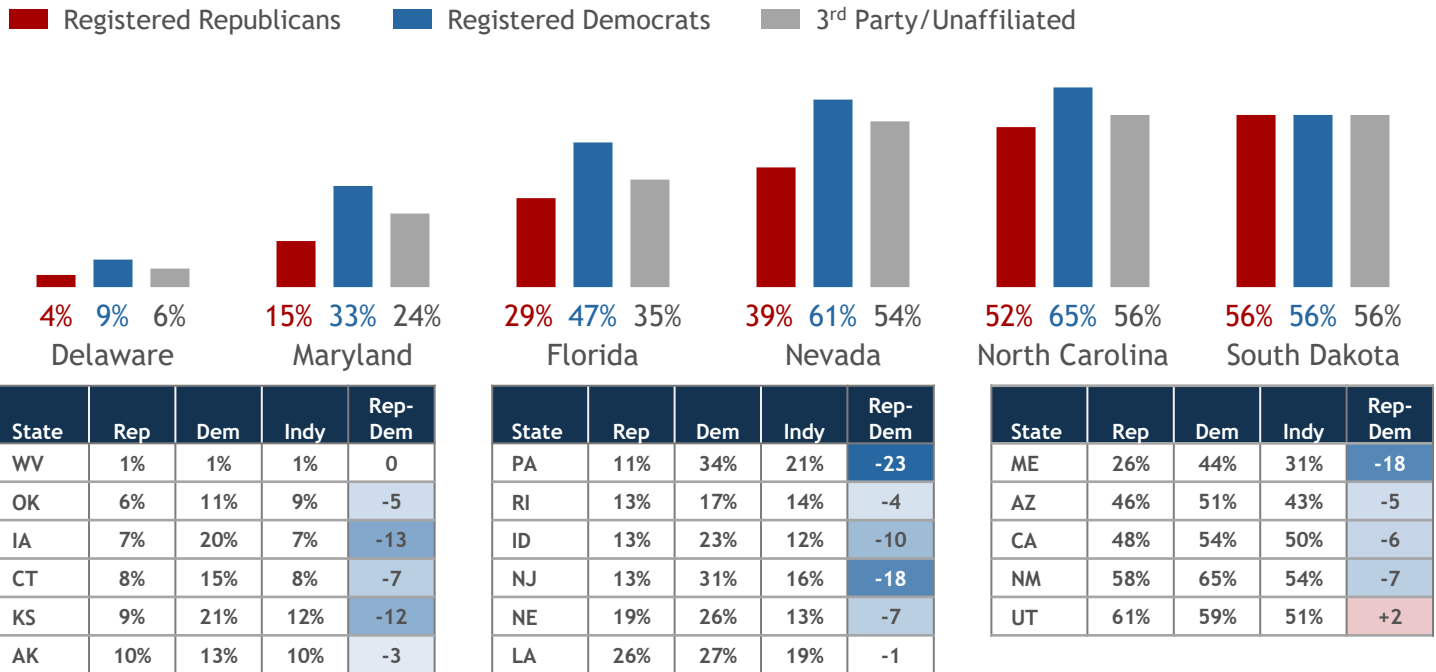
Florida Vote By Mail Turnout by Party in 2022



Democrats Vote By Mail More Often Than GOP Voters

The prevailing narrative in the last several election cycles has been that Democrats exploit the convenience of mail-in or no-excuse absentee voting more than Republicans do, and the existing data points to this sentiment being true. In states with party registration, we can look at how many of the ballots returned were mail-in ballots. **It is clear - in nearly every state, Registered Democrat voters turned in mail ballots at a significantly higher rate than Registered Republicans did.** Further, in many cases, use of mail-in ballots was higher among 3rd Party and Unaffiliated voters as well.

% of Mail Ballots Returned by Party out of Total Ballots Cast by Party



Note: Color indicates states with the widest disparity between GOP and Democrat adoption of vote by mail, where **red indicates more Republican voters use mail**, and **blue indicates more Democrat voters use mail**.

Data for DE, MD, FL, NV, NC, SD provided by each states' governing body responsible for elections. All other data provided by L2. Statement on L2 methodology: Immediately after every primary and general election, L2 submits a request to the Secretary of State (SoS) or Board of Election (BoE) for an updated voter file containing all of the newest registrants and the complete certified results from the most recent election. While a few states release partially coded files to L2, they chose not to release those partial data to avoid confusion and the use of inaccurate data. In many cases, coding files for a general election can take the counties and states months, with the majority of the states being released in January and February of the following year.

But this hasn't always been the case. When looking at the total number of mail-in ballots, Florida and Nevada are two examples of states where Republicans historically used mail-in ballots at a higher rate than Democrats. That dynamic has dramatically shifted since 2020. Given that adoption of mail-in ballots is increasing nationwide, **we need to shift the dynamic back to a Republican advantage.**

% of Total Mail Ballots by Party				
FL	Rep	Dem	Indy	Rep-Dem
2012	NA	NA	NA	NA
2014	44%	38%	18%	+7
2016	41%	38%	21%	+2
2018	41%	39%	20%	+2
2020	31%	45%	24%	-14
2022	36%	43%	21%	-7

% of Total Mail Ballots by Party				
NV	Rep	Dem	Indy	Rep-Dem
2012	43%	39%	18%	+4
2014	47%	37%	16%	+10
2016	41%	39%	21%	+2
2018	44%	38%	19%	+6
2020	26%	47%	27%	-20
2022	27%	42%	27%	-14

Republicans Can Win In High Vote By Mail States

The increasing concern among Republicans as vote by mail has proliferated is that Republican candidates won't be able to compete in this environment, but past races have shown that the GOP can remain competitive in areas with high vote by mail turnout. In the 2022 midterm Lori Chavez-DeRemer was able to pull out a victory against opponent Jamie McLeod-Skinner. Oregon is a state that conducts its elections entirely by mail, yet a Republican was able to win a district that included parts of Democrat strongholds like Portland and Salem within its boundaries.

In Central California John Duarte was able to defeat Democrat Adam Grey in a hotly contested race. Despite the odds against him, Duarte was able to win a heavily Hispanic D+7 district, in the Democrat controlled state of California, which had the sixth highest percentage of vote-by-mail in the United States in the 2022 election season.

In the state of Florida, Senator Marco Rubio one of a group of Republicans who outperformed GOP candidates across the nation in the 2022 midterm election. Rubio took 57.7% of the vote in a statewide election, trouncing his opponent Val Demings by more than a 16% margin. Florida had a strong turnout of absentee or mail votes with more than one-third (36%) of voters casting a mail ballot in the election.

2022 Midterm Election State/Region	Margin of Victory
California Congressional District 13	+0.4%
Oregon Congressional District 5	+2.0%
Florida United States Senate	+16.4%

Conclusion

Large scale absentee or vote by mail voting is on the horizon in the United States and we need to address it in voter communication, rather than reject it completely. In the last six election cycles voting by mail has risen steadily and was only exacerbated by having to conduct an election in the middle of a global pandemic. While Republican voters have not adopted vote by mail as much as their counterparts, the reality is that Democrats and Independents are voting by mail, even in states where Republicans have historically used it more frequently.

We need to reverse this trend. Because, despite concerns, there are clear cases that show Republicans can compete and have matched Democrats in contested states like Oregon where vote by mail is required. They can win in states with some of the highest adoption of vote by mail, even in competitive seats like California's 13th Congressional District.

CA-13 shouldn't be an outlier and should be a standard for winnable seats across the country. Voting by mail has been stigmatized among Conservatives following controversies in 2020 but when done correctly it can become a valuable tool in the GOP's bag.

About Ragnar Research

With over 60 years of combined experience in public opinion research, the partners at Ragnar Research have a track record of getting the numbers right on behalf of candidates, colleges and universities, and Fortune 500 companies. The principals at Ragnar have conducted public opinion research in every state in the nation using the most accurate methodologies for the modern world. Ragnar Labs is our ongoing series with a goal of provoking conversations about polling in Republican circles because we feel that evaluating ourselves, our industry, and the world around us is the only way Republicans can find continued success.