

U.S Senator Maria Cantwell
Press Conference on Mail-In Voting
September 2, 2026

Sec. Hobbs Remarks

Sec. Hobbs: Thank you very much. Welcome to the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library. I put that out there. It's part of the Secretary of State's office. Look, we're only two months away from the midterms. We're just a few weeks away, September 19th, when we mail ballots to our overseas voters, most of whom are in the armed services, defending our democracy.

October 16th is when we mail the rest of the ballots out to Washingtonians. Now, this is the critical time in which not just our state, but other states across the United States, coordinate with the federal government to receive support. Support against nation-state actors that do cyberattacks against us, influence operations, and helps us get the word out to our voters to make sure that they are voting. To make sure that they know about the elections process.

Unfortunately, what we have had from this administration and the federal government is a pulling back of support, cutting off our aid, leaving the states to fend for themselves. And so the states have no choice but to come together and try to support each other in this situation.

And while, additionally, this is going on and we're trying to support ourselves, this government is trying to do what they can to dismantle elections, not just in my state but in other states. Being very unconstitutional, doing executive orders, trying to pass bills in the U.S. Senate - thank goodness we have Senator Cantwell stopping those bills.

And then on top of that, to add insult to injury, in the last couple of weeks, the U.S. Postal Service is trying to do everything they can to ruin vote by mail in the state of Washington. And you all know about it because we all know about the rules that they're trying to do.

But let me take you back a little bit in time, because this is just the tip of the iceberg. Because under this administration, and by the Postmaster General, the first thing they did is they failed to inform our office and the counties, that several of their mailboxes, those blue boxes, were damaged, and ballots were in there. No one had access to those boxes. They had lost the key in some cases.

Now they said they got that fixed. But unfortunately, just about a year later, they changed the rules on postmarks, on the processing of postmarks. We are all used to putting our ballot in the mailbox, knowing that if we put it in there before 8 p.m. on election day, it would be counted. But instead, this postmaster general, in coordination with the administration, changes the rules on postmarks so that it's done at the central processing facility. And what does that mean? That can mean days in which your ballot is delayed. Another form of voter suppression.

And then we learn that when counties receive ballots from other counties - and this does happen. Let's say you're on a border of a county. You just go to the drop box. You put in your ballot in the drop box, but maybe it's in King County, but you're in Snohomish County. Happens all the time. What do counties do? They mail the ballots to the home county. But what did the Postmaster General do? They sat on it. Even though we paid - the counties paid priority mail. They sat on it, in some cases for three weeks. Another form of voter suppression. We couldn't count those votes because it went past the certification.

This last rule change, very devastating, saying that we have to give them the voter database because that's part of the executive order, part of the rule, in terms of this is the correct list that we mail to, which by the way, it's the list that we mail to anyway. But now they need to see the list. But they have no way to protect it. We update it by a minute-by-minute basis. They do not do that.

Additionally, they want us to put barcodes on both the outgoing and incoming envelopes. So the envelope going to you must have a barcode on it. That's great. We actually have that. But then they want the outgoing coming back to the county to have a barcode on it. We don't have the capability to do that, because we are out of time. I just told you, we're mailing on the 19th to our overseas voters and on the 16th of October to everybody else. That's 5 million ballots. We don't have the ability to reprint those. So they're really putting us in a bind.

Now, luckily - I'll just touch on the lawsuit really quick. So this state placed a lawsuit on the current rule. It is a restraining order for now. The courts will hear tomorrow. We should get a decision between tomorrow and hopefully the 10th, because the restraining order is only good till the 10th, and then hopefully an injunction will be made. I'm guessing the Supreme - they'll take this all the way to the Supreme Court, and we will fight it there. The good news is, the Supreme Court did not talk or rule on the constitutionality of the original injunction that was taken off by the Supreme Court.

So, I want to pass this off to some of the people, the organizations that are helping our state get the word out. And so, let's start off with Brenda Mann Harrison of the League of Women Voters. Thank you very much.