

(b) The Postal Service shall prescribe the endorsement to be placed on covers mailed under clauses (1)(E), (2), and (3) of section 3202(a) of this title.

(Pub. L. 91-375, Aug. 12, 1970, 84 Stat. 752.)

§ 3204. Restrictions on use of penalty mail

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this section or section 3220(a) of this title, an officer, executive department, or independent establishment of the Government of the United States may not mail, as penalty mail, any article or document unless—

- (1) a request therefor has been previously received by the department or establishment; or
- (2) its mailing is required by law.

(b) Subsection (a) of this section does not prohibit the mailing, as penalty mail, by an officer, executive department, or independent agency of—

- (1) enclosures reasonably related to the subject matter of official correspondence;
- (2) informational releases relating to the census of the United States and authorized by title 13;
- (3) matter concerning the sale of Government securities;
- (4) forms, blanks, and copies of statutes, rules, regulations, instructions, administrative orders, and interpretations necessary in the administration of the department or establishment;
- (5) agricultural bulletins;
- (6) lists of public documents offered for sale by the Superintendent of Documents;
- (7) announcements of the publication of maps, atlases, and statistical and other reports offered for sale by the Federal Power Commission as authorized by section 825k of title 16; or
- (8) articles or documents to educational institutions or public libraries, or to Federal, State, or other public authorities.

(Pub. L. 91-375, Aug. 12, 1970, 84 Stat. 752; Pub. L. 99-87, § 1(c)(1), Aug. 9, 1985, 99 Stat. 291.)

AMENDMENTS

1985—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 99-87 substituted “section or section 3220(a) of this title,” for “section,” in introductory provisions.

TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS

Federal Power Commission terminated and its functions, personnel, property, funds, etc., transferred to Secretary of Energy (except for certain functions transferred to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) by sections 7151(b), 7171(a), 7172(a), 7291, and 7293 of Title 42, The Public Health and Welfare.

§ 3205. Accounting for penalty covers

Executive departments and agencies, independent establishments of the Government of the United States, and organizations and persons authorized by law to use penalty mail, shall account for all penalty covers through the Postal Service.

(Pub. L. 91-375, Aug. 12, 1970, 84 Stat. 753.)

§ 3206. Reimbursement for penalty mail service

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, executive departments and agencies,

independent establishments of the Government of the United States, and Government corporations concerned, shall transfer to the Postal Service as postal revenue out of any appropriations or funds available to them, as a necessary expense of the appropriations or funds and of the activities concerned, the equivalent amount of postage due, as determined by the Postal Service, for matter sent in the mails by or to them as penalty mail under authority of section 3202 of this title.

(b) The Department of Agriculture shall transfer to the Postal Service as postal revenues out of any appropriations made to it for that purpose the equivalent amount of postage, as determined by the Postal Service, for penalty mailings under clauses (1)(F) and (4) of section 3202(a) of this title.

(c) The Department of State shall transfer to the Postal Service as postal revenues out of any appropriations made to it for that purpose the equivalent amount of postage, as determined by the Postal Service, for penalty mailings under clause (1)(C) and (D) of section 3202(a) of this title.

(Pub. L. 91-375, Aug. 12, 1970, 84 Stat. 753; Pub. L. 93-191, § 9, Dec. 18, 1973, 87 Stat. 745; Pub. L. 94-553, § 105(e), Oct. 19, 1976, 90 Stat. 2599.)

AMENDMENTS

1976—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 94-553 substituted “subsection (b)” for “subsections (b) and (c)”.

Subsecs. (c), (d). Pub. L. 94-553 redesignated subsec. (d) as (c). Former subsec. (c), directing the Library of Congress to transfer to the Postal Service as postal revenues out of any appropriations made to the Library for that purpose the equivalent amount of postage, as determined by the Postal Service, for penalty mailings under clause (5) of section 3202(a) of this title, was struck out.

1973—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 93-191 added subsec. (d).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1976 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 94-553 effective Jan. 1, 1978, see section 102 of Pub. L. 94-553, set out as an Effective Date note preceding section 101 of Title 17, Copyrights.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1973 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 93-191 effective Dec. 18, 1973, see section 14 of Pub. L. 93-191, set out as a note under section 3210 of this title.

§ 3207. Limit of weight of penalty mail; postage on overweight matter

(a) Penalty mail is restricted to articles not in excess of the weight and size prescribed for that class of mail receiving high priority in handling and delivery, except—

- (1) stamped paper and supplies sold or used by the Postal Service; and
- (2) books and documents published or circulated by order of Congress when mailed by the Superintendent of Documents.

(b) A penalty mail article which is—

- (1) over 4 pounds in weight;
- (2) not in excess of the weight and size prescribed for mail matter; and
- (3) otherwise mailable;

is mailable at rates for that class of mail entitled to the lowest priority in handling and delivery, even though it may include written matter and may be sealed.

(Pub. L. 91-375, Aug. 12, 1970, 84 Stat. 753.)

§ 3208. Shipment by most economical means

Shipments of official matter other than franked mail shall be sent by the most economical means of transportation practicable. The Postal Service may refuse to accept official matter for shipment by mail when in its judgment it may be shipped by other means at less expense, or it may provide for its transportation by freight or express whenever a saving to the Government of the United States will result therefrom without detriment to the public service.

(Pub. L. 91-375, Aug. 12, 1970, 84 Stat. 753.)

§ 3209. Executive departments to supply information

Persons and governmental organizations authorized to use penalty mail shall supply all information requested by the Postal Service necessary to carry out the provisions of this chapter as soon as practicable after request therefor.

(Pub. L. 91-375, Aug. 12, 1970, 84 Stat. 754.)

§ 3210. Franked mail transmitted by the Vice President, Members of Congress, and congressional officials

(a)(1) It is the policy of the Congress that the privilege of sending mail as franked mail shall be established under this section in order to assist and expedite the conduct of the official business, activities, and duties of the Congress of the United States.

(2) It is the intent of the Congress that such official business, activities, and duties cover all matters which directly or indirectly pertain to the legislative process or to any congressional representative functions generally, or to the functioning, working, or operating of the Congress and the performance of official duties in connection therewith, and shall include, but not be limited to, the conveying of information to the public, and the requesting of the views of the public, or the views and information of other authority of government, as a guide or a means of assistance in the performance of those functions.

(3) It is the intent of the Congress that mail matter which is frankable specifically includes, but is not limited to—

(A) mail matter to any person and to all agencies and officials of Federal, State, and local governments regarding programs, decisions, and other related matters of public concern or public service, including any matter relating to actions of a past or current Congress;

(B) the usual and customary congressional newsletter or press release which may deal with such matters as the impact of laws and decisions on State and local governments and individual citizens; reports on public and official actions taken by Members of Congress; and discussions of proposed or pending legislation or governmental actions and the positions of the Members of Congress on, and arguments for or against, such matters;

(C) the usual and customary congressional questionnaire seeking public opinion on any

law, pending or proposed legislation, public issue, or subject;

(D) mail matter dispatched by a Member of Congress between his Washington office and any congressional district offices, or between his district offices;

(E) mail matter directed by one Member of Congress to another Member of Congress or to representatives of the legislative bodies of State and local governments;

(F) mail matter expressing congratulations to a person who has achieved some public distinction;

(G) mail matter, including general mass mailings, which consists of Federal laws, Federal regulations, other Federal publications, publications purchased with Federal funds, or publications containing items of general information;

(H) mail matter which consists of voter registration or election information or assistance prepared and mailed in a nonpartisan manner;

(I) mail matter which constitutes or includes a biography or autobiography of any Member of, or Member-elect to, Congress or any biographical or autobiographical material concerning such Member or Member-elect or the spouse or other members of the family of such Member or Member-elect, and which is so mailed as a part of a Federal publication or in response to a specific request therefor and is not included for publicity purposes in a newsletter or other general mass mailing of the Member or Member-elect under the franking privilege; or

(J) mail matter which contains a picture, sketch, or other likeness of any Member or Member-elect and which is so mailed as a part of a Federal publication or in response to a specific request therefor and, when contained in a newsletter or other general mass mailing of any Member or Member-elect, is not of such size, or does not occur with such frequency in the mail matter concerned, as to lead to the conclusion that the purpose of such picture, sketch, or likeness is to advertise the Member or Member-elect rather than to illustrate accompanying text.

(4) It is the intent of the Congress that the franking privilege under this section shall not permit, and may not be used for, the transmission through the mails as franked mail, of matter which in its nature is purely personal to the sender or to any other person and is unrelated to the official business, activities, and duties of the public officials covered by subsection (b)(1) of this section.

(5) It is the intent of the Congress that a Member of or Member-elect to Congress may not mail as franked mail—

(A) mail matter which constitutes or includes any article, account, sketch, narration, or other text laudatory and complimentary of any Member of, or Member-elect to, Congress on a purely personal or political basis rather than on the basis of performance of official duties as a Member or on the basis of activities as a Member-elect;

(B) mail matter which constitutes or includes—

(i) greetings from the spouse or other members of the family of such Member or