

USPS Postmark Rule Change

Effective December 24, 2025

The U.S. Postal Service has changed how mail is postmarked. Postmarks now reflect the date mail is first processed at a regional facility NOT the date it is dropped off at your local post office. Because of this change, mail may be postmarked days after drop-off, which could result in missed ATRS deadlines.



Why This Matters

This impacts any document required to be submitted to the ATRS by a specific deadline, including:

- Retirement applications
- T-DROP applications
- Any time-sensitive ATRS paperwork



How to Guarantee a Postmark Date

To ensure your paperwork meets ATRS mailing deadlines, use one of the following USPS options:

- **Manual Postmark (FREE)**
 - Request a hand-stamped postmark at a USPS retail counter
- **Certificate of Mailing (\$2.40)**
 - Official proof USPS accepted the item on a specific date
- **Certified Mail (Fee Applies)**
 - Proof of mailing and delivery



.... DROP-OFF



... PROCESSING



... POSTMARKED

Members are strongly encouraged to submit paperwork early to avoid delays caused by the USPS postmark rule change.

Submitting Close to a Deadline?

Apply Online:

ATRS Member Portal



<https://www.arts.gov/login>

Email Submissions:



Info@arts.gov