

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE CRITERIA STAMP SUBJECT SELECTION

The U.S. Postal Service and the members of the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC) have set certain basic criteria used in determining the eligibility of subjects for commemoration on U.S. stamps and stationery. These criteria first were formulated about the time of Postal Reorganization in the early 1970s, and have been refined and expanded gradually since then.

Following are the 12 major areas now guiding subject selection:

1. It is a general policy that U.S. postage stamps and stationery primarily will feature American or American related subjects.
2. No living person shall be honored by portrayal on U.S. postage.
3. Commemorative stamps or postal stationery items honoring individuals usually will be issued on, or in conjunction with significant anniversaries of their birth, but no postal item will be issued sooner than ten years after the individual's death. The only exception to the ten-year rule is the issuance of stamps honoring deceased U.S. presidents. They may be honored with a memorial stamp on the first birth anniversary following death.
4. Events of historical significance shall be considered for commemoration only on anniversaries in multiples of 50 years.
5. Only events and themes of widespread national appeal and significance will be considered for commemoration. Events or themes of local or regional significance may be recognized by a philatelic or special postal cancellation, which may be arranged through the local postmaster.
6. Stamps or stationery items shall not be issued to honor fraternal, political, sectarian, or service/charitable organizations that exist primarily to solicit and/or distribute funds. Nor shall stamps be issued to honor commercial enterprises or products.
7. Stamps or stationery items shall not be issued to honor cities, towns, municipalities, counties, primary or secondary schools, hospitals, libraries, or similar institutions. Due to the limitations placed on annual postal programs and the vast number of such locales, organizations and institutions in existence, it would be difficult to single out any one for commemoration.
8. Requests for observance of statehood anniversaries will be considered for commemorative postage stamps only at intervals of 50 years from the date of the state's first entry into the Union. Requests for observance of other state-related or regional anniversaries will be considered only as subjects for postal stationery, and again only at intervals of 50 years from the date of the event.
9. Stamps or stationery items shall not be issued to honor religious institutions or individuals whose principal achievements are associated with religious undertakings or beliefs.
10. Stamps or postal stationery items with added values, referred to as "semi-postals," shall not be issued. Due to the vast number of worthy fund-raising organizations in existence, it would be difficult to single out specific ones to receive such revenue. There also is a strong U.S. tradition of private fund-raising for charities, and the administrative costs involved in accounting for sales would tend to negate the revenues derived.
11. Requests for commemoration of significant anniversaries of universities and other institutions of higher education shall be considered only in regard to Historic Preservation Series postal cards featuring an appropriate building on the campus.
12. No stamp shall be considered for issuance if one treating the same subject has been issued in the past ten years. The only exceptions to this rule will be those stamps issued in recognition of traditional themes such as Christmas, U.S. Flag, Express Mail, Love, etc.

Ideas for stamp subjects that meet the criteria may be addressed to the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee, c/o Stamp Management, U.S. Postal Service, 475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Room 4474E, Washington, D.C. 20260-2437. Subjects should be submitted at least three years in advance of the proposed date of issue to allow sufficient time for consideration and, for design and production, if the subject is approved.

THE CITIZENS' STAMP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The U.S. Postal Service is proud of its role in portraying the American experience to a world audience through the issuance of postage stamps and postal stationery.

Almost all subjects chosen to appear on U.S. stamps and postal stationery are suggested by the public. Each year, Americans submit proposals to the Postal Service on literally thousands of different topics. Every stamp suggestion is considered, regardless of who makes it or how it is presented.

On behalf of the Postmaster General, the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC) is tasked with evaluating the merits of all stamp proposals. Established in 1957, the Committee provides the Postal Service with a "breadth of judgment and depth of experience in various areas that influence subject matter, character and beauty of postage stamps."

The Committee's primary goal is to select subjects for recommendation to the Postmaster General that are both interesting and educational. In addition to Postal Service's extensive line of regular stamps, approximately 25 to 30 new subjects for commemorative stamps are recommended each year. Stamp selections are made with all postal customers in mind, not just stamp collectors. A good mix of subjects, both interesting and educational, is essential.

Committee members are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Postmaster General. The Committee is composed of 15 members whose backgrounds reflect a wide range of educational, artistic, historical and professional expertise. All share an interest in philately and the needs of the mailing public.

The Committee itself employs no staff. The Postal Service's Stamp Management group handles Committee administrative matters, maintains Committee records and responds to as many as 40,000 letters received annually recommending stamp subjects and designs.

The Committee meets four times yearly in Washington, D.C. At the meetings, the members review all proposals that have been received since the previous meeting. No in-person appeals by stamp proponents are permitted. The members also review and provide guidance on artwork and designs for stamp subjects that are scheduled to be issued. The criteria established by this independent group ensure that stamp subjects have stood the test of time, are consistent with public opinion and have broad national interest.

The Stamp Selection Process

The Postal Service has no formal procedures for submitting stamp proposals. This allows everyone the same opportunity to suggest a new postage stamp. All proposals are reviewed by the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee regardless of how they are submitted, i.e., post cards, letters or petitions.

Artwork For Stamp Designs

Once a subject is approved, the Postal Service relies heavily on design coordinators for the selection of artists who will execute the designs. Stamp designing is an unusual art form requiring exacting skill in portraying a subject within very small dimensions. Due to the demands of stamp design and reproduction requirements, it is our policy not to review nor accept unsolicited artwork.

Professional artists who may wish to be considered for a design assignment should request a copy of the "Stamp Design Requirements" package from Stamp Design at the following address:

U.S. Postal Service
Stamp Acquisition
Attn.: Stamp Design
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 4474E
Washington, DC 20260-2436