

Learn more about it...

**Charter**

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.

Many of the subjects chosen to appear on U.S. stamps and postal stationery are suggested by the public. Each year, the Postal Service receives from the American public thousands of letters proposing stamp subjects. Every stamp suggestion meeting criteria 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 of broad national interest for recommendation to the Postmaster General that are both interesting and educational. In addition to Postal Service's extensive line of mail use stamps, approximately 20 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 a maximum of 15 members whose backgrounds reflect a wide range of educational, artistic, historical and professional expertise. All share an interest in the stamp program and the needs of the mailing public.

The Committee itself employs no staff. The Postal Service's Stamp Development group manages Committee administrative matters, maintains Committee records and responds to as many as 50,000 inquiries received annually recommending stamp subjects and designs.

The Committee meets four times yearly. At these two day meetings, the members review all eligible proposals that have been received since the previous meeting. No in-person appeals by stamp proponents are permitted. 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 members also review and provide guidance on artwork and designs for stamp subjects that are scheduled to be issued.

**The Stamp Selection Process**

Stamp proposals are to be submitted in writing to the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee. This allows everyone the same opportunity to suggest a new stamp subject. 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. All eligible subjects are reviewed by the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee regardless of how they are submitted, i.e., stamped cards, letters or petitions.

Stamp proposals are to be submitted in writing to the following address:

Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee  
c/o Stamp Development  
U.S. Postal Service  
1735 North Lynn St., Suite 5013  
Arlington, VA 22209-6432

After a proposed subject is determined not to violate the criteria set by CSAC, the subject is listed on the CSAC's agenda for its next meeting. The CSAC considers all new proposals and takes one of two actions: it may reject the new proposal or it may set it aside for consideration for future issuance. If the proposal is rejected, it may be resubmitted to the Committee again, no sooner than three years after the rejection date.

Proponents are not advised if a subject has been approved for issuance until a general announcement is made to the public. While the Postal Service relies heavily upon the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee for its advice, it has the exclusive and final authority to determine both subject matter and designs for U.S. postal stamps and postal stationery.

Once a subject is approved, the Postal Service relies heavily on art directors under contract to the Postal Service 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 *Creating U.S. Postage Stamps* brochure from the following address:

U.S. Postal Service  
Stamp Development  
ATTN: Stamp Design  
1735 North Lynn Street, Suite 5013  
Arlington, VA 22209-6432

**Members of the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee****14 Members** (as of March 2010)**ALCALÁ, ANTONIO**

Graphic Designer; Adjunct Professor of Design

**BAILAR, BENJAMIN F.**

Former Postmaster General; Postal History Stamp Collector

**BRICK, CARY R.**

Retired U.S. Congressional Staff; Adjunct Professor of Government and History

**DE VARONA, DONNA**

TV Sports Commentator; Olympic Swimming Champion; Select Director of the Board, U.S. Soccer Foundation

**FIRSTENBERG, JEAN PICKER, \*\*CHAIRPERSON**

President Emerita, American Film Institute

**GATES, JR., DR. HENRY LOUIS**

Alphonse Fletcher University Professor, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African-American Research Harvard University

**GIOIA, DANA**

Poet and Past Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

**HARRIS, SYLVIA**

Information Design Strategist & Graphic Designer

**HELFAND, JESSICA, \*\*DESIGN SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR**

Graphic Designer; Author; Senior Critic, Yale School of Art; Partner, Winterhouse Studio

**HEYMAN, I. MICHAEL, \*\*VICE CHAIR; SUBJECT SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR**

Chancellor Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley; Secretary Emeritus, Smithsonian Institution

**KLUG, JANET**

Philatelist; Author; Retired

**MADSEN, ERIC**

Graphic Designer & Fine Artist

**PEDERSEN, B. MARTIN**

Chief Executive Officer and Creative Director *Graphis*, Magazine

**RODRIGUEZ, CLARA E.**

Professor of Sociology, Fordham University; Author

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 all 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 criteria 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 five years after the individual's death. The Committee will not accept or consider proposals for a subject until at least two years after his/her death. The only exception to the five-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, persons, and themes of widespread national appeal and significance will be considered for commemoration. Further, it is an important goal of the stamp program to assure inclusion of the Nation's diverse population especially women and minorities in choosing stamp subjects. In furtherance of this goal it is important to identify as possible subjects persons who have overcome great challenges or active discrimination to enter a field or accomplish an aim and thus created opportunities thereafter for others similarly situated. Events, persons 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. Stamps or stationery shall not be issued to promote or advertise commercial enterprises or products. Commercial products or enterprises might be used to illustrate more general concepts related to American culture.
7. Stamps or stationery items shall not be issued to honor individual federal agencies, 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. Semipostal stamps are designed to raise funds for causes determined to be in the national public interest and appropriate. Semipostal stamps are sold for a price above their postage value. The differential between the sales price and the postage value of semipostal stamps consists of an amount (less a deduction for the Postal Service's reasonable costs) to be given to other executive agencies in furtherance of specified causes. The Postal Service issues semipostals in accordance with the Stamp Out Breast Cancer Act and the Semipostal Authorization Act.
11. Requests for commemoration of universities and other institutions of higher education shall be considered only for stamped cards and only in connection with the 200th anniversaries of their founding.
12. No stamp shall be considered for issuance if one treating the same subject has been issued in the past 50 years. The only exceptions to this rule are traditional themes such as national symbols and holidays.