

Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee Learn more about it...

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 40,000 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 must be submitted in writing to the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee. Proposals made by email will not receive a response. 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 properly submitted proposals for eligible subjects will be 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
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 3300
Washington, DC 20260-3501

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.

Artwork for Stamp Designs

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
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 3300
Washington, DC 20260-3501

Members of the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee 12 members (as of February 2012)

Benjamin Bailar Former Postmaster General; postal history stamp collector

Caroline Baumann Associate director, Smithsonian Institution's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum

B. J. Bueno Founder, The Cult Branding Company; partner, Nonbox Consulting

Cary Brick Retired U.S. Congressional staff; adjunct professor of Government and History

Donna De Varona TV sports commentator; Olympic swimming champion; select Director of the Board, U.S. Soccer Foundation

Jean Picker Firstenberg, Chair President Emerita, American Film Institute

Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Alphonse Fletcher University Professor, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African-American Research Harvard University

Dana Gioia Poet and past chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts

Janet Klug Philatelist; author; retired

Eric Madsen Graphic designer & fine artist

Santana Maruchi Founder, The Brand Extension Agency

Debra Shriver Vice president and chief communications officer, Hearst Corporation; co-founder, UNICEF Snowflake Ball

Stamp Subject Selection Criteria

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.

Following are the 12 major criteria now guiding subject selection:

It is a general policy that U.S. postage stamps and stationery primarily will feature American or American-related subjects. Other subjects can be considered if the subject had significant impact on American history or culture.

The Postal Service will honor living men and women who have made extraordinary contributions to American society and culture. These remarkable individuals through their transformative achievements in their respective fields have made enduring contributions to the United States of America.

Commemorative stamps or postal stationery items honoring individuals usually will be issued to celebrate births, anniversaries, and significant contributions.

A memorial stamp will be issued honoring deceased U.S. presidents following death.

Events of historical significance shall be considered for commemoration on anniversaries in multiples of 50 years.

Themes of widespread national appeal and significance that reflect our nation's inclusiveness, events and persons will be considered for commemoration. Official postal cancellations, which may be arranged through the local postmaster, may be requested for significant local events or commemorations.

Statehood anniversary commemorative postage stamps will be issued 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 as subjects for postal stationery at intervals of 50 years from the date of the event.

Requests for commemoration of universities and other institutions of higher education shall be considered for stamped cards in connection with the 200th anniversaries of their founding.

No stamp shall be considered for issuance if one treating the same subject has been issued in the past 50 years. The exceptions to this rule are traditional themes such as national symbols and holidays.

The stamp program commemorates positive contributions to American life, history, and culture; therefore, disasters will not be commemorated on U.S. postage stamps or stationery.

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 of the following for commemoration: government agencies, localities, non-profit organizations, associations, and similar entities. Stamps or stationery items shall not be issued to honor religious institutions or individuals whose principal achievements are associated with religious undertakings or beliefs.

Stamps may be issued for the major military services (Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marines) on 50-year anniversaries (or multiples) of their current organizational structure. Stamps for the major service academies will be considered on a case-by-case basis for 50-year anniversaries (or multiples). Due to the large number of individual units with the military services, stamps will not be issued to honor individual groups or units within the military.

From the USPS Web page.

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