



# California Voter Guide

Communicating with  
California's Voters since 1986

## 5 Tips to Buying Slates ... *that mail!*

Every campaign has limited dollars to spend and seemingly unlimited opportunities to spend these precious funds. The challenge is to direct your campaign resources for maximum exposure.

Slate mailings, like California Voter Guide, are the only true point-of-decision advertising that can generate big exposure for a reasonable price. Some candidates purchase slates to reinforce their campaign message, others use them to try to elevate themselves out of the clutter of their challengers. Many incumbents participate on slates as “insurance” against a last minute surge or 3<sup>rd</sup> party attack supporting an underfunded challenger.

No matter what your motivation for making slate mailings a part of your campaign media buy, taking a few moments to select the right slate will ensure that you invest your campaign funds wisely.

### How Can I Be Sure The Slate Mails – As Promised?

You don't want to be sitting around during the waning days of the campaign wondering if the slates you purchased actually mailed. Nor do you want to be receiving a refund check for mail that we promised but never sent the week after the election when you could have utilized that cash to get yourself elected.

Here are 5 tips to buying slates ... *that mail!*

#### 1. Check their past performance with the California Secretary of State

Just like candidate committees, slates are required by law to report their income and expenses with the Fair Political Practices Commission. These reports (Form 401) are available on line at <http://cal-access.sos.ca.gov/Campaign/Committees/list.aspx?view=slateMailers>

The state maintains the current and historical records of every slate, even those which are inactive or have not mailed in a long time and will most likely not mail again. When you review these historical reports, here are a few things to look for:

- a. Did this slate mail during the last election cycle? If not, the cycle before that?
- b. If the slate mailed, did they raise enough money to have been able to mail in the quantity that is being promised this year?
- c. If the slate did not mail, ask the vendor what other slates he/she published in the past and check the financial performance of those committees.

#### 2. Has anyone you know seen or bought the slate in question?



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If you have not previously seen the slate in your mailbox, ask around to people you know to see if they have. If you can't recall seeing a copy in your mailbox, ask the slate to send you a copy of a prior year card so you can ask your committee members if they have. Don't forget to check with other candidates from previous elections and ask which slates they have seen or used.

One of the values of a slate is the year-after-year repetition in a voters' mailbox. Seeing the slate continually from election to election increases the chances that a voter will utilize the card. While it's nice to be on a slate, it's even nicer to be on one that voters' will use.

Samples and a historical list of candidate that have participated on the California Voter Guide slate program can be seen at [www.calvoterguide.com](http://www.calvoterguide.com).

### **3. Compare the slates "promised quantity" with your own mailing universe!**

Everyone targets voter households a bit differently. But there are only a limited number of voter households in your district that will most likely vote in your election. Slates are purchased on a "per household/piece basis" ... ask for a specific count and don't be shy about comparing that count to see if it seems realistic. One of California's most reputable data vendor, Political Data, has an on-line count program that will allow you to see voter history counts in your district.

Political Data's counts can be found at: <http://www.politicaldata.com/Pages/ReportCount.aspx>

The slates counts may not match your counts exact, but they should be close or reasonable.

Remember, when a slate is mailed, it is mailed to the "household" ... check the household count, not the voter count.

### **4. What Other Campaigns Are Participating On This Slate?**

One of the benefits of slates is their affordability. Yet, if the slate does not secure enough participants to help share the cost it might not be as affordable as you think. When you are making your decision on sending out your own mail or participating on a slate, you need to be reasonably assured that the slate will mail as promised.

Slates need "anchor" candidates and ballot measures that are either statewide or countywide to help defray the costs for local campaigns. Without these "anchors", it becomes financially difficult for a slate to mail. Go ahead and ask which statewide or countywide "anchors" the slate has already secured. If you are concerned about the slate's ability to mail, check out which "anchors" made early commitments and early deposits. Once again, the Secretary of State's on-



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line reporting system is an excellent resource for this research <http://cal-access.sos.ca.gov/Campaign/Committees/list.aspx?view=slateMailers> . You can also utilize the Secretary of State website to check which slates the statewide candidates and ballot measure committees are buying.

## 5. **When Will You See Samples and Postage Receipts?**

For the past two decades, California Voter Guide has made it a policy to mail live samples and copies of verified United States Post Office (Form 3602) postage receipts to every candidate – except County Central Committee – participating on the slate.

Even though the post office does not break down its postage receipt to show how many pieces mailed to precincts in your district, having a copy of that statewide Form 3602 and a sample with your name and message on it are assurances that the slates did in fact mail.

When you are making your slate buy, specifically ask when you will see samples and certified postage receipts.

Not only does California Voter Guide send a copy of the Form 3602 postage receipt within 48 hours of mailing; we also post them on our website at [www.calvoterguide.com](http://www.calvoterguide.com). In addition, we send a live sample of our slates ... to each candidate with their listing on the card ... within 96 hours of mailing. Candidates can receive additional copies of the slates for their districts for at least 1 year after each mailing.

Slates are cost-effective, vote-getting campaign tools if utilized properly. They can help you get a targeted message out to a large number of voter households in your district for a fraction of what it costs you to mail on your own.

To check availability of California Voter Guide for your race, please contact us at [tim@calvoterguide.com](mailto:tim@calvoterguide.com).

Thank you and good luck.