

Pursuant to Public Law 93-191, the bipartisan Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards or the "Franking Commission" has a three fold mandate: (1) to issue regulations governing the proper use of the franking privilege; (2) to provide guidance in connection with mailings; (3) to act as a quasi-judicial body for the disposition of formal complaints against Members of Congress who have allegedly violated franking laws or regulations.

As a result of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act for FY 1991, Members are required to submit all mass mailings (unsolicited mailings of 500 or more pieces of the same matter) for an advisory opinion prior to mailing.

The issuance of an advisory opinion is a process; involving telephone and personal consultations with the Member's staff prior to the dispersing of a written advisory. When proposed mailings are submitted to the Commission in draft form, often changes are needed in order to comply with franking standards. Staff routinely points out any problems and suggests the revisions that are necessary for the issuance of a favorable opinion. All material submitted to the Commission is reviewed by both the majority and minority staff before an advisory is issued.