

The town auditors are required to distribute their annual report to the legal voters of the town at least ten days before town meeting. What does 'distribute' mean, and do we have to give a separate copy of the report to each voter in a single household?

The auditors' report of the financial condition of the town, commonly known as the annual town report, is discussed in 24 V.S.A. §1682. The VLCT Municipal Law Center interprets the language, "*mailed or otherwise distributed*" to mean that a copy of the report must be *personally delivered* to the voters. Simply placing an ad in the paper telling people that they can pick up a copy at the town clerk's office, or dropping a stack of reports at the local corner store is not, in our opinion, satisfying the legal requirement to 'distribute' the report.

Remember, too, when placing your printing order for the report to include enough copies for your town or village clerk. The law requires clerks to supply each town and village library with two copies of the municipal annual report upon its publication. Additionally, the clerk must mail two copies to the state library and one copy each to the following state offices: secretary of state, commissioner of taxes, transportation board, state board of health, commissioner of social welfare, auditor of accounts and board of education.

We understand that the cost of mailing reports to all of the voters is a valid municipal concern. Therefore, as a practical matter, we think that if more than one voter resides at the same address, it is fiscally prudent to mail only one copy to that household. By listing each of the voters in that household on the address label, for example, "John & Dorothy Smith" or "John Smith and Dorothy Jones", the intent of the law is met. Another way to cut mailing costs would be to ask a volunteer group, such as the boy or girl scouts, to deliver the town report door-to-door.

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