

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

August 7, 2020

Tammy L. Whitcomb
Inspector General
United States Postal Service
1735 N. Lynn St.
Arlington, VA 22209-2020

Dear Inspector General Whitcomb:

We are writing regarding our concerns that modifications to United States Postal Service (Postal Service or USPS) staffing and policies put in place by Postmaster General Louis DeJoy have had an adverse effect on postal service operations that have “led to slower and less reliable delivery.”¹ These changes threaten the well-being of millions of Americans that rely on the Postal Service for delivery of Social Security checks, prescriptions, and everyday mail of all kinds – and they appear to pose a potential threat to mail-in ballots and the 2020 general election.

Given these concerns, we ask that your office conduct an audit of these actions by Mr. DeJoy, consistent with your mission to “conduct ... independent audits and reviews of Postal Service programs and operations to [p]revent and detect fraud, waste, and misconduct ... promote program integrity, and...[k]eep ... Congress ... informed of problems, [and] deficiencies”² in Postal Service operations and mail delivery.

The Postal Service has served Americans since before the founding of the Republic, and any actions by President Trump or Postmaster General DeJoy that damage the Postal Service’s ability to quickly and reliably deliver the mail would represent a significant breach of their responsibilities. But that appears to be exactly what has happened.

According to reports:

[T]he mail system is being undercut in ways set in motion by Mr. Trump. Fueled by animus for Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, and surrounded by advisers who have long called for privatizing the post office, Mr. Trump and his appointees have begun taking cost-cutting steps that appear to have led to slower and less reliable delivery.

¹ New York Times, “Mail Delays Fuel Concern Trump is Undercutting Postal System Ahead of Voting,” Michael D. Shear, Hailey Fuchs, and Kenneth P. Vogel, July 31, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/31/us/politics/trump-usps-mail-delays.html>.

² U.S. Postal Service Inspector General, Office of Audit, 2020, <https://www.uspsoidg.gov/audit>.

In recent weeks, at the direction of a Trump campaign megadonor who was recently named the postmaster general, the service has stopped paying mail carriers and clerks the overtime necessary to ensure that deliveries can be completed each day. That and other changes have led to reports of letters and packages being delayed by as many as several days.³

Specifically, within days of being appointed as Postmaster General, Mr. DeJoy made several fundamental changes to Postal Service operations including: cutting back hours at some Postal Service offices, denying overtime to mail clerks and carriers, and requiring that carriers leave mail “behind or on the workroom floor or docks.”⁴ After initially denying these changes were happening, the Postal Service recently confirmed to staff that they were in fact occurring.⁵

These changes occurred as Department of Treasury Secretary Mnuchin was demanding “sweeping operational control” of the Postal Service in exchange for distribution of an emergency \$10 billion loan to keep the agency afloat—turning the Postal Service into a “political football.”⁶

These changes have already had significant adverse effects. According to a report in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, “Neighborhoods across the Philadelphia region are experiencing significant delays in receiving their mail, with some residents going upwards of three weeks without packages and letters, leaving them without medication, paychecks, and bills.” In some cases, these are life-threatening delays, which appear to be caused by the policy changes put in place by Mr. DeJoy.⁷

These delays also pose a threat to the November election, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic when millions of Americans are expected to choose to vote by mail rather than wait in long lines on Election Day. As problems with the mail service grow, “[e]lection officials are worried that slower mail service will mean ballots are not delivered in a timely manner. In some cases, they may not be delivered at all. A struggling USPS may also fail to return ballots in time for counting, which raises the possibility of mass disenfranchisement.”⁸

³ New York Times, “Mail Delays Fuel Concern Trump is Undercutting Postal System Ahead of Voting,” Michael D. Shear, Hailey Fuchs, and Kenneth P. Vogel, July 31, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/31/us/politics/trump-usps-mail-delays.html>.

⁴ New York Times, “Mail Delays Fuel Concern Trump is Undercutting Postal System Ahead of Voting,” Michael D. Shear, Hailey Fuchs, and Kenneth P. Vogel, July 31, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/31/us/politics/trump-usps-mail-delays.html>.

⁵ Letter from Thomas J. Marshall, General Counsel and Executive Vice President to Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairwoman, Committee on Oversight and Reform (July 22, 2020) and Briefing for Committee staff, August 4, 2020.

⁶ Washington Post, “Treasury agrees to lend Postal Service \$10 billion in trade for rivals’ shipping contracts,” July 29, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/07/29/postal-service-treasury-loan/>.

⁷ Philadelphia Inquirer, “Mail delays are frustrating Philly residents, and a short-staffed Postal Service is struggling to keep up,” August 2, 2020, <https://www.inquirer.com/news/philadelphia/usps-tracking-in-transit-late-mail-delivery-philadelphia-packages-postal-service-20200802.html>.

⁸ New York Magazine, “How Changes to the USPS Might Affect Voting by Mail,” August 3, 2020, <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/how-the-usps-backlog-might-affect-voting-by-mail.html>.

Given the ongoing concerns about the adverse impacts of Trump Administration policies on the quality and efficiency of the Postal Service, we ask that you conduct an audit of all operational changes put in place by Mr. DeJoy and other Trump Administration officials in 2020. Members of the House and Senate have already submitted a number of requests for more information about these changes. As of the date of this letter, the responses from Postal Service officials has been seriously lacking. While we have every intention to continue to press for answers to previous requests, the Mr. DeJoy's actions call into question his willingness to keep Congress informed. We believe a Postal Service Inspector General review can help ensure Americans obtain the answers they need and deserve about the quality of their mail service.

Specifically, we ask that you examine:

1. What specific operational changes were put in place by Mr. DeJoy?
2. What was the rationale for these changes? What analyses of their impact did he or other Postal Service officials conduct before putting them in place?
3. How have these changes affected the quality of mail delivery? Have they caused delays in mail service, and if so, what has been the extent of these delays?

To the extent there have been delays or degradations of service, are these expected to have an adverse impact on the Postal Service's ability to provide services needed for the 2020 elections?

4. Was Mr. DeJoy's implementation of these changes consistent with the Postal Service's internal policies and procedures and applicable legal requirements, including requirements governing consultation with the U.S. Postal Regulatory Commission and postal employees and customers?
5. Has the Postal Service provided complete and accurate information to Congress and the public about the extent of and impacts of these changes in polies and procedures? ?
6. Considering that "DeJoy and his wife, ... who is [President Trump's] nominee to be the U.S. ambassador to Canada, own \$30.1 million to \$75.3 million in assets in Postal Service competitors or contractors, like UPS and the trucking company J.B. Hunt,"⁹ has Mr. DeJoy met all ethics requirements regarding disclosure, divestment, and recusal from decisions in which he may have a conflict?

Thank you for your attention to these matters. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

⁹ Donald Sherman and Sylvia Albert, "Trump's new postmaster general could corrupt a key institution ahead of Election Day," July 19, 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/trump-s-2020-usps-appointment-could-corrupt-key-institution-ahead-ncna1234125>.

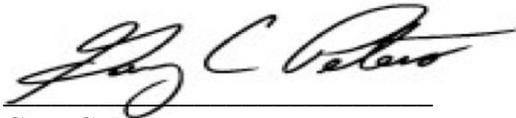
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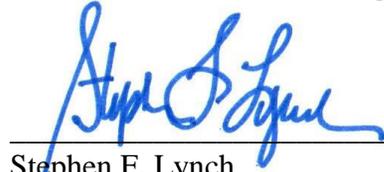
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



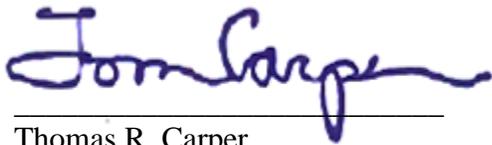
Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
House Committee on Oversight and Reform



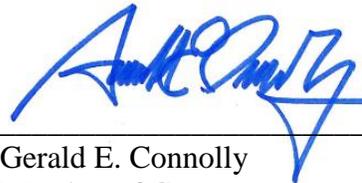
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



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Ron Wyden
United States Senator



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