

PETER R. PASTRE  
VICE PRESIDENT, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC POLICY



March 15, 2023

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-4504

The Honorable Peter Welch  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-4502

The Honorable Becca Balint  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-4500

Dear Senator Sanders, Senator Welch, and Congresswoman Balint:

This responds to your February 16 letter to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, regarding mail delivery service in Vermont.

I appreciate this opportunity to provide information about the U.S. Postal Service's efforts to strengthen our mail delivery operations in Vermont. Please know that we understand the extent to which our customers rely on timely, accurate, and efficient delivery of their mail. Moreover, you can be assured that it is the goal of the district's management team, as well as our delivery employees, to provide high-quality, reliable service.

As in many other parts of the country, the Postal Service has experienced employee availability issues due to personnel shortages in Vermont. Like other government agencies and private sector employers we must contend with a tight labor market that has complicated the hiring process, making it harder to find and retain employees. Though we attempt to manage these business challenges with every available tool, these personnel shortages have led to inconsistent service, as noted in your letter, and to aid understaffed units, management monitors daily staffing levels and works to mitigate the day-to-day staffing shortage we are facing in Vermont and across the country.

Please see the following responses to the specific questions in your letter:

1. The Postal Service's stated mission is "to provide the nation with reliable, affordable, universal mail service" six days a week. Our constituents in the Hinesburg, VT, area have not received this level of service. Please explain why the Postal Service has failed to meet its mission in the Hinesburg area.

**The Hinesburg Post Office recently experienced several weeks during which all three full-time carriers had unavoidable absences and were unavailable for work. During this period, Hinesburg Postmaster Alan Shaw stepped in to personally deliver mail every day, the office relied on personnel loaned by nearby Postal facilities, and carrier routes were rotated so that no route went undelivered for more than a day.**

2. What does the Postal Service plan to do, in the short term, to fix the egregious issues at the Hinesburg Post Office?

**As mentioned, the issues at the Hinesburg Post office were due to an unfortunate combination of unavoidable employee outages. The Hinesburg Post Office is fully staffed and is utilizing its full complement, including three full-time carriers, a part-time flexible carrier, and two assistant rural carriers, to resume regular delivery service. Mail is again being delivered daily along all routes.**

3. The Postal Service hired fewer temporary employees and leased less temporary space over the 2022 holiday season than in previous years. How many fewer temporary employees were hired and how much less temporary space was leased in Vermont in 2022 versus 2021? How does holiday mail performance in Vermont compare between the two years?

**Ahead of the 2022 peak season, we projected a decrease in mail volume in Vermont—and therefore less demand for temporary employees—relative to previous years. Comparing December 2021 with December 2022, total Postal Service hires in Vermont decreased by 59 employees, from 1,389 hires in the month to 1,330. And as expected, comparing peak season 2021 and peak season 2022, total mail volume in Vermont Post Offices declined about 11 percent, representing 7.1 million fewer mail pieces. At the same time, package delivery performance improved between the two periods, from 89.77 percent on-time delivery to 90.95 percent. Additional leased facilities have not been needed in Vermont during peak season.**

4. We understand that many qualified applicants remove themselves from the Postal Service's hiring process before their hiring and/or onboarding is complete due to the complexity and length of the process. What efforts has the Postal Service made under your leadership to improve and expedite the hiring process to ensure applicants are brought on board in a timely manner?

**The current hiring market has shown that competition for entry-level applicants is very strong. As a trusted federal agency, the Postal Service hires under specific federal laws and regulations, including the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944. Among other benefits, these regulations guarantee hiring preference for veterans and ensure applicants pass a background check—both steps the private sector does not follow. Nevertheless, we continue to improve our hiring processes while complying with applicable laws and regulations. Such improvements include implementation of an online employee assessment consistent with private-sector best practices and the use of digital recruitment advertising. We also use process automation to increase the speed of hiring transactions and have deployed a nationwide system of digital fingerprinting equipment.**

**Additionally, we reduced the time within which an applicant must respond to a job offer and post-offer screening, from five days to three, based on data that most applicants respond within 24 hours. We are also currently deploying a new Applicant Tracking System that will further automate and shorten the Postal Service's hiring process and that applicants can access through mobile devices. The first deployment of this new system is scheduled for late 2023.**

5. Please provide an explanation of how you plan to use the improved finances of the Postal Service—following the passage of the Postal Service Reform Act—to fundamentally improve staffing at all levels of the Postal Service. What efforts have you implemented so far? Do you plan to hire additional staff at locations in Vermont, and if so, how many?

**As mentioned, the Postal Service is funding investments in new technology to better recruit and hire employees. We will continue to hire for vacant positions in Vermont at every available opportunity. As part of recruitment efforts, the Postal Service places posters in retail lobbies, provides hiring notices at retail counters, posts job openings on recruitment websites and social media, sends mailings to veterans' agencies, and conducts job fairs both virtually and in person (5,774 in fiscal year 2022). In Vermont specifically, district officials coordinate heavily with staff in all 12 Vermont Department of Labor offices, work with Vermont high schools and colleges to recruit graduates, post positions at Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion chapters, advertise and interview on local television stations, and conduct outreach following any layoffs in the area. We will also be leveraging our modified contract provisions that allow us to hire part-time flexible rural carriers who have enhanced pay and benefits.**

6. The Postal Service's Delivering for America Plan—created under your leadership—involves tens of thousands of job cuts through attrition over the next ten years. How many jobs will be impacted in Vermont? How does the Postal Service plan to address existing staffing issues and service delays with fewer employees?

**We currently have no plans to reduce the delivery complement in Vermont. To mitigate staffing shortages, support the Delivering for America 10-year plan, and maintain a high standard of delivery service, the Postal Service is focusing on stabilizing the career workforce. Through the collective bargaining process, the Postal Service negotiated a provision that allows pre-career employees who stay employed with the Postal Service for two years to be automatically converted to career status. In fiscal year 2022, the Postal Service converted more than 48,000 employees to career positions.**

**Further, the Postal Service has collaborated with the National Association of Letter Carriers to identify 237 "pockets" in both urban and rural areas where hiring is especially difficult. Identifying these locations has produced negotiated joint Memoranda of Understanding that have facilitated external hiring of more than 3,500 new employees directly to career delivery positions. We have also negotiated numerous enhancements to both pay and benefits for our entry-level positions. Together, these improvements will lead to better retention and stability in the workforce and allow us to maintain high-quality service for all customers.**

Page 4

We appreciate your constituents' understanding as local and district management work to restore consistent service. If I can be of assistance with other postal matters, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter R. Pastre". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Peter R. Pastre