

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 24, 2024

Mr. Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy:

The United States Postal Service (USPS) did an exceptional job delivering ballots by mail in the 2020 and 2022 elections. Since 2022, however, USPS's implementation of its Delivering for America (DFA) plan has led to significant delivery issues nationwide. To ensure our constituents receive the highest possible level of mail-in ballot service this election season, we request information about the Postal Service's policies and plans to prepare for the 2024 election cycle.

USPS serves an essential function in American elections. On a nonpartisan basis, it securely processes, transports, and delivers election mail, including ballots. In 2020, the Postal Service overcame a series of challenges, including the onset of a global pandemic, to fulfill this critical mission. Impressively, it delivered 97.9% of ballots within three days, even as a record number of Americans voted by mail.¹ For the 2022 midterm elections, USPS maintained this standard of excellence and delivered 98.96% of ballots within three days.²

The Postal Service took extraordinary steps to achieve these results. For months before each election, it engaged in direct outreach with and offered support to thousands of election officials across the country to guarantee the secure and timely delivery of ballots. USPS also implemented special procedures to expand ground operations, including by scheduling supplemental collections and deliveries, creating special pick-ups, and extending facility operating hours. Furthermore, in the days leading up to each election, it automatically processed ballots as Priority Mail Express and deployed local turnarounds, which allowed ballots mailed to the same locality to forgo broader USPS processing.³

We applaud these achievements, but much has changed since 2022. Last summer, USPS began a series of Mail Processing Facility Reviews (MPFR) to consolidate the national postal network around Regional Processing and Distribution Centers (RP&DC). Through this process, USPS has greenlit the downgrading of 56 of 59 selected postal facilities across the country—including in

¹ U.S. Postal Service, *2020 Post-Election Analysis* (Jan. 19, 2021) (online at https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2021/usps_postelectionanalysis_1-12-21_georgia.pdf).

² U.S. Postal Service, *2022 Post-Election Analysis* (Jan. 9, 2023) (online at <https://about.usps.com/what/government-services/election-mail/pdf/usps-2022-post-election-analysis.pdf>).

³ U.S. Postal Service, *2020 Post-Election Analysis* (Jan. 19, 2021) (online at https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2021/usps_postelectionanalysis_1-12-21_georgia.pdf); U.S. Postal Service, *2022 Post-Election Analysis* (Jan. 9, 2023) (online at <https://about.usps.com/what/government-services/election-mail/pdf/usps-2022-post-election-analysis.pdf>).

Vermont, Oregon, Minnesota, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Nevada, New Hampshire, Maine, California, Washington, and Georgia.⁴ The prospect of such consolidations is particularly concerning for Americans in rural communities, who must already navigate limited postal access.

In July 2023, USPS completed its first regional consolidation in Richmond, Virginia. A report from the USPS Inspector General found that the consolidation led to “a decrease in service performance for the Richmond region that continued four months after launch.”⁵ Prior to July 2023, the area’s on-time delivery rate was 89.7%, only 2.1% below the national average. Virginia’s on-time delivery rate is now down to 71.75% for Fiscal Year 2024, 15.25% below the national average.⁶ Earlier this year, these delays led some local election officials to direct area residents to forego USPS entirely and instead place primary election ballots in designated drop boxes.⁷

USPS continued the MPFR process for several months, despite this evidence of consolidation-related service disruptions. In February 2024, for example, USPS consolidated Oregon's postal operations around an RP&DC in Portland. Despite USPS assurances that the consolidation would minimally affect residents, mail delays have already been reported in Southern Oregon. This area has a higher proportion of seniors and veterans compared to the national average, a group that heavily depends on USPS for medication, bill payments, and ballots, and cannot afford to experience any delays in service.

We are encouraged that, in the face of strong bipartisan opposition, USPS has now paused the MPFR process until after the 2024 election. However, as you indicated in your recent letter to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, that pause is set to expire in January 2025.⁸ Further, despite repeated requests from stakeholders and Members of Congress, the Postal Service has failed to provide evidence that these consolidations will not degrade service nationally, as they have done in Virginia and Oregon.

We believe that the Postal Service remains well-equipped to securely deliver mail-in ballots. However, given the service disruptions already resulting from the DFA plan, we fear the same approach adopted by USPS in 2020 and 2022 may not be sufficient to guarantee on-time delivery results.

⁴ U.S. Postal Service, *Mail Processing Facility Review* (online at <https://about.usps.com/what/strategic-plans/mpfr/welcome.htm>) (accessed May 23, 2024).

⁵ U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General, *Effectiveness of the New Regional Processing and Distribution Center in Richmond, VA* (Mar. 28, 2024) (online at <https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2024-04/23-161-r24.pdf>).

⁶ U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General, *Service Performance* (online at <https://www.uspsoig.gov/focus-areas/service-performance>) (accessed May 23, 2024).

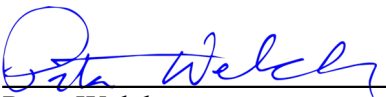
⁷ *Richmond Official Says Mail Delivery Issues a “Threat to Our Democracy”*, Axios (Feb. 26, 2024) (online at <https://www.axios.com/local/richmond/2024/02/26/richmond-early-voting-usps-mail-problems>).

⁸ Letter from Postmaster General Louis DeJoy to Chairman Gary Peters, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs (May 9, 2024) (online at <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/PMG-Letter-to-Chairman-Peters-5.9.2024.pdf>).

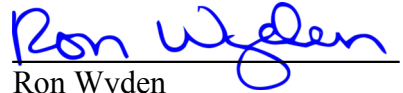
To ensure effective postal operations for the upcoming election, we request responses to the following questions by July 24, 2024:

1. Has USPS conducted any studies evaluating the DFA plan's short- and long-term impact on election mail operations? If so, please provide us with a copy of such studies. If not, why not?
2. During the MPFR pause, will the Postal Service commit to providing evidence that the consolidation will not result in further degradation of service for customers?
3. Please describe any efforts the Postal Service has taken or plans to take to engage in direct outreach and offer support to election officials for the 2024 election, as it did during the 2020 and 2022 election cycles.
4. Since 2022, has USPS developed new election mail strategies to account for continued implementation of the DFA plan?
5. In the upcoming election, how does the Postal Service intend to improve service for the communities where it has already proceeded with postal consolidations?
6. What support from Congress, if any, does USPS need to ensure on-time delivery of election mail?

Sincerely,



Peter Welch
United States Senator



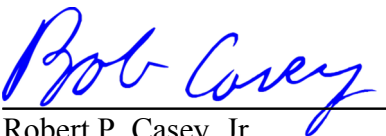
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator




Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



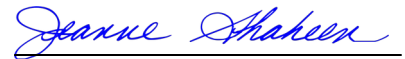
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



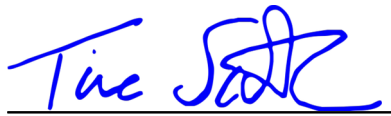
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



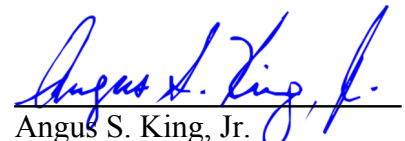
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator




Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator




Tina Smith
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator




Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator




John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



John Fetterman
United States Senator



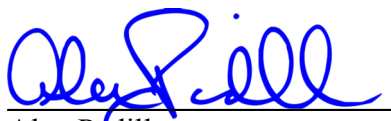
Raphaela Butler
United States Senator




Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



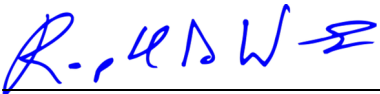
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator