

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 2024

The Honorable Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy,

We write with disappointment and alarm that USPS has yet to restore retail postal services for the people of Montpelier, Vermont. As you know, it has been more than 440 days since Montpelier's post office was destroyed by catastrophic flooding. We respectfully demand a written response providing the date by which the Postal Service will have a fully functioning retail post office open in Montpelier.

USPS has an internal benchmark of restoring retail service within 180 days of a natural disaster. Yet 14 months after the flood, Montpelier still does not have a fully functioning post office. It is the only state capital in the country without one.

In October 2023, four months after the flood, we wrote to your office about the decision to temporarily relocate the post office to a pair of parked, inoperable mail trucks.¹ Not only did these trucks lack power, bathrooms, and protection from the elements, they were stationed in several locations that were either unsafe or difficult to access without transportation. Following significant public outcry over working conditions and community accessibility, USPS relocated postal services to another temporary location—albeit with insufficient public notice and even further from the Montpelier service area.

In April 2024, nine months after the flood, USPS announced that it had signed a lease for a temporary retail post office located in downtown Montpelier, estimating completion and opening of the office by mid-summer. Today, that retail space consists of an empty, unstaffed room with a bank of PO boxes affixed to one wall.

To make matters worse, in the many months since the flood, USPS has been uncommunicative and unresponsive to requests from impacted residents, community organizations, and the congressional delegation for information about plans for restoring service. USPS's failure to restore retail service to Montpelier is not an anomaly; it is emblematic of a multi-faceted failure of USPS management to meet its obligations to rural customers. Since 2021, postal delivery service in many rural

¹ Letter from Sen. Peter Welch, Sen. Bernie Sanders, and Rep. Becca Balint to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, United States Postal Service (Oct. 31, 2023). (online at <https://www.sanders.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/VT-Delegation-Letter-to-PMG-DeJoy-10.31.232.pdf>).

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American communities has seriously declined as a result of the Delivering for America Plan.² And just last month, USPS announced plans to further slow delivery services to rural areas beginning in 2025.³

We understand that USPS has faced many challenges in restoring services following the multiple floods that hit Vermont in 2023 and 2024; however, your continued failure to restore service to Montpelier over a year later has undermined Vermonters' confidence in the Postal Service. Transparency and urgent action by USPS are now needed to restore it.

We look forward to your response to this important matter by October 15, 2024.

Sincerely,



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator



PETER WELCH
United States Senator



BECCA BALINT
United States Congresswoman

² U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General, *Service Performance* (online at <https://www.uspsoig.gov/focus-areas/service-performance>) (accessed September 24, 2024).

³ United States Postal Service, *Notice of Pre-Filing Conference* (Aug. 22, 2024) (N2024-1) (online at <https://prc.arkcase.com/portal/docket-search/advanced/filing-details/130212>).