

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 20, 2026

David P. Steiner
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Postmaster General Steiner,

We are writing to share our concern regarding significant Postal Service issues across Vermont and to request information on what the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) is doing to address these issues. It is clear that the problems we are seeing in our state are largely a result of decisions made by USPS leadership, and we ask that you take immediate steps to address them.

As you know, the Postal Service's Delivering for America ten-year plan was launched in 2021, supposedly to modernize and support the financial self-sustainability of the postal network.¹ Five years into this plan, mail delivery service in Vermont is at an all-time low, staffing shortages in the state are pervasive, and USPS has not improved its financial outlook.²

In the first half of 2026 alone, our offices have received over 2,000 constituent complaints about the USPS mail service.

Many of our constituents currently receive just one or two mail deliveries per week. Some residential areas have received zero mail deliveries over consecutive weeks. Vermonters living in South Burlington and the greater Chittenden County region have experienced particularly egregious service issues.³

These service failures have a significant impact on Vermonters: tax documents and bills are received after they are due, holiday cards come after the holiday season, and most critically, residents are forced to go without medical care when their prescriptions are not received on time.⁴

Inconsistent mail delivery is impeding state government services. The Vermont Agency of Administration has reported two separate instances over the last year when entire batches of vehicle titles were mailed out from the state Postal Center, received by USPS, and subsequently

¹ See *Delivering for America*, U.S. POSTAL SERV., <https://about.usps.com/what/strategic-plans/delivering-for-america/>.

² See U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., GAO-26-109008, U.S. Postal Service: Urgent Action Needed to Fix Unsustainable Business Model and Improve Service Performance (2026), <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-26-109008>.

³ See Erin Petenko, *South Burlington Mail Delivery Woes are Caused by Short Staffing, Says Postal Service*, VT DIGGER (May 18, 2026), <https://vtdigger.org/2026/05/18/south-burlington-mail-delivery-woes-are-caused-by-short-staffing-says-postal-service/>.

⁴ See generally Lauren Dorsey, *Local Residents Complain of Persistent Post Office Woes*, VERMONT STANDARD (Oct. 21, 2023), <https://thevermontstandard.com/local-residents-complain-of-persistent-post-office-woes/>.

lost in transit. These incidents not only create unnecessary administrative burdens for the state, they also present real security threats to customers' most sensitive personal information. Given these repeated detrimental impacts on government services, we are greatly concerned about USPS' ability to deliver election ballots timely, which are automatically mailed by the state to all registered voters in Vermont, before they are mailed back to town and city clerks' offices in time to be counted for elections.

Moreover, as a result of USPS' last-mile delivery agreements, third-party mail is being prioritized ahead of regular mail delivery. We have heard from Vermont postal workers that they are working seven days a week to deliver the packages for companies like Amazon and the United Parcel Service. To make matters worse, many postal workers are using their own personal vehicles that cannot accommodate increased package volume.

We have also heard from constituents that when carriers are on leave, their routes go without coverage. Insufficient staff and monthslong delays in hiring and onboarding staff, mean that Vermont postal workers are working 12 hour days, seven days a week to ensure Vermonters receive their mail. USPS' centralization of hiring processes and decision-making, has taken away hiring authority from Vermont postmasters, contributing to the problem.

We deeply appreciate the hard work of Vermont's postal employees, who, despite limited resources, continue to serve with dedication. We appreciate that USPS' Northern New England (NNE) District is focused on improving recruitment and retention, including by increasing the number of career fairs and hiring events across the state, but these measures alone cannot remedy the chronic operational deficiencies at USPS.

These issues are not new.⁵ Many Vermonters have dealt with reduced deliveries and deteriorating service for several years, following adoption of the Delivering for America Plan.⁶ In December 2022, and again in February 2023, the Vermont Congressional Delegation wrote to your predecessor, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, about the same hiring challenges at the Postal Service.⁷ Little has been done in the last several years to correct these systemic issues.

In order to better understand USPS' shortfalls in serving Vermonters and broader deficiencies at the national level, we request that you provide detailed answers to the following questions by no later than September 1, 2026:

1. USPS' stated mission is "to provide the nation with reliable, affordable, universal mail service" six days per week.⁸ What percentage of households in Vermont are currently receiving six days of mail delivery per week?

⁵ See *id.*; Letter from Sens. Bernard Sanders and Peter Welch and Rep. Rebecca Balint to Louis DeJoy, Postmaster General (Feb. 16, 2023), <https://www.sanders.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/VT-Del-Letter-to-PGM-DeJoy-2.16.23-PDF.pdf>.

⁶ See Petenko, *supra* note 4; Dorsey, *supra* note 5.

⁷ See Letter from Sens. Patrick Leahy and Bernard Sanders and Rep. Welch to Louis DeJoy, Postmaster General (Dec. 23, 2021), <https://www.sanders.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/Delegation-Letter-DeJoy-12.23.2021.pdf>; Letter from Sen. Sanders et al., *supra* note 6.

⁸ See U.S. Postal Serv., *Chapter 1: Our Mission, 2010 Comprehensive Statement on Postal Operations* (2010), <https://about.usps.com/strategic-planning/cs09/welcome.htm>.

2. How many open mail carrier roles across Vermont remain vacant and what is the average length of vacancy?
3. Will USPS meet its hiring goals in Vermont this year?
4. What is the average length of time for hired personnel to complete onboarding and begin work? Please provide data for Vermont and nationally.
5. What steps has USPS taken to shorten and streamline the hiring and onboarding processes? Are additional authorities or direction from Congress required to further improve efficient staff onboarding?
6. What is the average length of tenure for postal employees across Vermont?
7. In January 2026, USPS' NNE District Office confirmed to the Vermont Congressional Delegation that Vermont lags behind its regional neighbors in new employee recruitment numbers. What resources or strategies have you committed directly to the NNE District to boost statewide hiring efforts?
8. Due to insufficient staffing and delivery route coverage, Vermont requires the expeditious approval of Contract Delivery Service (CDS) to ensure that mail arrives timely. What steps are you taking to ensure that, while long-term hiring efforts are underway, routes are approved for contract service to ensure adequate coverage?
9. What are the average on-time delivery rates for last-mile delivery for 2024 and 2025?
10. What are the average on-time delivery rates for standard mail delivery services for 2024 and 2025?
11. What steps has the Postal Service taken to ensure that all ballots are timely delivered to eligible voters?
12. What specific elements of the ten-year plan have you identified that need to be altered or abandoned to ensure USPS can fulfill its mission?⁹
13. As part of your fleet modernization plan, how many new delivery vehicles will Vermont receive to facilitate mail delivery?

We look forward to receiving your prompt response.

Sincerely,



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator



PETER WELCH
United States Senator



BECCA BALINT
United States Representative

⁹ See *id.*