

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

July 16, 2020

Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
U.S. Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza West, S.W.
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Postmaster DeJoy:

The U.S. Postal Service plays a critical role in preserving the integrity of the U.S. election process and, as Postmaster General, you are responsible for ensuring adequate preparation for the challenges posed by an increase in election mail during the 2020 election. We write to request information on what steps you have taken or plan to take to ensure the Postal Service's preparedness for the influx of election mail caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As state and local officials across the country have seen, election administration during this pandemic presents unique challenges and threats to public health and safety. According to interim guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, large crowds and longer wait times at certain polling locations heighten the risk of COVID-19 spread. As a result, the CDC recommends that election officials offer, and voters use, alternative voting methods to in-person voting that minimize direct contact and reduce crowd size at polling locations. As the number of COVID-19 cases continues to rise, Americans have already begun to turn to the Postal Service in unprecedented numbers as a safe alternative to exercise their right to vote.

In states like Georgia, Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin, the number of mail-in ballots cast increased from less than 10 percent of total votes cast in the 2016 presidential primary, to over 40 and even over 80 percent of votes cast this year. In West Virginia, the number of mail-in ballots cast increased from just 25,000 in 2018 to over 200,000 this year. In Pennsylvania, the number of mail-in ballots cast increased from 80,000 in 2018 to over one and a half million this year. These dramatic increases are in addition to the millions of voter registration applications, absentee ballot applications, and other election mail being processed and delivered by the Postal Service.

The success of mail voting is dependent a number of federal, state, and local entities working in coordination. Election officials face the difficult challenge of planning the administration of this upcoming election – including arranging election mailings, sending ballots to voters on time, setting deadlines to mail back ballots, and coordinating with the Postal Service to meet its requirements –with increasingly strained budgets. Given the importance of these efforts, the Postal Service's Inspector General recently recommended further coordination between election officials and the Postal Service and called for a detailed plan to overcome potential issues.

While problems with vote-by-mail can result from a variety of factors, staffing shortages and delays at Postal Service processing facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic may lead to delays that harm the use of election mail. An efficient Postal Service is essential to ensuring the right to

vote is protected. If mail ballots arrive late and are uncounted, some voters may be disenfranchised.

Given these concerns, we ask that the Postal Service regularly brief Congress on the steps it has and plans to take to address the challenges posed by an increase in election mail during the 2020 election. Further, as part of Congress's constitutional oversight responsibilities, we request that you provide a response to the following questions by Wednesday, July 29, 2020:

1. In a recent audit, the Inspector General recommended the Postal Service "develop and implement an action plan with timelines to address the potential national issues" the Postal Service and election officials may face in successfully coordinating vote-by-mail processes. The Inspector General asked for a detailed plan with all anticipated implementation dates. Please provide Congress with a copy of that plan.
2. The Inspector General raised concerns regarding the low number of Postal Service Political and Election Mail coordinators in specific locations who are tasked to communicate with a high number of local election offices and mitigate any logistical issues. What efforts are you taking to respond to this issue? Have you hired additional coordinators to ensure strong communication between the Postal Service and election officials?
3. What is your plan to ensure adequate staffing at all processing facilities to handle election mail, including procedures to reassign mail processing staff and any plans to hire additional staff, to accommodate expected increases in election mail volumes, as well as contingencies for sick leave rates due to potential COVID-19 outbreaks?
4. What mitigation plans do you have in place for the situation where a processing plant has to close before or during the election due to a severe regional outbreak or an outbreak within the facility? Please provide Congress with a copy of that plan.

Millions of Americans continue to rely on the hard work of the Postal Service to ensure their vote will be counted, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the leader of the Postal Service, you are responsible for ensuring that the vote-by-mail system and the delivery of election mail is conducted with integrity and efficiency during this pandemic. Thank you for your attention to a matter that is essential to our democracy.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Booker', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator