

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 17, 2021

Mr. Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W.
Room 4012
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Mr. DeJoy:

We write to seek answers about continued mail delays under your leadership that are adversely affecting our constituents across the country.

In 2020, you made changes to operations at the U.S. Postal Service that slowed down mail and compromised service for veterans, seniors, and others who depend on the mail for prescription medications, package deliveries for small businesses, and other critical needs.¹ An October 2020 report from the nonpartisan USPS Office of Inspector General confirmed that the July 2020 changes you initiated, along with cost reduction strategies by operations executives, resulted in widespread delays. The Postal Service did not analyze the service impacts of these changes prior to making them.² We appreciate that the Postal Service fulfilled its duties during the 2020 general election and executed extraordinary measures to prioritize timely delivery of election mail.³ However, we remain concerned about timely delivery of all mail, from packages to newspapers to letter mail and more.

In recent weeks our constituents have again faced unacceptable delays. On-time delivery plummeted during the holiday “peak season.” For example, the week of December 26, 2020, nationwide on-time delivery was 64% for First-Class Mail and 45% for periodicals. Delays were even worse in many areas of the country.⁴ Our constituents have experienced missed paychecks and court notices, delayed critical prescriptions, an inability to reach small business customers

¹ U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs, Minority Staff Report, *Failure to Deliver: Harm Caused by U.S. Postmaster General DeJoy's Changes to Postal Service Mail Delivery* (Sept. 16, 2020); Minority Staff Report, *Interim Report on the Threat of Postmaster General DeJoy's Postal Service Delays* (Aug. 21, 2020).

² U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General, *Operational Changes to Mail Delivery* (20-292-R21) (Oct. 19, 2020) (<https://www.uspsoig.gov/document/operational-changes-mail-delivery>). These changes included eliminating late and extra trips to transport mail, reducing work hours and limiting overtime, accelerating removal of processing equipment, and more. The OIG noted that while USPS has identified initiatives in the past to contain costs, “prior year initiatives were not executed with the same velocity and consistency as the July 2020 initiatives.”

³ U.S. Postal Service, *U.S. Postal Service Releases Updated 2020 Post-Election Analysis Highlighting Extraordinary Lengths to Deliver Ballots During Historic General Election Season*, (Jan. 19, 2021) (<https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2021/0119-usps-releases-updated-2020-post-election-analysis-report.htm>).

⁴ Email from U.S. Postal Service to Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee staff (Jan. 7, 2021). See also Exhibit 1- Congressional Update, *Jones v. USPS*, No. 20 Civ. 6516 (VM), 2020 WL 5627002 (S.D.N.Y. Sept. 21, 2020) (<https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/17449832/111/1/jones-v-united-states-postal-service>).

and suppliers, lost rent payments and delayed credit card payments resulting in late fees, breakdowns in service to their communities, late personal mail such as holiday packages, and more. Reportedly, mail delivery has not yet recovered after the peak season, with constituents continuing to experience delays despite the tireless efforts of postal workers.

USPS has attributed recent delays to the historically high volume of packages during peak season,⁵ a shortage of airlift and trucking capacity, and employee shortages with postal workers on necessary leave due to COVID-19.⁶ While these are credible explanations, the fact remains that USPS leadership had a responsibility to prepare for these expected challenges. We question whether management made adequate preparations including sufficient temporary hiring and logistical planning.

We also question whether your decisions and directives continue to hinder mail delivery. Our constituents, including postal workers and Postal Service business partners, have reported concerning practices in at least some areas of the country, including management rejecting most overtime requests, limiting transportation, and renewing orders to reduce office time and leave mail behind. In addition, your hiring freeze on managers, implemented as part of a reorganization plan,⁷ has reportedly left many local postal manager positions vacant. Finally, you have announced that additional changes to the Postal Service will be forthcoming under a strategic plan that you and the Board of Governors will release in the coming weeks.⁸ This plan will reportedly include changes to service standards, slowing down the mail even further.⁹

It is your duty, first and foremost, to protect service and ensure timely mail delivery for every person in this nation. We demand that you not make additional changes that will harm service for the American people. In addition, we urge you to be fully transparent with the public about Postal Service operations and the reasons they are still facing delays. To that end, we ask that you answer the following by February 26, 2021:

⁵ Remarks from Feb. 9, 2020 open session meeting of the Board of Governors. Package volumes in December were 40% greater than the same period last year. Volume increases were partly driven by private carriers FedEx and UPS limiting service, rerouting packages to USPS.

⁶ U.S. Postal Service, *Amid Historic Volumes in an Extraordinary Year for Deliveries, the U.S. Postal Service Reinforces Importance of Mailing Packages Early* (Dec. 14, 2020) (<https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2020/1214-usps-reinforces-importance-of-mailing-packages-early.htm>).

⁷ U.S. Postal Service, *Postmaster General Louis DeJoy Modifies Organizational Structure to Support USPS Mission* (Aug. 7, 2020) (<https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2020/0807-pmg-modifies-organizational-structure.htm>); *USPS Announces Management Hiring Freeze, Other Steps as Losses Continue*, FEDweek (Aug. 12, 2020) (<https://www.fedweek.com/federal-managers-daily-report/usps-announces-management-hiring-freeze-other-steps-as-losses-continue>).

⁸ Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, U.S. Postal Service, Remarks from Nov. 13, 2020 open session meeting of the Board of Governors (Nov. 13, 2020) (<https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2020/1113-pmg-remarks-from-open-session-meeting-with-bog.htm>).

⁹ *Postmaster general's new plan for USPS is said to include slower mail and higher prices*, Washington Post (Feb. 12, 2021) (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/02/12/dejoys-new-plan-usps-slower-mail-higher-prices-sources-say/>). USPS has also reportedly considered other proposals to decrease the level of service, including reducing nonprofit discounts; increasing prices for Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico; and eliminating Alaska bypass mail.

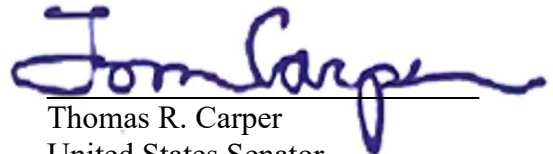
1. Please describe the specific steps you have taken to identify each cause of mail delays, including measuring the impacts of management actions.
2. Please describe in detail the steps you took to prepare for expected high package volumes and employee shortages during the peak season. Please explain why you were unable to complete necessary steps to prevent delays, such as hiring sufficient temporary workers.
3. Please list steps you have taken to respond to customers who have been harmed by these mail delays.
4. Have any nationwide or regional operational changes, other than those listed in previous USPS statements, exacerbated mail delays during and since the peak season? Please describe.
5. Please explain any nationwide and regional operational directives you or other Postal Service executives have made since November 2020.
6. Will you commit to not reducing service standards, and to not enacting other changes that will reduce the level of service to our constituents, as part of your strategic plan?

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to working with the Postal Service during the 117th Congress to ensure it remains a vibrant, sustainable institution for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator




Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Richard Durbin
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



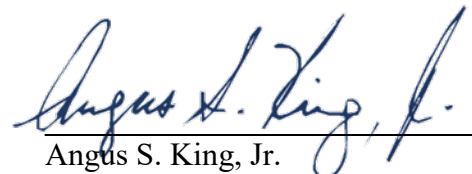
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator




Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



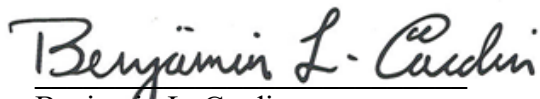
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator




Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator




Mark R. Warner
United States Senator




Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator




Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



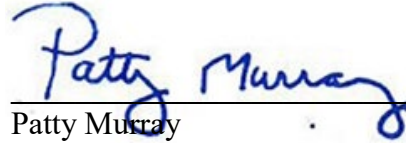
Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/ Martin Heinrich

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator




Patty Murray
United States Senator



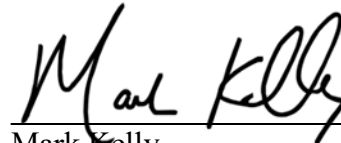
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Bob Casey
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator