

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 16, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Gary Peters
Chairman, Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer and Chairman Peters:

We write to express our support for President Joe Biden's nominees to serve on the Board of Governors of the United States Postal Service (USPS) and to call for their immediate consideration before the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and the full Senate. The President's nominees - Mr. Ron Stroman, Mr. Anton Hajjar, and Ms. Amber McReynolds - represent experienced, thoughtful experts on the Postal Service who will help to guide USPS through its current financial and logistical challenges. Acting with all possible speed to expedite their confirmations is critical as the Board of Governors will soon review Postmaster General Louis DeJoy's 10-year strategic plan.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have once again seen the critical role of USPS in connecting our communities, and yet unacceptable mail delays have occurred due in part to ineffective leadership. Whether it is manifest in the delivery of birthday and Christmas cards or stimulus checks and medications, service levels have fallen to unacceptable levels. It is crucial that the Senate quickly move to confirm President Biden's nominees to bring renewed focus on the vital, public service that USPS provides and ensure that mail delivery improves to the standards Americans have come to expect for generations.

Virginia customers have experienced among the worst delays in the nation. In December 2020, first-class mail on-time delivery rates averaged just 52.4% in the Northern Virginia Postal District, 55.1% in the Richmond Postal District, and 67.0% in the Appalachian Postal District. These rates represent drastic declines relative to baselines in on-time delivery from March 14, 2020 – July 11, 2020, the period between the onset of COVID-19-related impacts and the announcement of Postmaster General DeJoy's operational changes. The on-time delivery rates of first-class mail in this time frame were 90.9% in the Northern Virginia Postal District, 90.3% in the Richmond Postal District, and 93.8% in the Appalachian Postal District.¹ But this service decline represents more than an abstract statistic, it represents real-world harm to thousands of our constituents. To that end, thousands of Virginians have shared their frustrations with us in recent weeks. Here are but a snapshot of our constituent's stories to demonstrate the consequences of the failures of Postmaster General DeJoy:

"My parents (who are older, on fixed income, and aren't comfortable with many online options) got fined by their mortgage company and car loan lender for lateness (they'd never been late prior) when their payments did not arrive on time but were mailed as normal. My dad, who as a Medicare enrollee, is now required to use a mail-order pharmacy for his life-sustaining blood thinning medication, is now having to ration his pills to make sure he doesn't run out entirely

¹ <https://www.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.542242/gov.uscourts.nysd.542242.111.1.pdf>

because his three-month supply has not yet come...This is a life or death problem.” – Michelle, Fredericksburg, VA

“I use USPS to mail small packages for my business, 3-5 [times] per week. I always pay extra for USPS Priority Mail...because it is supposed to get to its destination in 2-3 days. Since November, only a few have arrived on time and the rest have taken between 7 and 18 days to arrive. In the final two weeks before Christmas, I had to shift to UPS which not only cost more but also came out of my own pocket because I provide free shipping as a service to my customers. Mine is a small business and I can’t afford the additional expense of alternate shipping methods. Even though my business is small, it puts food on the table for my family because my husband’s salary has been cut in half due to Covid. I cannot afford to anger or alienate my customers who expect prompt delivery. I would like to say that things have gotten better since Christmas, but they haven’t.” – Patricia, Charlottesville, VA

“I ordered and paid for 2-3 day priority mail on a shipment of medicine for my pet, rather than choosing the free shipping in standard mail that I could have received, because it said it could take 5-7 business days in standard mail; I needed the medicine within 7 business days but I didn’t want to take a chance on it being late. It was shipped from California on Feb 15th. As of this morning, February 24th, I still have not received it.” – Ben, Fairfax, VA

“Our neighborhood has not received mail at least one day a week (entire neighborhood). Bills are so late when I receive them they are past due. This has resulted in late fees on my accounts.” – Marcia, Norfolk, VA

Despite historic delays in recent months, the Postmaster General has indicated he plans to announce a new strategic plan in the coming weeks that would cut service standards and raise prices. From what we understand, Mr. DeJoy’s plan seems tailored towards codifying the very delays which have deeply frustrated so many Americans today. In his testimony before the House Oversight Committee, Mr. DeJoy said he was “evaluating all service standards” and public reporting indicates this includes eliminating two-day delivery for local, first-class mail and eliminating all mail transport for first-class mail.² The American people deserve a full Board to consider the proposed plans to ensure that the unacceptable delays in the delivery of bills, medicine, and letters do not persist. Of particular importance in consideration of the strategic plan is the input of postal workers and unions who would be well represented by Mr. Stroman, a former deputy postmaster general, and Mr. Hajjar, formerly general counsel for the American Postal Workers’ Union, if they are confirmed.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/02/12/dejoys-new-plan-usps-slower-mail-higher-prices-sources-say/>