

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 6, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Mnuchin:

We write to you to express our deep concern that the solvency of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), which provides essential delivery services for 160 million^[1] American homes and businesses, is being jeopardized for political reasons. We urge you to reject imposing counterproductive or politically motivated conditions on the pledged \$10 billion emergency loan to the USPS and any other relief that the USPS needs.

Enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, the USPS has always provided an invaluable service —delivery to anyone with an address, regardless of living in an urban versus rural area, being rich or poor, or old or young. Now, during the COVID-19 crisis, millions of people are receiving their much-needed relief checks through the mail. An affordable delivery service is needed more than ever in these times—to ensure everyone is able to get their essential medicine prescriptions, purchase items not available in their area, or to keep in touch with loved ones in a time of social distancing. U.S. businesses, especially small and medium-sized businesses that are suffering greatly because of lost revenue because of the coronavirus, also rely on receiving goods through the USPS's affordable pricing structure.^[2]

We are therefore very disturbed to hear President Trump's public statements threatening approval of the \$10 billion loan unless conditions are added such as hiking prices^[3] perhaps to even four or five-times as high as current levels. These threats appear to be thinly-veiled attempts to retaliate against what he sees as a vocal critic of his presidency, the Washington Post, and its owner Jeff Bezos. We are concerned about President Trump's history of invoking another of Bezos' assets, Amazon, in conjunction with calls to increase prices charged by the USPS, strongly suggesting personal and political motivations on this matter. It would be highly inappropriate and unacceptable for the Department of Treasury to act on such motivations when considering the USPS loan or other USPS relief.

We similarly oppose, in the strongest possible terms, using the coronavirus crisis as a way to push through a privatization of the USPS. The White House Office of Management and Budget in 2018 advocated for privatization of the Postal Service, an idea which has been around for a long time but is extremely unpopular with

^[1] *Postal Facts*, USPS (viewed April 26, 2020), <https://bit.ly/2S5ATh6>.

^[2] Laura Behrens Wu, *If We Let the US Postal Service Die, We'll Be Killing Small Businesses With It*, TECHCRUNCH, Apr. 24, 2020, <https://tcrn.ch/2yHNFvs>.

^[3] Diane Bartz and Jeff Mason, *Trump Threatens to Block Aid for U.S. Postal Service if it Does Not Raise Prices for Amazon*, REUTERS, Apr. 24, 2020, <https://reut.rs/3aJfyjT>.

the American people.^[4] In addition to privatizing parts of the USPS, the Treasury Department’s Presidential Task Force on the Postal Service called for hiking prices charged by the USPS as well as cuts in services and decreased benefits for postal workers.^[5] Privatization efforts like these would lead to putting profits over people—meaning rural areas would suffer from service cuts and Americans would be left to the whims of corporations constantly seeking to maximize their bottom lines—and should be off limits during this crisis.

Taking advantage of this pandemic by raising prices on shipping companies or pursuing privatization for political purposes will only mean one thing—increased prices for everyday consumers, as well as the huge numbers of businesses that depend on the mail service. These reported planned conditions President Trump seeks to impose on the \$10 billion loan to the USPS stand in stark contrast with the relative lack of strings placed on monies made available to corporations in recent relief efforts, no matter how badly a company might have been managed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge you to reject these political and ideological calls to use this pandemic to further the President’s agenda while burdening everyday Americans and U.S. companies already struggling to make ends meet.

In addition to being highly inappropriate, any attempt to retaliate against the USPS in this way would also be deeply unpopular with the American people. Recent opinion polling released by the Pew Research Center shows how important the USPS is to all Americans—across political party affiliation. Ninety one percent of survey respondents stated that they viewed the USPS in a positive light, reflecting almost identical majorities from both Republican and Democratic parties.^[6] And, our democracy may very well depend on the ability of immunocompromised and otherwise vulnerable people to vote-by-mail in a time where going to polls is risking their very lives.

Finally, these threats are an insult to the hardworking men and women of the USPS, who are on the front lines keeping our society and economy functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic. To provide these critical services to our nation, hundreds of thousands of postal workers are heroically facing the coronavirus every day so that their fellow Americans can more safely remain in their homes and not spread the virus. This is a heavy burden in addition to making sure that “snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night” keeps them from guaranteeing everyone with an address receives their mail. Tragically, 44 postal carriers have already lost their lives from COVID-19.^[7]

We urge you to do what is right not only for the postal workers bravely delivering our essential goods, but also for the American people and businesses who rely on affordable mail services. We strongly recommend that you reject any politically-motivated conditions that would force price increases, service or benefit cuts, or otherwise hinder the excellent work of the USPS when considering the pledged \$10 billion emergency loan or any other relief for the USPS.

Sincerely,

/s/ Tom Udall
United States Senator

/s/ Doug Jones
United States Senator

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

^[4] EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, DELIVERING GOVERNMENT SOLUTIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: REFORM PLAN AND REORGANIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS, at 68, Jun. 2018, <https://bit.ly/3aDLCWG>.

^[5] U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY, UNITED STATES POSTAL SYSTEM: A SUSTAINABLE PATH FORWARD, Dec. 4, 2018, <https://bit.ly/3bGauyi>.

^[6] *Public Holds Broadly Favorable Views of Many Federal Agencies, Including CDC and HHS*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER, Apr. 9, 2020, <https://pewrsr.ch/3ayH6so>.

^[7] *Response to President Trump’s Remarks Today That He Will Block Coronavirus Aid for the U.S. Postal Service*, APWU, Apr. 24, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3eVGHDy>.

/s/ Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/ Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie Hirono
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/ Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/ Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

/s/ Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/ Patty Murray
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/ Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

/s/ Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

/s/ Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith
United States Senator

/s/ Mark R. Warner
United States Senator