

United States Senate

August 26, 2020

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

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy:

We write to express our concern about recent operational changes enacted by the United States Postal Service (USPS) that have resulted in significant mail delays, unpredictable closures and reduced hours at post offices, and staffing shortages at facilities in California and around the nation. We ask that you provide written answers to the attached questions regarding recent policy changes, what the USPS is doing to address ongoing service issues, and how the agency is preparing for an expected increase in mail volume in the coming months.

Press reports indicate that on July 10th, you directed significant operational changes that included restricting overtime, prohibiting late departures and extra trips, and directing letter carriers to leave mail behind on workroom floors and docks. Subsequently, we learned of accelerated efforts to remove letter processing equipment and other mail infrastructure, including 76 mail-sorting machines in California. Since these changes were enacted, there have been widespread reports of mail service issues in California and around the country.

Over the past several weeks, our offices have been contacted by tens of thousands of constituents concerned about the USPS, many having experienced slower mail delivery, missing or delayed packages, and unpredictable post office hours. California residents have shared stories of medication that usually arrives in three days taking more than 10 days to reach them, leading to missed doses and serious medical complications. Small businesses in the state have reached out to share that they are losing customers over missing or delayed products that were sent through the mail. Some residents have complained of not receiving mail for more than a week, while others have been asked to pick up mail themselves at the local post office.

On August 18th, you issued a statement announcing a suspension of the new policies until after the November election. However, it has since become clear that this is only a partial roll back, and that you intend to move forward with the new policies after the election, despite clear evidence that they have led to a decline in the agency's performance. Furthermore, press reports indicate that you are considering implementing much more sweeping changes after the election. While we support meaningful reforms

to improve the efficiency and financial standing of the USPS, changes made without consulting Congress or postal regulators that risk undermining the agency's service standards in the midst of a pandemic are simply unacceptable.

The Postal Service is much more than just a business. It is an essential service for our nation and our economy, providing universal and affordable delivery to every household and business across the United States. For seniors and rural Americans, the agency represents a lifeline delivering food, medicine, and other basic necessities. Small businesses rely on the USPS to carry their products, particularly in remote areas, and that reliance has only grown during the pandemic. In the coming months, millions of Americans will use the mail to safely and securely cast their election ballots. All told, nearly 160 million homes and businesses depend on the USPS to deliver their mail and packages.

At this critical moment, as the United States struggles to overcome a devastating public health crisis, and as we gear up for a national election, the need for quick and reliable mail delivery is clear. The essential service provided by the Postal Service must be maintained, and we look forward to learning the details of your plan to ensure that this happens.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us or have your staff contact Ryan Williams in Senator Feinstein's office at Ryan_Williams@feinstein.senate.gov or Jon Bertran-Harris in Senator Harris' office at Jonathan_Bertran-Harris@harris.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Enclosure: Questions for the Postmaster General

Enclosure: Feinstein/Harris Questions for the Postmaster General

Please provide answers to the following questions as promptly as possible:

1. What steps have you taken to address and correct widespread mail service issues being reported throughout the United States subsequent to your July 10th memo calling for sweeping operational changes?
2. On August 21st, you testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee that you have no intention of reinstalling any mail-sorting machines that were recently decommissioned, saying they are “not needed”. What is the basis for your statement that these mail-sorting machines, including a reported 76 in California, are “not needed”?
3. Please provide a list of mail processing equipment that has been decommissioned in California since the start of the year, including dates that these machines were removed. Please also provide any analysis that has been completed regarding the number of machines needed to handle peak mail volumes in California districts where machines were removed.
4. During the Senate hearing, you testified that you never directed the elimination of overtime, nor had it been curtailed by you or the USPS leadership team. This contradicts a widely reported memo entitled “New PMG’s expectations and plan.” circulated to Postal employees on July 14th, which very clearly stated that, “overtime will be eliminated.” Please clarify what overtime policy changes have been planned or enacted during your tenure as Postmaster General.
5. You confirmed that the USPS has faced significant issues with employee availability related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has contributed to an overall mail slowdown. In light of these concerns, please provide plans for how the agency is preparing (e.g. expanded overtime authorization, temporary positions, etc.) for anticipated peak periods in California.
6. Please describe what plans are in place to handle an increased volume of mail-in ballots in California? How have those plans been communicated to state election officials?
7. Can you provide your commitment in writing that the Postal Service will continue the practice of treating all election mail, including ballots, as First Class mail, regardless of the class of mail used to send it?