

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 20, 2020

Mr. Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W., Room 10300
Washington, D.C. 20260-1000

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy:

We are writing to express deep concern about recent reports on the timeliness of ballot mail. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many voters may consider alternatives to in-person voting. Voters should not have to choose between their health and exercising their constitutional right to vote, and they should feel confident that their vote will be counted if they choose this option. It is vital that the United States Postal Service (USPS) processes to send and receive absentee or mail-in ballots are thorough and clear to ensure full and accurate election results.

Despite measures to increase communication between the Postal Service, State Election Commissions, and associated election offices, our offices continue to receive word of absentee ballots not being properly processed and delivered in a timely manner. Additionally, revelations of changes to Postal Service operations and organizational structure that could further delay mail delivery times underscore these concerns, particularly regarding individuals choosing to vote absentee in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes, in combination with the delays already resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, highlight the need for USPS to continue to clearly and quickly address these deficiencies in coordination with election and post offices.

In May, USPS General Counsel Thomas Marshall wrote that states with ballot deadlines by Election Day run a serious risk of ballots not arriving by this deadline, particularly for those mailed less than a week prior to this date. In his letter, he also highlights the likelihood of voters choosing to use the mail to vote as a result of the pandemic.

On July 7, 2020 the USPS Office of Inspector General released an audit report following the Wisconsin primary elections held on April 7, 2020 that aimed to investigate reports of absentee ballots not being delivered to voters or received by the election commission in a timely manner. While investigating these cases the report noted potential nationwide issues integrating vote by mail processes with the Postal Office procedures which could impact future elections.

The report identifies 13 states, including Michigan, with deadlines that put ballots at high risk of not being delivered to voters before an election, and 11 states with insufficient time to deliver and process ballots before an election. It also notes several key issues regarding the handling of absentee ballots including ballot postmark procedures, ballots mailed without mail tracking technology, and the ratio of Political and Election Mail coordinators to election offices.

This report highlights our deep concern that individuals voting through absentee or mail-in ballots will not have their votes accurately counted, and it is critical that these issues are addressed prior to elections rather than in response.

Among the report's recommendations, the audit outlines the importance of Postal Service postmarking procedures and use of the political mail log to record ballot mail, continued communication with election offices on service standards and the use of Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMBs) to track ballots, and addressing the ratio of Political and Election Mail coordinators and the election offices they oversee. The audit calls for the Chief Operating Officer & Executive Vice President of the Postal Service to develop and implement an action plan with timelines to resolve these issues.

As a result, we request information on the Postal Service's measures to address the issues highlighted in this report and implement procedures to ensure the proper delivery of ballots, including:

1. What measures is USPS taking to ensure full and continued coordination between state election commissions and election offices and members of the postal service to ensure the proper delivery and receipt of ballots, including the use of Intelligent Mail barcodes, design of ballot mailings, and clarity on postal service delivery standards and expectations?
2. What outreach is USPS doing in coordination with these offices to ensure that voters are aware of postal service delivery standards and provide sufficient time for delivery and other best practices when voting by mail?
3. How is the USPS implementing the recommendations of this report nationally to address key deficiencies in the proper transfer of election mail, including proper postmarking, tracking, and processing procedures?
4. What measures is USPS taking to ensure that COVID-19 related delays in mailings, and delays resulting from reported operational changes do not impact ballot processing and mailing with the expectation of larger absentee voting due to the pandemic and the expectation of large voter turnout for the 2020 Presidential Election?
5. What is being done to mitigate the risks of issues related to Political and Election mail coordinators overseeing numerous election offices, and lapses in communication therein?
6. In implementing the modifications to USPS's organizational structure announced on August 7, 2020, what is being done to ensure that mail delivery, including election mail, is not impacted by its implementation?

We also call upon the Chief Logistics & Processing Operations Officer and Executive Vice President and the Chief Retail & Delivery Officer and Executive Vice President of the United States Postal Service to develop and implement an action plan with timelines to address the issues highlighted in this report prior to the November elections.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the USPS's role providing for the American people is more important than ever. The USPS provides mail and package delivery services that allow Americans to pay their bills, receive medication, and other critical tasks, and we must ensure that it continues to function effectively through the Coronavirus outbreak, and in the coming years. One of these responsibilities is to provide the continued availability of voting by mail and guarantee that every voter that chooses this option has their vote counted. It is USPS's responsibility to ensure that it is prepared prior to the election to properly execute this function, and coordinate with election offices to provide this service. We stand with you to ensure you have the adequate resources to complete this critical work.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and please provide full and prompt responses.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

/s/
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/
André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/
Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

/s/
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

/s/
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

/s/
Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress

/s/
Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

/s/
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

/s/
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

/s/
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

/s/
James P McGovern
Member of Congress

/s/
Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress

/s/
Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/
Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress

/s/
TJ Cox
Member of Congress

/s/
Ed Case
Member of Congress

/s/
Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

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Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress

/s/
Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

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Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

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Sean Casten
Member of Congress

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Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

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Peter Welch
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Dan Kildee
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Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

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Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

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Dean Phillips
Member of Congress

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Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress

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Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

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Ron Kind
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Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

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Kendra S. Horn
Member of Congress

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Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

/s/
Judy Chu
Member of Congress

/s/
Joyce Beatty
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Bill Foster
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Chellie Pingree
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Peter A. DeFazio
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Kathy Castor
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Lucy McBath
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Elissa Slotkin
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Suzanne Bonamici
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Steve Cohen
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Chris Pappas
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Jackie Speier
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Jamie Raskin
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Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

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Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

/s/
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

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Brian Fitzpatrick
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Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress

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David Price
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Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
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Steven Horsford
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Raja Krishnamoorthi
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Marcy Kaptur
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Denny Heck
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Gregory W. Meeks
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Tulsi Gabbard
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

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David Cicilline
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Jim Cooper
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Jerry McNerney
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Ann Kirkpatrick
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David Scott
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Mike Thompson
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Nydia M. Velázquez
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Andy Levin
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Henry Cuellar
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Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

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Tim Ryan
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Rosa DeLauro
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Yvette D. Clarke
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Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress

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Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

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A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

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Jim Himes
Member of Congress

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Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress

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Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

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Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress

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Alma Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

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Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

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Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

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Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

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Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

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William R. Keating
Member of Congress

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Haley Stevens
Member of Congress

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David Trone
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Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

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Conor Lamb
Member of Congress

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Julia Brownley
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John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

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Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

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Dutch Ruppersberger
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Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

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Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

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Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

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Derek Kilmer
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José E. Serrano
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Marcia L. Fudge
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Mark Pocan
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Lori Trahan
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John Garamendi
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Grace Meng
Member of Congress

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Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress