

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 27, 2022

The Honorable Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy,

We are writing to express deep concern about the timely delivery of mail, especially with election ballots already sent to voters, in Washington state. Over the past several months, we have heard numerous complaints from constituents who have experienced delays in the delivery of medication, bills, passports, and other important paperwork through the United States Postal Service (USPS).

Earlier this year, we received more than 170 complaints from Lynden residents about delayed mail delivery.¹ For months, we have also heard ongoing complaints about mail delivery in other parts of Whatcom County, Snohomish County, and Island County. More recently, many constituents in Everett have reported not receiving daily mail deliveries for several weeks, and constituents in Ferndale have stated that they have not received any mail deliveries for over a week. Doctors have reached out to express concern that they are unable to send medications to their patients. While officials have told customers they can pick up their mail directly at the Ferndale Post Office, the lines are hours long and many people cannot take advantage of this option due to family, job, and health constraints.

Furthermore, Washington uses an entirely vote-by-mail system and with the state primary election less than a week away, we are worried about the impact that these delays are having on the timely delivery and return of ballots. It is our understanding that some facilities have a significant backlog of ballots that need to be delivered, and that there is inadequate staff to run each route every day, which means ballots are not being picked up, postmarked, and delivered to election officials in a timely manner. Following widespread delays during the 2020 general election, a series of court decisions required USPS to take extraordinary measures to ensure expeditious processing of election mail, and a May 2022 settlement agreement states that USPS will “take measures similar in content to, and consistent with, the written guidance and extraordinary measures used in the November 2020 election.”² Thus far, we have not heard or seen any evidence to suggest USPS is taking such measures in our region.

When our constituents have asked USPS about the delayed mail delivery, they have been repeatedly told that USPS is experiencing severe staffing shortages. We have heard that the one-

¹ https://whatcom-news.com/some-whatcom-county-post-offices-face-challenges-mail-recipients-seek-delivery-solutions_205448/

² <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/190-1.pdf>

year retention rate for USPS employees for our region may be as low as 34 percent. While we understand that the entire country is grappling with workforce shortages, we believe there are steps USPS can take in the short-term to boost hiring, training, and retention. We deeply appreciate and commend the great work of the USPS employees who are working tirelessly amid these challenging conditions and urge the agency to do more to support these workers.

The current mail delivery situation in our region is unacceptable. We request your prompt response to the following concerns:

- Please provide a detailed list of all steps USPS is taking to ensure the timely delivery and return of election mail in Washington state ahead of the August 2nd primary.
- What measures is USPS taking to address staffing shortages in Washington state?
- What steps is USPS proactively implementing ahead of the November general election to ensure similar staffing shortages do not impact the timely processing of election mail?
- How is USPS using resources and requirements in the Postal Service Reform Act to improve timely mail delivery?
- Are there additional resources that Congress can provide to help USPS address these staffing challenges and boost timely mail delivery?

Thank you for your attention to this important and urgent matter. We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress