

United States Senate

October 8, 2020

Mr. Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Room 4012
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Mr. DeJoy:

We write to express our concern about recent reports that in August, the United States Postal Service (USPS) failed to update address data in the National Change of Address Linkage database (NCOALink) and to request information about the resulting impact on election mail. With voters already casting ballots across the nation, such failures are unacceptable and require immediate action.

For three weeks in August, the Postal Service failed to update address changes in the NCOALink database, which most states use to keep voter addresses up to date. Between August 10 and August 30, at least 1.8 million new changes of address were not registered in the database, due to an unspecified "error." While USPS stated that it fixed the error and restored the missing data on September 14, we are concerned about how the missing data affected jurisdictions that were preparing election mailings during the outage. According to reports, officials in Minnesota sent out ballot applications based partly on information drawn from the faulty database in August, while other states had to delay sending out mailings as they scrambled to fix incorrect addresses. Other states were unaware of the change-of-address problem.¹ USPS is responsible for communicating with jurisdictions about election mail issues, and has over 400 Election Mail Coordinators available for this purpose. USPS must fully communicate with states and the public about any issues that might affect election mail, and must work diligently to prevent such errors.

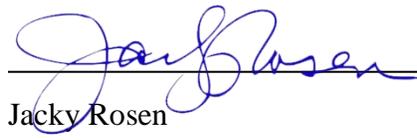
On August 21, 2020, you testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee regarding policy changes at the Postal Service that resulted in nationwide delays to mail delivery service. Senators raised concerns not only about the delays in critical items that Americans receive through the mail on a regular basis, such as prescription medications and Social Security checks, but also about the Postal Service's ability to safely and securely deliver all mail ballots on time for the upcoming general election. This year will see the largest volume of election mail in American history, due in large part to the global health pandemic that will keep voters at home in November. You told the American people during your testimony before the committee that you were "extremely, highly confident" the Postal Service would deliver the nation's election mail on time.

¹ <https://time.com/5893881/exclusive-as-states-prepared-mail-in-ballots-postal-service-failed-to-update-at-least-1-8-million-addresses/>

In order to reassure our constituents that this error will not impact their ability to vote, we ask that you respond to the following questions no later than October 14, 2020:

1. When and from whom did you learn that USPS stopped updating change-of-address data in NCOALink for a period of about three weeks in August 2020? What was the cause of this failure and what corrective actions did you take to respond?
2. Upon learning of this failure, did USPS immediately notify relevant election officials in each of the states that were impacted by any missing data? Did USPS work with election officials to assist them in responding to this failure?
3. How did the failure to update addresses affect jurisdictions that were preparing election mailings during the period of August 10 to September 14? Based on USPS coordination with election officials, how many jurisdictions were at risk of preparing mailings based on incorrect data, and how many had to change their procedures in order to correct the data?
4. How have you determined that the NCOALink database is now complete and up-to-date?
5. What steps are in place to ensure that address changes are entered into NCOALink in a timely fashion and that there are no system failures, particularly in the days and weeks leading up to the 2020 general election?
6. While USPS is taking steps to ensure swift delivery of election mail, errors such as this one can have unexpected impacts in a nationwide network. How will USPS communicate to election officials, and crucially to the public, about any internal errors that affect election mail?

Sincerely,



Jacky Rosen
U.S. Senator

/s/

Gary C. Peters
U.S. Senator

/s/

Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator

/s/

Tammy Duckworth
U.S. Senator

/s/

Mazie K. Hirono
U.S. Senator

/s/

Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senator

/s/

Cory A. Booker
U.S. Senator

/s/

Amy Klobuchar
U.S. Senator

/s/

Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senator

/s/

Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senator

/s/

Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator

/s/

Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator

/s/

Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator

/s/

Margaret Wood Hassan
U.S. Senator

/s/

Jack Reed
U.S. Senator

/s/

Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator

/s/

Tina Smith
U.S. Senator

/s/

Thomas R. Carper
U.S. Senator