



United States Senate Committee on

Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs

U.S. Senator Gary Peters | Ranking Member

Failure to Deliver

**Harm Caused by U.S. Postmaster
General DeJoy's Changes to Postal
Service Mail Delivery**

A HSGAC Minority Staff Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2020, U.S. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, who had been serving as Postmaster General for less than one month, directed widespread changes to United States Postal Service (USPS) operations. Changes under Postmaster General DeJoy's leadership included the elimination of extra and late mail transportation trips, the reduction of equipment at mail processing plants, the start of a pilot program for mail sorting and delivery policies at hundreds of post offices, and reported reductions of overtime. Within weeks, these changes significantly slowed mail delivery across the entire country and, as Senator Peters wrote to Postmaster General DeJoy and detailed in an interim report, "compromised service for veterans, small businesses, rural communities, seniors, and millions of Americans who rely on the mail for medicines, essential goods, voting, correspondence, and for their livelihoods."¹

On August 6, 2020, U.S. Senator Gary Peters, Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, launched an investigation into the Postal Service delays resulting from operational changes directed by Postmaster General DeJoy. As part of his investigation, Senator Peters invited the public to provide information about their recent experiences. He received over 7,700 submissions from Postal Service employees, constituents, and individuals across the country sharing concerns about the impacts of these changes. Senator Peters also repeatedly requested information from the Postal Service regarding these changes, and called on Postmaster General DeJoy to address conflicting prior statements and remaining unanswered questions when he testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on August 21, 2020.

At the direction of Ranking Member Peters, this report evaluates the extent of the harm caused by Postmaster General DeJoy's directives, the reliability of claims made about who ordered these changes and how and why they were made, and the extent of service delays as a result of these changes. This report also assesses the Postal Service's procedures for moving election mail and its responses to public concerns about readiness for high volumes of election mail in 2020.

This report finds that on-time mail delivery dropped abruptly throughout the U.S., following Postmaster General DeJoy's July 2020 directives. By the second week of August 2020, on-time delivery of First-Class mail nationwide had fallen nearly 10 percentage points compared to the first week of July 2020, prior to Postmaster General DeJoy's changes – a drop that represents approximately **85 million more late deliveries** in that single week than would have otherwise occurred.² Widespread delays have continued over the two months since the changes began. Although service has shown some improvement by the beginning of September 2020, on-time delivery rates remain below the levels of the weeks prior to the beginning of Postmaster General DeJoy's tenure.

¹ Letter from Ranking Member Gary C. Peters, to Louis DeJoy, Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer, U.S. Postal Service (July 17, 2020); Letter from Ranking Member Gary C. Peters et al. to Louis DeJoy, Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer, U.S. Postal Service (July 30, 2020); [United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs, Ranking Member Peters Minority Report, Interim Report on the Threat of Postmaster General DeJoy's Postal Service Delays \(Aug. 21, 2020\)](#).

² Estimate based on USPS First-Class mail volume data (4.15 billion pieces of First-Class mail in July 2020). "USPS Financial Dashboard for the month of July 2020," (copy on file with Committee) and staff analysis of USPS Weekly Service Performance data (copy on file with Committee).

In addition, this report finds that Postmaster General DeJoy failed to consider the likely service impacts of the transportation changes he ordered in July 2020. Postmaster General DeJoy did not conduct any analysis of the service disruptions and delays his directives could cause. He moved to abruptly and dramatically cut late and extra trips from processing centers, without addressing underlying factors, despite available information on likely negative impacts. As a result, this report finds that delays were more severe. While he has since admitted to ordering the July 2020 mail transportation changes, Postmaster General DeJoy initially refused to acknowledge his role, has denied playing a role in other changes reported by postal workers and constituents, and has continued to minimize the magnitude of the service problems and the impacts these changes have had on millions of Americans across the country.³

³ Letter from David E. Williams, Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President, U.S. Postal Service, to Ranking Member Gary C. Peters et al. (Aug. 6, 2020); Letter from Thomas J. Marshall, General Counsel and Executive Vice President, U.S. Postal Service, to Ranking Member Gary C. Peters (July 22, 2020).

FINDINGS OF FACT

- 1. Changes directed by Postmaster General DeJoy slowed mail service across the country.** On-time mail delivery fell abruptly following Postmaster General DeJoy's July 2020 directives ordering operational changes to mail service and delivery. By the second week of August 2020, on-time delivery of First-Class mail nationwide had fallen nearly 10 percentage points compared to the week preceding the changes. This means approximately **85 million more deliveries were late in a single week**, compared to what the late deliveries would have been that week under on-time delivery rates before the changes.
- 2. Some parts of the country saw on-time delivery drop by 15-20 percentage points in the weeks following Postmaster General DeJoy's July 2020 changes.** Every one of the Postal Service's 67 Districts across the country saw a decline in on-time delivery of First-Class mail during the weeks following Postmaster General DeJoy's July 2020 directives. In Central Pennsylvania, Northern Ohio, the Ohio Valley, Detroit, and Honolulu, on-time delivery of First Class mail fell by 15-20 percentage points over the four-week period starting on July 11, 2020, compared to the four-week period preceding Postmaster DeJoy's start at USPS. **In the Detroit District, on-time delivery fell from 84.8 percent to 65.7 percent during this period, a 19.1 percentage point drop.**
- 3. Postmaster General DeJoy was not transparent about the operational changes he directed and has downplayed their damaging effects on seniors, veterans, small businesses, and others across the country.** Within one month of beginning his tenure as Postmaster General on June 15, 2020, Louis DeJoy directed significant changes to Postal Service operations but initially declined to acknowledge his role in these changes. He has since failed to fully acknowledge severe and widespread delays even after they were apparent for weeks, and the impact of these delays, including on delivery of needed medicine, or for shipping, payments, and other vital services for small businesses and the public.
- 4. Postmaster General DeJoy failed to consider the likely service impacts of the transportation changes he ordered in July.** Mr. DeJoy moved to dramatically cut late and extra trips from processing centers, but did not assess or even request any analysis of the service disruptions and delays his directives could cause. From July 5 – 19, 2020, the Postal Service cut the number of weekly extra trips from approximately 15,000 to under 5,000, and cut weekly late trips from over 30,000 to under 8,000. These actions disregarded the likely negative impacts of displacing the mail carried on those trips, as well as the findings of a previously released Inspector General report that extra and late trips are used to mitigate delays in the network and that USPS should address the underlying causes of delays.
- 5. Nearly two months after Postmaster General DeJoy mandated operational changes, on-time delivery has still not fully rebounded.** While there has been improvement following the steep drop in July, as of September 4, 2020, nationwide on-time delivery of First-Class mail remains below the levels during the weeks prior to Postmaster DeJoy's arrival. During the week of August 29 – September 4, 2020, on-time delivery began declining again in many parts of the country.

6. Accounts from USPS workers contradict Postmaster General DeJoy's statements about the status of certain operational changes, including limitations on overtime – and the Postal Service has still not answered questions about these conflicting reports.

Postmaster General DeJoy has repeatedly denied making changes to USPS overtime policies. However, information and accounts from employees across the country contradict these claims. The Postal Service has not provided any explanation for these discrepancies.

7. The Postal Service has robust procedures to swiftly move election mail, but it remains to be seen whether these procedures will be followed. The Postal Service has provided its election mail procedures in documents to the Committee and made public commitments to follow these procedures as well as unwritten practices – including moving election mail by the First-Class service standard. However, the Postal Service has not consistently followed its election mail procedures during the 2020 election cycle, and further significant delays and backups would jeopardize its ability to do so. The Postal Service has responded to congressional pressure by putting a greater focus on election mail, but additional oversight will be necessary to determine whether USPS will meet its stated objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Postmaster General should cease and reverse actions that are causing mail delays.

The Postmaster General failed to analyze the impact of his actions on mail delivery for Americans. Postmaster General DeJoy should halt all changes and practices that continue to cause mail delays for Americans. If the Postmaster General does not halt such changes, the Board of Governors must use its authority to do so.

2. Congress should pass the *Delivering for America Act*, which Senator Peters has introduced to prevent the Postmaster General from making any further changes that could harm service during the COVID-19 pandemic. Americans count on reliable service from the Postal Service, particularly during this public health crisis. Making any big changes at the Postal Service during this time is not only risky, it puts Americans' lives at risk. The *Delivering for America Act* would prohibit the Postmaster General and USPS leadership from implementing any changes that would disrupt operations and services during the COVID-19 public health emergency, including:

- Any change that would prevent the Postal Service from meeting its service standards or cause a decline in service performance.
- Any change that would have the effect of delaying mail, allowing for the non-delivery of mail to a delivery route, or increasing the volume of undelivered mail.
- Any closure, consolidation, or reduction of hours of a post office or facility.
- Any prohibition on payment of overtime to Postal Service officers or employees.
- Any removal, decommissioning, or other stoppage of mail sorting machines, other than for routine maintenance.

3. The Postal Service should follow policies and practices for swiftly delivering election mail, including treating all election mail as First-Class mail. Postmaster General DeJoy must follow through on his promises to follow all election mail procedures. The Postmaster General and Board must ensure the Postal Service continues to strictly follow its practice of treating election mail as First-Class mail, delivering it using the highest service standard. The Postal Service must also carry out proper procedures to ensure mail is swiftly processed and not lost. This requires that leadership first eliminate any changes that are causing backups and delays.

4. The Postal Service should consult with Congress and stakeholders before enacting any future changes. Postmaster General DeJoy's changes, portrayed as a necessary approach to cost-cutting at the Postal Service, without regard to the chaos it has caused for Americans, raises significant concerns about his approach to the Postal Service's future. Before making operational changes in the future, the Postmaster General must conduct robust analysis, consult with stakeholders, follow all laws pertaining to Postal Regulatory Commission input and public consultation, and ensure there are no negative effects on mail service. Postmaster General DeJoy and the Board, who are currently formulating a 10-year plan for the Postal Service's operations and solvency, must not take the approach of cutting services to pad the bottom line. They must engage with stakeholders, Congress, and the American people about the future of the Postal Service, which belongs to the people.