

**Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson**  
**“The Postal Service’s Actions During the 2016 Campaign Season:**  
**Implications for the Hatch Act”**  
**July 19, 2017**

Good morning. In October of last year, one of my constituents, Timm Kopp, a letter carrier from Wisconsin, came forward to my office with concerns about leave practices he was experiencing and witnessing related to the upcoming election. In response, I referred the matter to the Postal Service Inspector General and to the Office of Special Counsel.

I appreciate Mr. Kopp’s willingness to come forward and to testify here today. Both the Office of Inspector General and the Office of Special Counsel have now completed their audits and investigations, and representatives are here today to present their findings. I also appreciate the appearance of the Postmaster General today to respond to these findings.

Our committee has jurisdiction over both the Postal Service and the Office of Special Counsel, and it is our responsibility to conduct oversight of this matter. The Hatch Act exists to ensure that federal agencies administer programs without regard to politics.

The Office of Special Counsel’s report in this matter found a systemic violation of the Hatch Act dating back to the 1990s. It noted that Postal Service leadership “took official actions with the intent of enabling” the campaign activity of its union, and “with a clear understanding of what that activity involved.” Based on these findings, it is legitimate to wonder why no one will be held accountable, how Postal Service leadership allowed this systemic violation of the Hatch Act to go on for twenty years, and is this occurring in other federal agencies?

In the grand scheme of things, the data identified by the investigations—97 employees out of work and a sampled overtime cost of \$90,000—do not seem like large numbers, especially here in Washington. But there were unquantified consequences of this practice. One Postmaster in Wisconsin noted ten operational concerns stemming from this practice, including “penalty overtime, late trips to the plant, and safety issues.” The practice also put non-union employees, or union employees who supported other candidates, at a disadvantage. If those employees sought unpaid leave for several weeks for campaign activity, they would not have received the same treatment. Thus, the Office of Special Counsel found “an institutional bias” in favor union-endorsed candidates, all of whom belonged to one political party.

I thank the witnesses for appearing today and look forward to your testimony.