

**“Tracking the Postal Service: An Update on the Delivering for America Plan”**  
**House Committee on Oversight and Accountability,**  
**Subcommittee on Government Operations**  
**10:00 AM, Wednesday, May 17, 2023**  
**Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our Postal Service workforce delivered prescription medications, paychecks, food stamps, stimulus checks, holiday and birthday gifts, rapid COVID tests, and more to homes and businesses across the country. Today, the Postal Service employs 630,000 individuals who live in every single congressional district. That workforce delivers mail to more than 163 million delivery points each day and operates more than 31,000 post offices nationwide.

The United States Postal Service (USPS) touches every household in America. That is why as former Chairman of the Government Operations Subcommittee, I made Postal oversight one of my top priorities. During my tenure, the Subcommittee hit the road to conduct Postal field hearings in cities across the United States including Detroit, Michigan; Chicago, Illinois; Baltimore, Maryland; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In each of these cities we assessed the U.S. Postal Service’s mail delivery performance, worker safety, and efforts to reduce mail theft.

After these hearings, I took the lessons gleaned from our solution driven discussions and authored a number of Postal bills to address the very issues expressed by constituents and stakeholders around the country. First, cost effective rates and reliable service are vital attributes to the Postal Service’s long-term survival. That is why I introduced the Ensuring Accurate Postal Rates Act, which would require the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) to reconsider if the Postal Service needs increased ratemaking authority when accounting for the newfound positive financial effects of the Postal Reform Act. Now is not the time to reduce delivery standards and increase prices on customers. Congress must make certain that the Postal Service is accessible to everyone.

Second, I introduced a bill that would prohibit the United States Postal Service from moving forward with a contract for a new fleet of mail trucks unless 75 percent of those trucks are electric. Initially, Postmaster General (PMG) Louis DeJoy attempted to purchase a fleet of gas-guzzling mail trucks, against the wishes of the Biden administration, for \$6 billion. But this would only further climate change and be even more costly in the future. I am proud that at the end of last year, USPS took up my proposed plan and announced their decision to acquire a 75 percent electric fleet of Next Generation Delivery Vehicles over the next five years and committed to meet the requirement to only acquire new vehicles if they are electric by 2026.

Finally, I introduced two additional bills geared towards improving employee protections and benefits. The Postal Employee Appeal Rights Amendments Act extends federal employee protections, including the right to appeal such actions to the Merit Systems Protection Board and the Postal Supervisors and Managers Fairness Act improves internal procedures for negotiating pay and benefits of USPS supervisory and other managerial personnel. These two bills are the beginning steps towards properly protecting and supporting our federal workforce. And they also build upon my additional federal employee bill, the Equal COLA Act, which would create parity

between the two federal retirement systems and result in a more just retirement benefits system for all federal workers. But our work is not done.

Throughout his tenure, PMG DeJoy has repeatedly failed to engage critical stakeholders—including Congress, unions, and postal customers—when making sweeping changes to the Postal Service’s transportation, processing and operating structures, delivery standards, and pricing. Since PMG DeJoy’s tenure began in June 2020, the Postal Service has undergone significant operational and organizational changes, leading to reduced delivery service performance during the coronavirus pandemic. According to a recent audit from the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG), the Postal Service’s on-time delivery rate (also known as “service performance”) began “significantly declining between July and December 2020 to a low of 67.43% of on time deliveries nationwide at the end of December.” Furthermore, PMG DeJoy orchestrated a major restructuring of USPS leadership, weakening strong institutional postal knowledge and further slowing down the mail. He also threatened our very Democracy by meddling with our election and reversing a long-standing policy that treats election mail as speedier first-class mail and maintains charges at a lower marketing mail rate. This decision gravely jeopardized ballot’s timely delivery. Lastly, PMG DeJoy oversaw the removal of more than 600 mail sorting machines national wide and a multitude of mail collection boxes. For these reasons, I have and will continue to call for PMG DeJoy’s resignation. He openly pledged his allegiance to the political expedience of President Trump and blatantly disregarded the cost to our democracy. PMG DeJoy must answer to his ignominious legacy of deliberate sabotage, draconian service cuts, and craven partisanship.

The Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC), members of the Postal Service’s Board of Governors, unions, and consumer groups have heavily criticized PMG DeJoy’s ten-year plan titled, “Delivering for America,” in fear it would result in higher mail delivery fees and slower mail delivery. We cannot let standards slip while prices increase — it’s the prescription for a death spiral. That is why I fought for and secured the passage of the bipartisan Postal Service Reform Act (PSRA). The PSRA boosts the Postal Service’s financial outlook, drives cost savings, and codifies six-day mail delivery, which is essential to those in rural areas, and remains a competitive advantage for the postal service.

I also sent a letter to the PRC, to share concerns regarding the recent proposed changes to the USPS’s delivery standards and provided alternative ways to improve the USPS. In addition, I sent another letter to the United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General to raise concerns about potential safety violations by USPS truck freight shipping contractors, which resulted in a now active investigation. And finally, I sent a letter to the Office of Personal Management and Office of Management and Budget urging them to implement recommendations from a commissioned study by the PRC, including the recommendation to adopt certain private-sector pension cost allocation methods that could save the Postal Service as much as \$63 billion.

But solvency threats are not the only threats to the United States Postal Service. The Associated Press found that in 2022, robberies of postal carriers skyrocketed, and surged 78 percent from the previous year, resulting in nearly 500 incidents. In addition, according to Postal Inspector Service data, from 2018 and 2021, robberies of mail carriers more than tripled, and

robberies involving a gun more than quadrupled. Moreover, according to press reports, the Postal Service informed the Department of Justice that there have been more than 165 armed robberies against letter carriers from October 2021 through March 2022. If this pace holds, it will mark a 400% increase from the number of armed robberies in 2019. NBC4 Washington's data analysis found more than 2,000 assaults or robberies against postal carriers since 2020. In addition, thieves have been robbing mail handlers for their universal or "arrow" keys that unlock mailboxes and clusterboxes—allowing for easy access to large collections of checks and other mail. A 2020 Postal Service Inspector General report found that the Postal Service's management controls over arrow keys was ineffective, and it was not clear how many of these arrow keys were "in circulation, lost, stolen, and broken."

While most of the recent mail theft and other crimes occurred in Florida, California, Texas, and New York, a *Washington Post* report from April 30, 2022 found that check stealing schemes using the Postal Service were on the upswing in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, particularly in Maryland. NBC4 Washington's reporting found close to 180 incidents in the D.C. region (133 assaults and 44 robberies).

Congress must remain committed to preserving the safety and security of our postal workers not just in word, but in action. That is why last August, as Chair of the Government Operations Subcommittee of the House Oversight Committee, I led a request to the Government Accountability Office then Vice Chair Katie Porter, Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, and Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton on a request to examine the effectiveness of the Postal Service's use and deployment of Postal Police to prevent and reduce crime. I also led a letter with Ranking Member Jamie Raskin of the House Oversight Committee and Ranking Member Kweisi Mfume of the Government Operations Subcommittee of the House Oversight Committee to PMG DeJoy expressing continuing concerns about the Postal Service and United States Postal Inspection Service's plan to ensure the physical safety and wellbeing of our postal carriers. We must remain diligent to ensure that hardened security of our postal assets do not shift risk onto our civil servants that are committed to delivering the mail rain or shine.

It remains concerning that PMG DeJoy continues to do so little to improve delivery service, deter mail theft, or stop the abuse of letter carriers and it investigates only an infinitesimal fraction of reported theft. Postal Service leadership must provide Congress with a robust strategy to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of mail across the country, hold thieves and assailants accountable, and better secure the safety of both postal workers. We look forward to partnering with the Postal Service to do all we can protect to these public servants.

The Postal Service has a statutory obligation to deliver the mail to 163 million households across our country every day. Even in 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Postal Service remained a consistent, stalwart for all families across America. So, we must continue diligent bipartisan oversight over mail delivery delays, postal theft incidents, and violence against United States Postal carriers.