

# *WITNESS TESTIMONY*

*CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS AD- HOC HEARING ON TRUMP  
ADMINISTRATION EFFORTS TO SABOTAGE UNITED STATES POSTAL OPERATIONS*

*August 20, 2020*

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*Testimony before the Congressional Progressive Caucus*  
*August 20, 2020*

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Chairs Jayapal, Pocan and members of the Caucus thank you for having me today. I recently resigned as Vice Chairman of the Postal Board of Governors, when it became clear to me that the administration was politicizing the Postal Service with the Treasury Secretary as the lead figure for the White House in that effort.

By Statute the Treasury was made responsible for providing the Postal Service with a line of credit. The Treasury was using that responsibility to make demands that I believed would turn the Postal Service into a political tool, ending its long history as an apolitical public infrastructure.

Clearly the President was determined that the Postal Service should inflict harm on Amazon delivery by sharply raising parcel shipping prices on everyone by 400% or more. On the way to attacking a political foe, I was concerned that American citizens would feel the shock of the price increase and that American supply chains would lose much of their value, harming businesses and our competitive position globally.

The President was also scoffing at the Postal Service, calling it a joke, while a large number of our employees were dying daily as they struggled to perform our mission, during a deadly pandemic. The President eventually admitted that he was withholding Covid-19 relief funds so that the Postal Service could not reliably enable voting in his upcoming election.

The Treasury Secretary had also insisted that all Republican appointees for the Board of Governors and Postal Regulatory Commission come to his office to kiss the ring and receive his blessing before confirmation. He continued contacts with them away from the full board issuing orders and expressing his approval and disappointment with their performance.

The Secretary was keenly interested in labor agreements, postage pricing generally and especially the volume discounts being given to the Postal Services largest customers- Amazon, UPS and FedEx. The Postal Service replied to early demands from the Secretary explaining that his demands were illegal, but the concerns were ignored.

Ironically, the actual fiscal concern, was not whether the Postal Service could zero out its \$15 billion-dollar line of credit. The postal service keeps a huge cash-on-hand account that could always pay off all or most of the loan.

The real concern was that the Treasury had borrowed and spent our \$300 billion pension and retiree health fund. The interest, rate set by Treasury for itself, was so low

that the funds were dying. Had the funds been invested in a retirement fund, the liability would have been fully funded by now.

The Postal Service actually is losing some money. Several years ago, a one-time price increase, that had been granted to Postal Service, was withdrawn, rather than being made permanent. The increase was valued at \$2 Billion a year, and so predictably the Postal Service began losing about 2 Billion a year.

I believe the problems of the Postal Service can be remedied without becoming a political tool and without gutting the infrastructure. There are many options available and many small solutions that can be configured to avoid harsh financial shocks for any one stakeholder group.

Post Offices should be allowed into related business lines and become a single neighborhood point of access for government services that cannot be put online. Postal carriers going to every door can provide personalized services to challenged and elderly Americans that would enable citizens to live in their own homes independently. Post offices and carriers can also support and resupply the new army of workers that are office-less or work at home, while providing work opportunities for those living in rural areas. The Postal Service can help make the coming smart mega cities places of wonder instead of places of impersonal isolation.

Instead we are now seeing infrastructure cuts that are destroying the Postal Service's commitment to service delivery standards and the beginning of the price increases that the President threatened. The White House has admitted that steps are being taken to assure that Americans cannot vote in the next Presidential election without exposing themselves to disease at the height of a deadly pandemic.

I resigned from the Board of Governors, because I was convinced that its independent role had been marginalized and that representations regarding an independent postal service for the nation were no longer truthful. I felt that the public was owed the truth in this matter. Thank you for having me today.

*Testimony of Tammy Patrick  
Senior Advisor on Elections | Democracy Fund Voice  
Testimony before the Congressional Progressive Caucus*

*August 20, 2020*

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Thank you to the Honorable Co-Chairs and Members of the Caucus for asking me here today to share with you the concerns of election officials with what has been happening under the new leadership at the United States Postal Service.

As a bit of background, I was a local official in Maricopa County, Arizona for over a decade, served as a Commissioner on President Obama's Presidential Commission on Election Administration (PCEA), and have served as a liaison between the National Association of Election Officials (Election Center) and USPS as a member of the Postal Service's Mailers Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC).

After the PCEA's work was completed I moved from Arizona to work in Washington, D.C. at the Bipartisan Policy Center where I penned the *New Reality in Voting by Mail* in 2016. Since 2017, I have served as a Senior Advisor to the elections team at Democracy Fund, an independent foundation working to defend American democracy and challenge it to be more open and just. I am also an adjunct professor at the Humphrey School of Public Administration at the University of Minnesota.

Since the Civil War, ballots have been entrusted to mail carriers for safe delivery. Since the late 1980s the State of Oregon has conducted all of their elections by mail. In the 90s, the Postal Service created the Official Election Mail Logo to help identify ballots and voter registration materials in the mail stream. But it was not enough.

Ten years ago, when election officials would have a postal session at our conferences, election administrators from across the country would line up at the microphone to share their stories of poor communication: phone calls that went unanswered, emails that were never returned, questionable customer service.

However, in the ensuing decade we made great strides in fostering a collaborative partnership between election officials and the Postal Service. For tens of millions of American voters their ballot is handed to them not by a pollworker, but by their postal carrier and we have seen USPS embrace their role in what I often refer to as "delivering democracy". It isn't just another envelope in with the more than 400M mail pieces each day: it is someone's ballot, someone's vote.

Protocols were established:

- the tracking of election and political mail throughout processing;
- focused training of operational staff on treatment of ballots;
- the creation of a special service type ID (STID) for ballots in the intelligent mail barcodes to raise visibility of ballots in the data (to parallel what the logo does visually);

- the sweeping of plants for ballots in increasing frequency as Election Day draws near with nightly all-clears verifying that all ballots have been processed and are on their way to their final destination; and
- Election Mail specialists were tasked with outreach to election officials to aid them in their navigation of the many rules and regulations in the tome that is the USPS Domestic Mail Manual (DMM).

Some of these efforts have required overtime.

Some of them require additional trips, and some late trips.

Which brings us to why we are here today. I am here today to answer any questions you have to the best of my ability, but also to ask a few questions of my own as election officials are seeking clarity on a number of issues.

The “Mandatory Stand-up Talk” directive outlined no overtime and no late trips and that changes “may be difficult” and that “we may see mail left behind or mail on the workroom floor or docks”. This is diametrically opposed to the ethos of the Postal Service: “Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds”.

It has been reported that “there IS overtime” and that “there have been no official changes”—yet my understanding is that a **mandatory** directive outlining that “**Every single employee** will receive this information, no matter what job they perform” changes the expectation of what that employee will do on the job. **So, which is it?**

My concern is with the postal carrier out on their route and their shift is about to end: do they finish the route? Do they leave the remaining stops to be picked up the next day? What if there are ballots in those mailboxes?

If the carrier DOES complete their route, will the truck heading for the processing plant wait for the carrier to come in? Even if it means that they don’t leave on time?

If the mail is not collected or does not go to the plant on the day it is picked up, will it be postmarked that day, or the next?

Some will say that it is only delayed one day—but in many states one day is a day too late for the ballot to count. And there are many points along the journey that such a delay could occur.

The Postal Service has recommended for years that that ballots mail out at First Class, rather than Marketing Mail (formerly Standard Mail). The use of Marketing Mail is most common in the Western States where we have whole states, and large portions of other states, mailing out ballots to voters weeks in advance of Election Day. Many election offices have mailed at this rate not because they have a lesser view of electionmail, but because they have been told for years that the use of the election mail logo and the green Ballot Tag 191 (a placard that goes on the mail trays) allowed the

Postal Service to identify ballots and expedite their delivery. This is still what local Postal employees are telling election officials, what they recently experienced in the state's primaries in the last few weeks.

Yet from L'Enfant plaza election officials are hearing that, "You get the service that you pay for. The logo does not change the class of service."

***So, which is it?***

The tone I am hearing from this Postmaster General is a new one, it is accusatory and combative where previously it was collaborative and instructive. At the recent Board of Governors meeting it was said that "we cannot correct the errors of the Election Boards if they fail to deploy processes that take our normal processing and delivery standards into account." Election boards do not set the dates and deadlines to mail out ballots, state legislatures do and they have been remiss to change them.

The voters should not be disenfranchised because of the failings of their elected officials. In the past the Postal Service has moved mountains if need be to ensure ballots were prioritized—even, and most importantly, in those final days before the deadline.

I will be honest; this is where I do have some internal angst. For years I have been calling on the states change their deadlines to request a ballot—and some have. The Postal Service recommends voters mail back their ballot at least one week before it is due, and that is pre-COVID. Yet, 22 states allow a voter to request a ballot in that time—7 allowing for a voter to request a ballot by mail on Monday for Tuesday's election. This sets the wrong expectation for voters, the expectation that even if they do wait until the deadline things will be fine. They won't. Especially if the Postal Service is no longer going to the lengths they have in the past to make certain that voters aren't the ones to pay the cost for outdated statutes. That cost is high. That cost is with their vote.

***So, which is it?***

Timing. Removal of blue collection boxes, pulling sorting equipment offline, hiring freeze, rapid reorganization, pilot programs to change carrier routes in urban areas—some of these actions may be warranted and fully supported by data, but the lack of transparency has been palpable; and in a vacuum, you get viral. The public outcry of concern demonstrates that the voters are listen, they are watching, and it is impacting their confidence in their ability to vote by mail.

Lastly, every election there are interruptions of service. Hurricanes, fires, tornadoes, floods, indeed 9/11 was an Election Day in New York City. But this year we also are in a global pandemic and do not know **where** the next hot spot will be nor **when** it will hit. Our democracy depends on people, and people can get sick. The Illinois Board of Elections is currently under quarantine. We know that Fulton County, GA had a 2 week quarantine in the primary and a death of an employee. The Postal Service employs more than 600K people and processing plants and carrier pickup and delivery depend on them. Now is not the time for a hiring freeze.

Election officials love a check list, so here is mine:

**CONGRESSIONAL ATTENTION:**

Fund the USPS—so that financial reasons can't be used to change mail delivery  
Provide Paid Postage for all Election Mail—similar to the payment of UOCAVA  
Create Formal Election Mail USPS Policy around prioritization of election mail.

**USPS RESPONSIBILITY:**

Continue procedures of the past in delivering democracy  
Treat Election Week as “Peak Season”  
Increase USPS Election Mail Training and Outreach

**STATE ACTIVITIES:**

Align State Ballot Request Deadlines with Reality of Mail Delivery Timelines  
Increase Ballot Tracking and Mail Ballot Return Options.

**VOTERS ACTION:**

Don't Wait to Request  
Don't Wait to Return  
Know Your Options

Ballots mail out to voters in less than one month. Military and overseas voters' ballots will go out in every state in the Nation on September 19<sup>th</sup>. We don't have much time; the runway is running out. The American public is tired, frustrated, grieving the loss of more than 170K souls. They need to be assured that in this moment it is safe and secure to vote by mail. In this moment their voting booth may be their kitchen table, their ballot box their mailbox. In this moment their voices will be heard and their votes counted.

I look forward to any questions you may have.

**President Mark Dimondstein**  
**American Postal Workers Union**  
**Testimony before the Congressional Progressive Caucus**

**August 20, 2020**

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Thank you co-chairs Jayapal and Pocan and members of the caucus for this opportunity to speak today.

The Postal Service, enshrined in the Constitution, is a national treasure that belongs to the people. It is a small “d” democratic right providing universal postal services at reasonable rates, no matter who we are or where we live – daily serving 160 million addresses. It is the low-cost anchor of a massive \$1.4 trillion mailing and package industry. It is a source of family sustaining and community building decent union jobs that apply the important principle of equal pay for equal work. The public Postal Service has the full support of the people with an astounding 91% approval rating.

The 200,000 workers we represent, and postal workers as a whole, are extremely dedicated to the mission of binding the country together. This has been graphically underscored with the frontline essential work of postal workers proudly connecting us all in these difficult times of the pandemic.

But our ability to reliably continue to serve the country is under threat in several ways. First, and most urgently, is the effect of the pandemic on the Postal Service’s finances. The sharp economic contraction that began in March also affected the mail. Letter mail has contracted over 30%. While the surge in package volumes has outstripped early expectations, that has only delayed – not eliminated – the Postal Service’s projected moment of insolvency. The Postal Service projects that it will suffer \$50 billion lost revenue over the next ten years due to COVID and will likely face a cash shortfall as soon as March of next year.



Simply put, because the USPS normally runs its operations with zero tax dollars, the pandemic related lost revenue places the continuity of postal essential services at serious risk.

We have worked, along with many others, to secure a minimum of \$25 billion in emergency COVID relief, a bi-partisan unanimous request of the Postal Board of Governors. We applaud the House for passing this measure and urge the Senate to swiftly do so.

Second, is the hostility postal workers and the public Postal Service face from this Administration. In June 2018 a White House Office of Management and Budget Report openly called for the privatization of the Postal Service. A White House Task Force report later that year suggested slowing down the mail, cutting delivery services, restricting union rights for workers and drastically raising package prices. We face a president that calls us a joke, rails against the tried and true practice of voting by mail, and thus far stands in the way of COVID financial relief while corporations received \$500 billion plus in the CARES stimulus package.

Our members come from all walks of life and political persuasions. But we are united in rejecting these attacks. We recognize this Administration's agenda as what it is – a brazen attempt to demonize postal workers and defund and degrade the Postal Service, just so it can be sold off piecemeal to Wall Street and private financial interests.

Furthermore, the Postal Service was designed to be apolitical and independent of the type of Administration meddling that Dave Williams has described. We've been alarmed by these practices and welcome the oversight this hearing and others will provide into them.

Finally, when Louis DeJoy was appointed Postmaster General, we voiced our concern over his relationships with this Administration but stated we would welcome him into the postal family if he shared in practice postal workers' commitment to the quality public, universal service this country deserves.

The policies he implemented to cut service and delay the mail is counter to the needs of the postal customers who expect and deserve the “prompt, reliable and essential”

services promised under the law. The PMG's announcement Tuesday that he was rolling back some of these cuts is welcome. It is evidence that the popular uproar around the Postal Service these last weeks has sent a powerful message.

But a temporary suspension of some service cuts is simply not enough. In our view, the public would be better served by a commitment to expand and enhance postal services, not slow and contract them. While we are confident that the Postal Service is in a position to safely and securely handle election mail this November, we know that the public deserves top quality postal services through the election, through the duration of this pandemic and far beyond and for all mail - from medicines and financial transactions, to retirement checks and vital supplies.

That's why our call for a minimum of \$25 billion in COVID-related emergency relief is ever more urgent. I appreciate the support the members of this caucus have provided in this effort and welcome any questions.

*Testimony of Rosemary Enobakhare  
Campaign Director, Health Care Voter  
Testimony before the Congressional Progressive Caucus*

*Thursday, August 20, 2020*

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Good afternoon. My name is Rosemary Enobakhare. I am a proud daughter of Jackson, Mississippi, and now an equally proud resident of Washington, D.C.

I lead a national grassroots movement called Health Care Voter, which mobilizes millions of people across the country advocating for quality, affordable health care and medicine.

I'm here today because, like millions of Americans, I must tell my story if I want to survive this pandemic. I'm also here on behalf of millions of Health Care Voters across the country to demand moral leadership from the Trump administration and its allies. I shouldn't have to testify about my personal health before Congress to survive, but the powers that be in the halls of Congress and this president's administration need to reckon with the pain they are causing me and the people I work with every day by sabotaging the U.S. Postal Service.

I live with hypertension, which requires daily doses of prescribed medication. Like millions of Americans, I have been receiving these life-saving medications via the U.S. Postal Service because of the pandemic. I live in fear of times like this because my mother died from an aneurysm and my father from a heart attack. And in my heart of hearts, I know: Without my medication, my life could end as swiftly and without warning as my parents' lives did. As a Black woman in America living with pre-existing conditions, I am very aware of the heightened health risks I face — especially now, as the rampant COVID-19 pandemic continues killing Black people at an alarming rate.

I live in southeast Washington, D.C., in a neighborhood called Congress Heights, which is part of D.C.'s Ward 8. Ward 8 is a pharmacy desert. We have just 12 pharmacies for more than 80,000 people, none of which are safely accessible by foot. Meanwhile, Ward 2 has triple the number of pharmacies for about the same population size. Ward 2 is 69% white — Ward 8 is 92% Black. So when the mail doesn't get delivered in Ward 8, those who suffer are overwhelmingly Black, elderly, and/or living with more limited income than residents in other wards of the district.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, my neighborhood was already facing a mail delay. But in the last two months, I have been forced to go long stretches without my daily medicine because the Trump administration has actively tried to destroy this public good in its path to illegitimately cling to power and destroy our democracy. I am very lucky to have the resources to rideshare over to another part of the city and get my medicine. Many of my neighbors cannot afford this luxury, and have been forced to go without crucial medications. Without timely mail delivery, my community is left without the medicine that keeps us healthy and alive.

The fact is, the very same people who benefit from the crumbling postal service have deliberately relegated my neighborhood, and many others across the country, to a pharmacy desert. This crisis is a concerted effort by the Trump administration to further marginalize the same people they have always left behind: rural communities, seniors, people with pre-existing conditions, Black people, veterans — the list goes on.

The Trump administration has intentionally unleashed this mail crisis on our country because the outcome of a crumbling postal service advances the president's corrupt agenda. The president is actively delegitimizing this year's election by hemorrhaging the very system through which millions of Americans will vote in the midst of this pandemic in order to stay safe. Postmaster General DeJoy, a Republican megadonor and long-time businessman, is his partner in crime. For DeJoy and Trump, our postal service is just another one of their crooked business schemes that advances their agenda at everyone else's expense.

But the American people won't stand for this corruption. The U.S. Postal Service is crucial to our country's public health, especially during a pandemic — and a pandemic election.

The postal service is the sole source of life-saving medicines for countless Americans. It is the sole means of safely participating in our democracy during this pandemic for countless Americans. It is a lifeline to medicine for countless veterans. That's why Postmaster General DeJoy must fully rescind his operational destruction of the postal service — not temporarily pause it. That's why Sen. McConnell must urgently bring the Senate back into session so the Senate can pass Rep. Carolyn Maloney's Delivering for America Act, which reverses DeJoy's destruction.

If DeJoy, Trump and their Republican allies in Congress don't end their attack on the postal service, they will have even more blood on their hands. And I refuse to die as the political pawn of a vindictive president turning on his citizenry to advance his own corrupt cause.

Thank you for your time, I am happy to answer any questions members of this caucus have at this time.

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