

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 11, 2023

The Honorable Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Postmaster DeJoy:

We write to express our concern regarding the continued delay of United States Postal Service (USPS) mail delivery in Northwest Washington, particularly in Whatcom County during the December holiday period.

Following our July letter, we continued to receive regular reports of delayed mail across the region. Starting in mid-December, we increasingly heard a number of constituent complaints of significant daily mail delivery delays and complete lack of service in parts of Bellingham, Ferndale, Lynden and other areas of Whatcom County. While brief delays due to weather and the busy holiday period are understandable, many constituents reported no mail delivery for over a week. Concerningly, we also heard reports that USPS employees in these areas were asked to prioritize package delivery over other types of mail, even though our constituents reported missed paychecks, medication, court notices, and other important items. Constituents who attempted to pick up mail at local post offices faced hours-long wait times and no answers from USPS as to when regular mail delivery would resume.¹

Adding to our concern is that these recent delivery delays are only the latest in a series of ongoing challenges with USPS in Northwest Washington. We continue to also hear regular complaints about mail delivery in Island, King, San Juan and Snohomish counties. We heard reports that once again in October, election mail delivery was delayed for the November 2022 election. We are deeply disappointed by these reports after your response to our July letter regarding the timely delivery of election ballots assured us USPS was taking steps to prevent similar delays during the general election.

Additionally, we remain concerned with the hiring challenges USPS is experiencing in our region. In our July letter, we requested updates on USPS's efforts to increase staffing amid severe workforce shortages. Though we appreciate the steps you outlined to us and subsequent actions USPS has taken to increase hiring in Northwest Washington, including local hiring days and a statewide hiring fair in December, these efforts are clearly insufficient as delays in mail

¹ <https://www.bellinghamherald.com/article270569657.html>;
<https://www.cascadiadaily.com/news/2023/jan/02/whatcom-county-plagued-by-mail-delays/>

delivery continue. We also remain concerned about the retention rate of USPS employees amid consistent reports of inadequate training of supervisors, an often months-long hiring process that discourages interested applicants, and unpredictable and extremely long work hours that put the health and safety of current employees at risk. We are grateful for the work of USPS employees who continue to work above and beyond to deliver mail during these challenging times. USPS must do more to support and retain these workers.

Since our July letter, the mail delivery situation in Northwest Washington continues to worsen without evidence to suggest USPS is taking serious steps to alleviate mail delays in the region. We respectfully request a prompt response to the following questions:

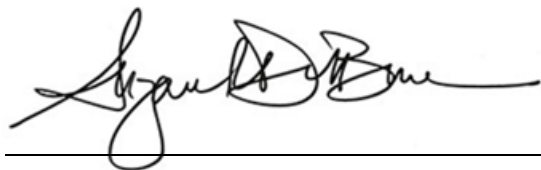
- Can you provide a detailed list of all steps USPS is taking to ensure timely mail delivery during periods of high mail volume, including the December holiday period?
- What is the specific USPS policy under which USPS employees are required to prioritize package delivery over letters, flats, and other classes of mail?
- What steps is USPS taking to improve communication with constituents impacted by mail delivery delays?
- What steps is USPS taking to address its workforce shortage, both in terms of hiring new employees and improving retention of current employees?
- What training and resources are provided to new employees, and how are supervisors trained to help new employees?
- How is USPS training supervisors to manage busy mail periods and support employees?
- What additional resources can Congress provide to help USPS address these issues?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We stand ready to work with you to ensure the delivery of mail for our constituents and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress