

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 6, 2026

The Honorable David P. Steiner
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Postmaster General Steiner:

We are writing to express serious concerns regarding recent postmark rule changes implemented by the United States Postal Service (USPS) and the negative effect this could have for the processing, handling and timely delivery of First-Class Mail, specifically election ballot mail. While we understand that the original intent of the USPS postmarking process was for internal use, it has become inherently tied to election ballot mail, utility bills, tax returns, and so much more.

Under recent updates to the USPS's Domestic Mail Manual, issued as part of the *Delivering for America* framework, the USPS has altered long-standing mail acceptance, collection, and postmarking practices. Revised guidance now limits when mail is collected and transported to processing facilities, where a piece of mail would previously have received its postmark in the same day, in order to reduce costs. While we support streamlining efforts and reducing overhead costs, the timely collection and delivery of mail is a lifeline for many communities, particularly in rural areas, and these recent operational changes threaten that reliability and jeopardize the trust Americans have in USPS.

Under the Regional Transportation Optimization (RTO) plan, USPS has reduced dispatches from local post offices to regional processing centers from twice daily to only a single early morning pickup.¹ Mail deposited later in the day now sits overnight and fails to receive an accurate postmark. In practice, these changes mean that the postmark applied to important or time sensitive mail can vary widely depending on the time of deposit, effectively eroding any postmark advantage associated with expedited or priority mailing.

These risks are further compounded by USPS's reliance on consolidated, centralized processing, a problem that is felt across the United States. The St. Louis Processing and Distribution Center is a prime example, with constituents experiencing severe mail delays, prompting an audit of the facility by the USPS Office of Inspector General in 2025. The resulting report released in August of the same year documented significant processing and transportation deficiencies², confirming long-standing concerns about service reliability. Now, with the USPS' revised postmark changes, we have concerns that this new process will create further issues for processing facilities that

¹ Postal Regulatory Commission, Postal Service Implements Nationwide Changes to Mail Service, Apr. 29, 2025, Available at: [Postal Regulatory Commission](#)

² United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General, Efficiency of Operations at the St. Louis Processing and Distribution Center, St. Louis, MO, Report Number 25-097-R25, August 11, 2025. Available at: [USPS OIG Report](#).

already have existing deficiencies. This is particularly concerning with election ballots, as a voter could submit a ballot in full compliance with state law, yet still risk disqualification due to operational delays entirely beyond their control.

While USPS has indicated that customers may request a postmark in person from a retail clerk, this option is not realistic for rural residents who must travel significant distances to reach a post office. Guidance also fails to account for the volume of people who may seek in-person postmarking, further straining an already limited retail capacity. For many individuals, traveling solely to obtain a postmark is not feasible. This effectively silences voters who lack the means to travel to a post office.

Given this context, we respectfully urge the USPS to reconsider this new policy and provide responses to the following questions:

1. Did the USPS conduct an analysis on the impact that the reduced collection and dispatch frequency could have on communities, particularly in rural areas?
2. What safeguards exist to prevent delays that could have legal or financial consequences for customers?
3. In facilities with documented processing and transportation deficiencies, including the St. Louis Processing and Distribution Center, what steps has USPS taken to ensure that critical First-Class Mail – such as election ballots, government correspondence, tax documents, and bill payments – is processed, postmarked, and delivered in a timely manner?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact Jared Palmer with Rep. Bost's staff at jared.palmer@mail.house.gov if you require any additional information. Thank you for your consideration, we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Mike Bost
Member of Congress



Jack Bergman
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress



Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress



Nicholas A. Langworthy
Member of Congress



Ann Wagner
Member of Congress



Jen A. Kiggans
Member of Congress



Adrian Smith
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Eric Burlison
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