

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
COMMERCE
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

October 28, 2020

Mr. Louis DeJoy, Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20260

The Honorable Robert M. Duncan, Chairman
The Honorable Jon M. Barger, Member
The Honorable Ron A. Bloom, Member
The Honorable Roman Martinez IV, Member
The Honorable Donald L. Moak, Member
The Honorable William D. Zollars, Member
United States Postal Service Board of Governors
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Mr. DeJoy, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Board of Governors:

I write urging USPS to immediately reverse a directive banning uniformed postal police officers from performing their patrol duties that safeguard our nation's mail and letter carriers¹. With the November 3, 2020 general election approaching, the integrity of our mail system and the safety of USPS personnel is paramount. The August 25, 2020 directive instructing postal police officers that they were confined to postal real estate upends long-standing practice and violates congressional statute and intent.

For years, uniformed postal police officers have served a vital role protecting mail outside of postal real estate, ensuring that blue collection boxes and postal vehicles are not victims of theft, that letter carriers receive protection on their routes, and that high value mail shipments are protected. Despite this, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service inexplicably decided to confine highly trained officers to postal real estate, only months before an election where millions of Americans are planning on voting by mail due to the COVID-19 pandemic. USPS has yet to provide an adequate explanation for this change.

Several constituents have contacted my office, voicing their opposition to this change. Diana, who lives in Sheboygan, Wisconsin wrote to me concerned that this directive threatens the safety

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-postal-service-benches-its-police-officers-before-election-11602862096>

of her daughter, who is a letter carrier in the Milwaukee metropolitan area. On September 29, 2020, about a month after postal police were instructed to stop patrols, a letter carrier in Milwaukee was robbed at approximately 2:30 pm, a crime for which the U.S. Postal Inspection Service is offering a reward of \$20,000.² With postal police officers sidelined, deterrents against mail theft disappear and thieves seeking credit cards and personal identification information can more easily obtain this information – and also leave ballots behind.

This change troublingly bypasses congressional statute and intent. The 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) provides that postal police officers shall have law-enforcement authority over postal “property.” Until August 25, 2020, USPS had continuously, and correctly, interpreted “property” to mean all forms of postal property. And Congress used the same word—“property”—to give authority to USPS’ other law enforcement personnel, Postal Inspectors, and these personnel are not restricted by the August 25 directive from conducting law enforcement actions off of postal real estate. Since August 25, 2020, USPS has adopted a cramped interpretation of “property” in just one section, in order to remove postal police. This inconsistent position is unsupportable.

Additionally, Congress was fully aware that postal police officers were already performing mail-security duties off postal real estate before the PAEA was even passed. Nothing in the legislative history indicates any intent to reduce the availability of postal police officers in performing their duties.³

The timing of the August 25 directive from USPS, which was authored by Deputy Chief Inspector David Bowers, raises even more questions. The directive was issued one day after Postmaster General DeJoy testified before the House Oversight Committee. Only one week prior on August 18, 2020, days before Mr. DeJoy testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, he announced a suspension of USPS changes “to avoid even the appearance of any impact on election mail.”⁴

Please promptly answer the following questions:

1. Did Postmaster General DeJoy or any members of the Postal Board of Governors have communication with the U.S Postal Inspection Service about this directive before it was presented to postal police officers on August 25, 2020?
 - a. Did the Postmaster General or members of the Board provide directions, instructions or give approval of this directive or view the directive before it was presented to postal police officers on August 25, 2020?
 - b. Was Postmaster General DeJoy aware of this forthcoming directive when he testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on August 21, 2020 or the House Oversight Committee on August 24, 2020?

² [https://www.cbs58.com/news/usps-letter-carrier-robbed-by-3-men-near-palmer-and-burleigh#:~:text=MILWAUKEE%20\(CBS%2058\)%20%E2%80%93%20The,Burleigh%20on%20Tuesday%2C%20September%2029.](https://www.cbs58.com/news/usps-letter-carrier-robbed-by-3-men-near-palmer-and-burleigh#:~:text=MILWAUKEE%20(CBS%2058)%20%E2%80%93%20The,Burleigh%20on%20Tuesday%2C%20September%2029.)

³ <https://www.congress.gov/108/crpt/hrpt672/CRPT-108hrpt672-pt1.pdf>

⁴ <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2020/0818-postmaster-general-louis-dejoy-statement.htm>

2. Please report the number of instances of mail theft and crimes against letter carriers per week for this calendar year in the cities of Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, Philadelphia, Miami and Atlanta.

Mr. DeJoy has stated that the integrity of election mail is a priority for the Postal Service. I agree that this should be a priority and in order to ensure the safety of our nation's mail and letter carriers, you must immediately reverse this decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator