

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

February 2, 2026

The Honorable David Steiner
Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer
United States Postal Service
473 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Postmaster General Steiner:

Many constituents have raised concerns with the December 24, 2025, revision to the Domestic Mail Manual regarding its postmarking, transportation schedules, and their effect on mail voting.¹ We understand the new publication does not reflect any changes related to the U.S. Postal Service's (Postal Service) use of postmarks, but rather memorializes existing Postal Service policy and procedures regarding the use of the postmark and reflects new transportation changes. We appreciate that it is longstanding Postal Service policy to treat all Ballot Mail as First-Class Mail, regardless of its actual paid mail class, and to endeavor to postmark every return ballot mailed by a voter. However, we write to express concerns regarding the potential effect of the Postal Service's new transportation schedule through the Regional Transportation Optimization (RTO) initiative on mail delivery performance during the 2026 midterm election season. We seek answers from your agency to ensure that the Postal Service can reliably fulfill its critical constitutional mandate in processing election mail.

Mass participation in elections is a signal of a healthy democracy. During the 2024 election period, the Postal Service delivered roughly 3.37 billion pieces of political and election mail—including 222.39 million ballots to and from voters.² The number of ballots processed through the Postal Service network increased 65% between 2020 and 2024. In recent years, the Postal Service has successfully prioritized the delivery of election mail, sustaining on-time three-day delivery of ballots to election officials to 97.73% in 2024, compared to 97.9% in 2020.³ We commend the Postal Service's efforts to ensure successful election seasons, though we are concerned that the Postal Service could run into challenges during the 2026 midterm elections.

¹ United States Postal Service, *DMM Revision: Postmarks and Postal Possession* (online at https://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2026/pb22694/html/updt_002.htm) (accessed Jan. 22, 2026).

² United States Postal Service, *Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Report to Congress* (online at <https://about.usps.com/what/financials/annual-reports/fy2021.pdf>) (accessed Aug. 23, 2022); United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General, *Vote by Mail and the Postal Service: A Primer* (June 1, 2021) (online at www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2023-01/RISC-WP-21-004.pdf).

³ *USPS Plans to Slash 50,000 Positions in Coming Years to Reach "Break Even" Point*, Government Executive (July 28, 2022) (online at www.govexec.com/workforce/2022/07/usps-plans-slash-50000-positions-coming-years-reach-break-even-point/375096/); United States Postal Service, *2024 Post-Election Analysis Report: Delivering the Nation's Election Mail Securely and Effectively* (Dec. 2, 2024) (online at <https://about.usps.com/what/government-services/election-mail/pdf/usps-post-election-report-2024-12-02.pdf>).

We understand the concerning financial condition of the Postal Service and champion efforts to reach a firmer financial position while ensuring universal service. However, the RTO initiative, announced under your predecessor and continuing under your tenure, is negatively impacting a portion of the mail—especially rural and hard-to-reach constituents. RTO was announced to purportedly save the Postal Service \$651 million annually.⁴ As part of the plan, the Postal Service reduced “the number of transportation trips to and from select delivery units from two or three trips per day to only one trip,” affecting 74.9% of five-digit ZIP codes.⁵ Your agency states that, under this new initiative and updated service standards, 75% of First Class Mail will remain unchanged, 14% will be delivered more quickly, and 11% will require an extra day of delivery.⁶ Despite the Postal Service’s lofty goals, the Postal Service Office of Inspector General projected that RTO may slow down mail delivery times and the Postal Regulatory Commission found that RTO “is unlikely to achieve its projected cost savings or improve the financial health of the Postal Service.”⁷ We are concerned that the 11% of addresses negatively affected by RTO could hurt the delivery performance of ballots and other election mail.

Because RTO was implemented in an off-election year in April 2025, we do not know how RTO will affect this year’s election mail delivery. We appreciate the fact that the Postal Service helps states with their election mail concerns through its network of election mail coordinators. However, we are troubled that election officials and the public do not know what jurisdictions will be subject to RTO and therefore will not know if their mail will require an extra day of delivery. Given that many states have strict deadlines for ballot receipt, even minor delays could prevent lawfully cast ballots from being counted. We advise that you communicate with election officials and the public about best practices regarding election mail delivery and provide more information about the regions affected by RTO.

Voting by mail is unequivocally safe and secure. It is imperative that the Postal Service have successful performance during the 2026 election season, and that means ensuring that any new programs borne out of the Delivering for America plan or otherwise do not harm the delivery of ballots. Independent oversight bodies have verified that RTO will not save the Postal Service the money it needs and many customers will be provided with worse service. We urge you to consider eliminating the RTO program until the Postal Service has quality controls and substantial savings projections in place, and adequate public awareness of the distinct impacts on mail delivery.

⁴ Postal Regulatory Commission, *Advisory Opinion on the Operational and Service Standard Changes Related to The Delivering for America Plan* (Jan. 31, 2025) (online at <https://prc.arkcase.com/api/prc-dockets/filing/downloadFile?fileId=236113&inline=true>).

⁵ *Id.*, at p. 115; United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General, *The OIG’s Oversight of the U.S. Postal Service’s Delivering for America Plan* (Sept. 30, 2024) (24-102-R24) (online at www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2024-10/24-102-r24.pdf).

⁶ Postal Regulatory Commission, *Service Standard Changes*, 89 CFR 83708, Notice (Oct. 17, 2024).

⁷ United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General, *Delivering for America: First-Class Mail and Priority Mail Service Performance Update* (May 7, 2025) (25-028-R25) (online at www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2025-05/25-028-r25.pdf); Postal Regulatory Commission, *Postal Service Implements Nationwide Changes to Mail Service* (Apr. 29, 2025) (online at <https://prc.gov/postal-service-implements-nationwide-changes-mail-service>).

To assist our offices in understanding the Postal Service's preparedness for the upcoming 2026 election season, please provide the following information no later than February 13, 2026:

1. What specific measures has the Postal Service taken to ensure RTO and related operational changes will not slow the delivery of election mail during the 2026 primary and general elections?
2. What contingency plans are in place to address potential service disruptions during the 2026 election season?
3. How is the Postal Service coordinating with state and local officials to understand what districts will be subject to RTO transportation changes?
4. What systems are in place to monitor delivery performance of ballots in real-time?
5. Has or will the Postal Service consider pausing or modifying RTO implementation during the 2026 election season?
6. What steps is the Postal Service taking to ensure the health and safety of postal workers during the 2026 election season?
7. Given the risk posed by RTO to timely processing of election mail, and its potential harms to rural communities more broadly, what alternative cost-saving measures should Congress consider? For example, are there changes to financial statutory mandates that could help support Postal Service fiscal health without harming rural communities, including the ability of those communities to have their election mail delivered and processed quickly?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Robert Garcia
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform



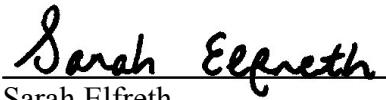
Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress
Ranking Member
Committee on House
Administration



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress




Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



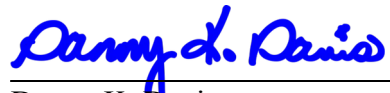
Sahas Subramanyam
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Shontel M. Brown
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Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



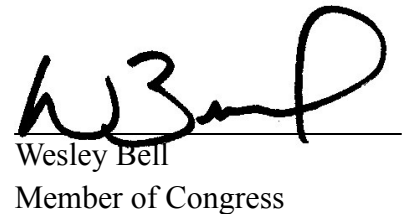
Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



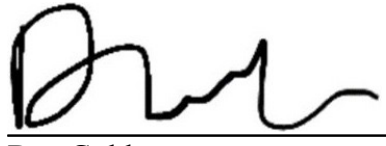
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
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Wesley Bell
Member of Congress




Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



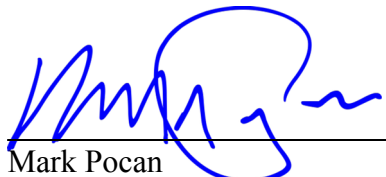
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress




Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress




Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
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Steve Cohen
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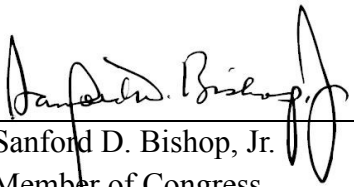
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Angie Craig
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Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress




Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
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Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



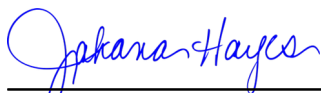
Maxine Dexter
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Brendan F. Boyle
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Chrissy Houlahan
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Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



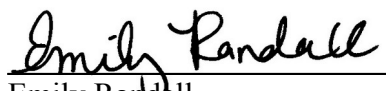
Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



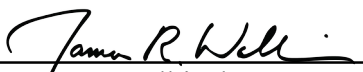
Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress



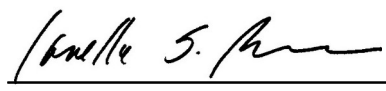
Terri A. Sewell
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Emily Randall
Member of Congress



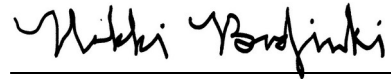
James R. Walkinshaw
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Janelle S. Bynum
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Dwight Evans
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Nikki Budzinski
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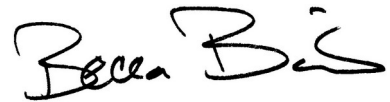
Andrea Salinas
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Pramila Jayapal
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Paul D. Tonko
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Becca Balint
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Raja Krishnamoorthi
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Betty McCollum
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Summer L. Lee
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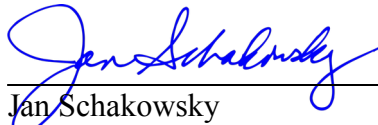
Deborah K. Ross
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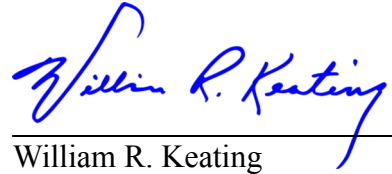
SETH MOULTON
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Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



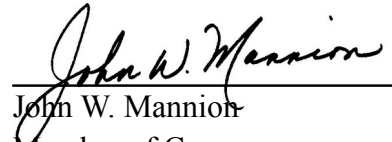
Jan Schakowsky
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William R. Keating
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Greg Casar
Member of Congress



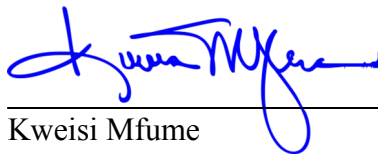
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James P. McGovern
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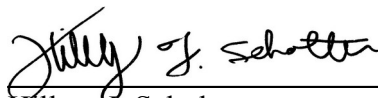
Eric Sorensen
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Kweisi Mfume
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Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



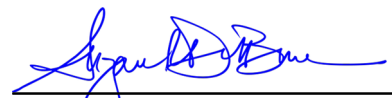
Hillary J. Scholten
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Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress




Suzan K. DelBene
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Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



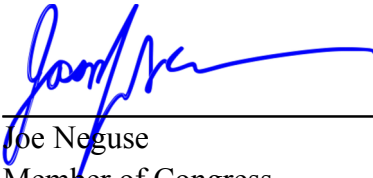
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



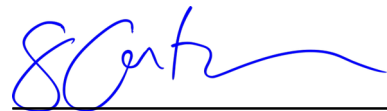
Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress



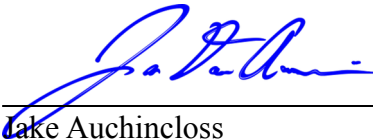
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.
Amber F. McReynolds, Chair, Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service.
Ronald A. Stroman, Member, Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service.
Derek T. Kan, Vice Chairman, Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service.
Daniel M. Tangherlini, Member, Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service.
Tammy Hull, Inspector General, U.S. Postal Service.
Robert G. Taub, Vice Chairman, Postal Regulatory Commission.