



MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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CONGRESS PUSHES BACK ON OPERATIONAL MAIL MOVES



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With proposals from the USPS Delivering for America (DFA) plan that would impact processing and distribution centers (P&DCs) as well as the network, members of Congress are growing more and more concerned in regards to service and delivery. To this point, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC), held an oversight hearing on April 16. In his opening statement, Chairman Gary Peters (D-MI) commented, “There is no clear evidence that shows the changes will improve service in the long run. When I have repeatedly asked the Postal Service for detailed studies, it cannot provide them.” In order to get a better understanding of the Postal Service’s mail processing facility reviews (MPFRs) and proposed changes to the network, HSGAC heard testimony from Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, USPS Board of Governors (BOG) Chairman Roman Martinez, Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) Chairman Michael Kubayanda, and USPS Inspector General Tammy Hull.

In their testimonies, PMG DeJoy and BOG Chairman Martinez commented that the Postal Service has been financially struggling for well over a decade, operating at losses in order to meet customer demands. DeJoy reaffirmed his commitment to the DFA as the only comprehensive solution, while Martinez added that the DFA is working, it just needs more time for implementation. DeJoy acknowledged the service delays currently impacting the Richmond, Atlanta, and Houston areas, however, he attributed these problems to management failures, employee absenteeism, transportation issues, and overcoming legacy issues within USPS.

IG Hull and PRC Chairman Kubayanda expressed concern over these delays and their impact on service for customers. Prior to the hearing, the Office of Inspector General conducted an audit of the changes happening in the Richmond area and found that while changes could offer financial savings, service decreased significantly, especially within rural areas. Hull further expressed concern over lack of local coordination and input from the public. Kubayanda commented that with the relaxed service standards, efficiency has declined.

During a line of questioning, Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV) brought up the proposed changes of moving mail operations from the Reno P&DC to the Sacramento

P&DC. To the PMG, she raised issues of the lack of local engagement with the proposed moves and potential impacts on seniors, veterans, and rural residents. Additionally, she brought up the logistical problem that the only way to get from Reno to Sacramento was through the notorious Donner Pass, which experiences an average of 33 feet of snow annually and had 15 road closures over 37 days last winter. She further expressed frustration that processing mail across state lines will further delay service and marginalize underserved communities.

Senator Jon Ossoff (D-GA) pointed out inbound mail in Palmetto, Georgia, has a rate of 36 percent for on-time delivery and needed answers on operational failures. When asked when service will improve, DeJoy commented that it would take months. Sen. Ossoff said that wasn’t sufficient and the Postal Service is failing its core mission and issues need to be fixed in weeks.

Echoing the general frustrations of the committee, members of both the House and Senate introduced multiple, bipartisan bills addressing the consolidations implemented by the MPFRs. The Timely Mail Delivery and Postal Services Protection Act (H.R. 8000), as introduced by Representatives Jared Golden (D-ME-02) and August Pfluger (R-TX-11) would stop any funding for MPFRs as well as require the PRC to approve of any future consolidations. Protect Postal Performance Act, H.R. 8040, introduced by Reps. Nikki Budzinski (D-IL-13) and Jack Bergman (R-MI-01), prohibits consolidations in areas that are not meeting Postal Service delivery standards of 90.3 percent delivery for three to five-day first-class mail and 93 percent on-time delivery for two-day first-class mail. The Postal Operations Stay Timely and Local (POSTAL) Act, H.R. 8045, introduced by Reps. Harriet Hageman (R-WY-AL) and Chris Pappas (D-NH-01), stops the Postal Service from closing, consolidating, or downgrading P&DCs if such an action would remove the sole P&DC within a state or negatively impact mail delivery. The Senate version of the bill, S. 4160, is sponsored by Senators Cynthia Lummis (R-WY), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), John Barrasso (R-WY), and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH). Sen. Jon Tester’s (D-MT) the Protecting Access to Rural Carriers for Every Location (PARCEL) Act, S. 4254, prohibits consolidation if operations would move out of state; if

geographical hinderances would impact delivery; and, if the public does not favor the move.

In addition to these bills, a bipartisan group of 26 Senators wrote to PMG DeJoy, calling for a moratorium of changes to the network until the PRC can examine the changes and analyze the full impact of the MPFRs. “We are concerned about the impacts these changes have had so far, and the potential impacts that further changes could have. In regions where USPS has implemented significant changes, on-time mail delivery has declined,” the letter stated. The Senators continued, “In addition, it is not clear these changes will improve efficiency or costs. Despite these concerns, USPS has moved forward with announcing and approving additional facility changes across the country.”

To abate these concerns, DeJoy and USPS has put a pause on any changes to facilities that would be impacted by the MPFRs until January 1, 2025. It should be noted, however, that these changes will be reinstated after the 2024 federal elections which could bring changes in leadership in the Administration, the Senate, and the House. With this uncertainty, the NPMHU cannot count that further drastic changes will not take place in the new year. Additionally, there should be vigilance during the seven months between now and January 1. If service continues to decline and on-time delivery suffers, there is concern that there could be calls for privatization as USPS is not meeting its constitutionally mandated mission. In the April 16 Senate hearing, Ranking Member Rand Paul (R-KY) posed the question as to why customers don’t just use private carriers for shipping purposes if those private carriers can operate more efficiently. At this point, it is still more economically feasible for postal customers, especially those living in rural and suburban areas, to utilize the Postal Service. However, if service continues to steadily decline without signs of improvement, customers will be driven away.

The NPMHU will continue to work with members of both the House of Representatives and Senators on these service issues. We will continue to inform them on how any possible changes to the network would impact not only our members and mail handler jobs, but also the ramifications changes would have on customers and the sustainability of the United States Postal Service.



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