

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

DELEGATION OFFICE
STATE OF NEW MEXICO
HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510
(202) 224 - 8962

August 25, 2020

Mr. Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza West, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy,

We write to express concern regarding recent national operational changes at the United States Postal Service (USPS). While we are appreciative that after significant concerns from the public and elected officials, you agreed to suspend these previously ordered operational changes and initiatives at USPS until after the November 2020 election, a stance communicated in your August 18, 2020 statement,¹ we also urge you to reinstate critical equipment removed under these operational changes.

As you know, Northern and Central New Mexico is primarily serviced by postal facilities in Northern and Central New Mexico, while Southern and Eastern New Mexico is serviced by postal facilities in Texas, including El Paso and Lubbock. Two of the postal facilities that serve Northern and Central New Mexico, Coronado Station in Santa Fe and Five Points Station in Albuquerque, were chosen to take part in a USPS pilot program, the Expedited to Street/Afternoon Sortation (ESAS) initiative², to standardize mail delivery times. Additionally, as part of the operational changes you ordered, one Delivery Bar Code Sorter (DBCS) was removed and one Automated Facer Cancellor Sorter (AFCS) was shut down, while another two DBCSs began the removal process in the Albuquerque area, with similar machinery changes occurring in Texas³.

Following these actions, our offices received numerous reports of constituents experiencing significant delays receiving their mail, packages, and vital prescription medications. Recent operational changes at USPS, including the removal of mail sorting machines in Albuquerque and related facilities in Texas, the

¹ Postmaster General Louis DeJoy Statement. (2020, August 18). Retrieved August 21, 2020, from <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2020/0818-postmaster-general-louis-dejoy-statement.htm>

² Katz, E. (2020, July 21). USPS Tests More Mail Delivery Changes as Lawmakers Push Back. Retrieved August 21, 2020, from <https://www.govexec.com/management/2020/07/usps-tests-more-mail-delivery-changes-lawmakers-push-back/167075/>

³ Chasnoff, B. (2020, August 17). San Antonio Postal Service sorting machines 'thrown in the trash'. Retrieved August 21, 2020, from <https://www.expressnews.com/news/local/politics/article/San-Antonio-Postal-Service-sorting-machines-15490051.php>

elimination of overtime and late/extra trips, as well as recent attempts to eliminate postal service jobs, are having a very real impact on the timely delivery of mail in the State of New Mexico—a situation that we urge you to address.

Detailed media reports, as well as Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) responses, have shown that you ordered the removal or decommissioning of 671 mail sorting machines⁴ just months before the 2020 presidential election. The removal of these machines will likely make it more difficult for USPS offices across the country to deal with the expected high volume of mail-in ballots and election materials. While we understand that USPS does regularly decommission and update mail sorting machines each year, this year's reduction of 13% of the total DBCS mail sorting machines is significantly higher than in previous years.

Although we welcome the halting of the initiatives that have resulted in significant mail delays, we remain troubled that your August 18 statement did not include a commitment to not just halt, but reverse the removal of machinery that you had previously ordered. Additionally, we are aware that directly following your statement, USPS sent emails instructing all maintenance managers around the country to not reconnect or reinstall any machines that had been disconnected.⁵ You remained committed to this position during your appearance before the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee on August 21, stating that you have “no intention” of reinstating decommissioned machines.⁶

We firmly believe that solely halting your initiatives will not reverse the damage that has been done and, as such, we urge you to commit to re-installing any mail sorting machines that were removed or disconnected in New Mexico well before the 2020 presidential election in November. Additionally, we request that you provide a response to the below questions no later than September 1, 2020.

1. Following a request from our offices, the USPS provided us with the following total numbers of mail sorting machines in New Mexico: 50 DBCS's, 7 AFCS's, and 3 Combined Input/Output Subsystems (CIOSS). However, postal workers and USPS leadership in New Mexico informed us that these numbers are incorrect as there are only 15 - 26 DBCS (2 of which have CIOSS capability) and 3 AFCS.
 - a. Were these incorrect inventory numbers used to determine that USPS should remove/deactivate DBCS and AFCS machines in Albuquerque?
 - b. Please provide an updated and full accounting of the total numbers of DBCS, AFCS, and CIOSS machines in New Mexico that were disconnected or removed?.
 - c. In addition to machines that were disconnected or removed from postal facilities in the state of New Mexico, please provide and accounting of the total numbers of DBCS, AFCS, and CIOSS machines in facilities that serve New Mexico, including the El Paso and Lubbock postal facilities in Texas, that were disconnected or removed over the course of these operational changes.

⁴ Bogage, J., & Ingraham, C. (2020, August 20). Here's why the Postal Service wanted to remove hundreds of mail-sorting machines. Retrieved August 21, 2020, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/08/20/postal-service-mail-sorters-removals/>

⁵ Gordon, A. (2020, August 20). USPS Headquarters Tells Managers Not to Reconnect Mail Sorting Machines, Emails Show. Retrieved August 21, 2020, from https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/xg8k4d/usps-emails-tell-managers-not-to-reinstall-mail-sorting-machines-postmaster-general-dejoy

⁶ U.S.Cong., Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee. (2020). Ranking Member Peters Presses for Answers at Mail Delays Hearing with Postmaster General DeJoy [116th Cong., 2nd sess.]. Retrieved August 24, 2020, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nl2iJFsOZGs&feature=youtu.be>

- d. Are there plans in place for USPS to reconnect DBCS sorting machines that were previously powered down in the Albuquerque facility, elsewhere in New Mexico, and in facilities that serve New Mexico (including El Paso and Lubbock)? If so, please provide a timeline of these plans so our offices may monitor progress on the effort.
 - e. And, finally, please confirm the actual numbers of these machines in the Albuquerque Five Points Station and in the Santa Fe Coronado Station.
2. Did you conduct any formal analysis before scheduling the removal of machines in New Mexico and how it would impact mail delivery times and volume? If so, please provide us with that analysis. If not, please explain why you neglected to undertake an analysis.
 3. Did USPS engage with the relevant stakeholders in New Mexico, including unions, county clerks, the NM secretary of state, and mailing industry stakeholders, prior to implementing these changes?
 4. Is ESAS being continued? How were Coronado and Five Points selected?
 5. We are hearing from unions that membership is often working for weeks with no time off.
 - a. What is being done to address this, is there a current plan in place to bring on more staff?
 6. Our office has received reports of prescriptions, from the VA and other pharmacies that are taking weeks to arrive. Specifically how are you handling the issue of timely prescription deliveries?

We look forward to hearing back from you regarding a commitment to return the USPS presence in New Mexico back to its previous, full capacity, as well as answers to the above questions.

Sincerely,

/s/ Tom Udall

Tom Udall
United States Senator

/s/ Ben Ray Luján

Ben Ray Luján
United States Representative

/s/ Martin Heinrich

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

/s/ Xochitl Torres Small

Xochitl Torres Small
United States Representative

/s/ Debra Haaland

Debra Haaland
United States Representative