

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 29, 2026

Postmaster General David P. Steiner
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260

Postmaster General Steiner,

As Members of the Congressional Postal Service Caucus, we are writing regarding the Postal Service's December 24, 2025, final rule clarifying that a postmark will no longer reflect the date a Postal Service customer originally mailed a letter. We are concerned about how this rule clarification coupled with the delays stemming from the Regional Transportation Optimization Plan (RTO) may affect delivery of time-sensitive mail, and the ability of the Postal Service, law enforcement to effectively investigate and deter crime and fraud committed via mail, and the integrity of the United States Postal Service.

As you know, millions of Americans rely on the United States Postal Service (USPS) for the delivery of critical items such as tax returns, bills, checks, and even election ballots. For our constituents, a delayed postmark could result in late fees on bills, essential utilities being shut off, mail-in ballots not being accepted by local Boards of Elections, or delays in receiving paychecks and refunds.

This change is likely to have a disproportionate impact on rural Americans who do not always have easy access to a post office where they can request a same-day postmark, an issue that has been exacerbated by the Regional Transportation Optimization plan. As you know, the RTO plan, which has been gradually implemented across the country over the last year, has reduced the number of times mail is picked up from post offices located more than 50 miles from a Regional Processing and Distribution Center (RP&DC). The results of these changes have been clear: the RTO has added additional delays for outgoing mail from rural areas and cities that do not have an RP&DC. In 2024, a pilot version of this program was tested in the Postal Service's Wisconsin region, and the USPS Office of Inspector General found that the changes resulted in a "decrease in service," with "rural communities more significantly impacted."¹

Additionally, we are concerned that delays in postmarking stemming from broader RTO related mail delays will hinder the ability of the Postal Service and law enforcement to investigate crimes and fraud committed via mail. By shifting postmarking from the point of origin to regional processing centers, the policy obscures where mail entered the postal system and makes it more difficult to trace mail associated with criminal or fraudulent activity. For example, in 2001, following the anthrax mail attacks on the United States Capitol and various other public officials, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was able to use the postmark to track the exact date on which the contaminated letters were sent and the location from which they were mailed.² We are concerned that these changes would make it more difficult for federal law enforcement to track packages containing illicit substances, potentially resulting in increased danger for both Postal Service employees and the general public.

As Members of the Postal Service Caucus, we remain concerned that the full implementation of the RTO plan will exacerbate postmark delays for rural communities that rely on timely service from the United States Postal Service. For these reasons, we ask that the RTO plan be reversed until the Postal Service can assure customers

¹ [Network Changes: Local Transportation Optimization in the Wisconsin Region | Office of Inspector General OIG](#)

² [The Anthrax Mail Attack | National Postal Museum](#)

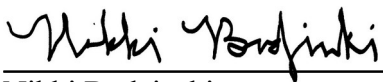
across the country that they will not experience delayed postmarking on time-sensitive mail simply because they do not live within 50 miles of an RP&DC.

As you may expect, we have received many questions from our constituents regarding the December 24 rule change and how it will impact postmarking going forward. Accordingly, we respectfully request that you provide written responses to the following questions:

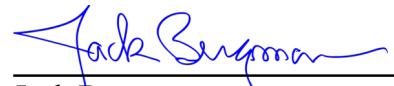
1. Did USPS take into consideration the potential delays in postmarking dates before implementing the RTO?
2. In 2025, what percentage of letters mailed had a postmark date reflecting the day the customer dropped off the letter, and what percentage had a postmark reflecting a later date?
3. Especially in regions of the country with reduced mail pickups, how does USPS notify customers that their letter will not be postmarked on the day it is mailed unless they request an in-person postmark at their local post office?
4. USPS has historically been successful in ensuring election mail is delivered to local Boards of Elections, with recent election cycles achieving over 99 percent on-time delivery. However, 16 states and the District of Columbia currently permit a ballot received after Election Day to be counted so long as it is postmarked by Election Day.³ Does the USPS plan to issue guidance to Americans regarding the latest date they can reliably post a mail-in ballot and still have it postmarked by election day?
5. How can you ensure that delays to postmark stemming from the RTO will not compromise the ability of law enforcement to track the originating location of a package containing an illegal substance or enclosure?
 - a. If a letter is suspected to contain a chemical weapon and is expected to sit for multiple days without a postmark at its originating location, how will the Postal Service trace which employees might have been exposed?

We appreciate your time and attention to these concerns and look forward to your response. Thank you for your continued service to the United States Postal Service and the millions of Americans who depend on it.

Sincerely,



Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Congressional Postal
Service Caucus



Jack Bergman
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Congressional Postal
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³ [Here's What the New USPS Rule Means for Voting by Mail | Campaign Legal Center](#)



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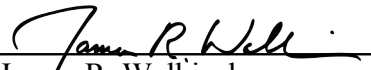
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