

# US Senator Asks PMG to Explain Reported Changes

As if to illustrate that running the Postal Service as Postmaster General isn't like running a corporation as its CEO, Senator Gary Peters (MI), ranking member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, wrote PMG Louis DeJoy on July 17 asking for "information about operational changes at the US Postal Service that have the potential to affect the quality of service for Americans."

Peters' letter was inspired by the reports of plans to modify delivery procedures that were contained in a PowerPoint leaked by a USPS manager in Ohio and other documents (see the articles beginning on page 1).

In his letter, which cites passages from the documents leaked to the media by USPS employees, Peters particularly notes the comparison of the USPS "to a private company, rather than framing it as a public service." Before asking a series of questions, Peters further states that "Congress, the public, and postal stakeholders should be fully apprised of any proposed changes to postal services, particularly if they impact the speed of mail delivery for postal customers."

The ensuing questions clearly imply that the Senator is displeased that DeJoy did not share the "business plan" that's allegedly under development by the Board of Governors, a part of which would be the changes to transportation and delivery mentioned in the leaked materials.

Peters likely came into possession of the documents from one of the postal unions. Though the changes in the documents would primarily impact city carriers, the president of the clerks union had quickly offered a belligerent response

to the PMGs assumed plans (see the quote on page 1). As a senior member of the Senate committee with postal oversight, Peters was a likely contact to use to intervene on the unions' behalf.

Politically, the letter also is a chance to tweak the committee chairman, Ron Johnson (WI) and his partisans in the Senate majority and the administration who put the current USPS governors in place (who then chose their political ally to be PMG).

## Welcome to Washington

Politics aside, the letter is instructive to DeJoy that his latitude to run the USPS is more constrained than he might have believed before taking office. As a private sector executive, he likely never had to respond to Congressional questions when he wanted to revise his operations, and certainly wasn't expected to seek input (let alone approval) from a wide range of "stakeholders," all with their own ideas, concerns, and demands for what he should do.

Congressional politicians seldom add any real value by their meddling, and their communications often are more for the consumption of their constituencies than offers of real help to those to whom they write their messages.

Just the same, political interference is something with which PMGs – like those DeJoy has said failed to take action on costs – have had to deal. There were changes they wanted to make as well, only to be undercut by the postal unions and their allies in Congress. It's all unproductive, but the new PMG might want to get used to it.

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**United States Senate**  
COMMITTEE ON  
 HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
 WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

July 17, 2020

Mr. Louis DeJoy  
 Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer  
 United States Postal Service  
 475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W.  
 Room 4012  
 Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Mr. DeJoy:

I am writing to seek information about operational changes at the U.S. Postal Service that have the potential to affect the quality of service for Americans. It is essential that the Postal Service not slow down mail or in any way compromise service for small businesses, rural communities, seniors, and millions of Americans who rely on the mail. On July 14, national publications released two documents that appear to be official Postal Service memoranda. The documents discuss significant changes to Postal Service procedures.

The first document, entitled "PMG's Expectations and Plan" details a number of operational changes, which the document says "will be implemented in short order." These include eliminating overtime, restrictions on certain letter carrier activities, and curtailing other measures used to mitigate staffing shortages. It states, "if we cannot deliver all mail" due to shortage of people, "the mail will not go out." The document states these measures are aimed at cutting costs and "making the USPS financially solvent." The strong rhetoric about cost-cutting compares the U.S. Postal Service to a private company, rather than framing it as a public service.<sup>1</sup>

The second document, a routine "mandatory stand-up talk" reportedly given to employees across the country, details transportation changes being implemented immediately to reduce costs. These include limitations on extra trips by carriers to deliver mail. The document states, "One aspect of these changes that may be difficult for employees is that –temporarily– we may see mail left behind or mail on the workroom floor or docks." The document positions these changes as part of an "ongoing pivot, which will have a number of phases" the Postal Service will "swiftly implement."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Leaked USPS PowerPoint indicates PMG DeJoy focus on getting operating costs under control, Alliance of Nonprofit Mailers, <https://www.nonprofitmailers.org/leaked-tips-ppt-indicates-pmg-dejoy-focus-on-getting-operating-costs-under-control> (July 14, 2020).  
<sup>2</sup> Internal USPS document tells employees to leave mail at distribution centers, Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/context/internal-usps-document-tells-employees-to-leave-mail-at-distribution-centers/1756d1aee202-4777-877c-33442338d1e8/> (July 14, 2020).

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Congress, the public, and postal stakeholders should be fully apprised of any proposed changes to postal services, particularly if they will impact the speed of mail delivery for postal customers. Please answer the following questions as soon as possible:

- Do these documents reflect official Postal Service policy and practice? Please submit a full explanation of each operational change that will be implemented, and a timeline and justification for each.
- Do these documents reflect your views and plans as Postmaster General (PMG)? Was the Postal Service Board of Governors involved in making these decisions?
  - In its public response to the release of these documents, the Postal Service referenced the Board's development of a "business plan to ensure that we will be financially stable and able to continue to provide reliable, affordable, safe and secure delivery." Developing this long-term solvency plan is the responsibility of the Senate-confirmed Governors in addition to the PMG. If these operational changes are part of a long-term solvency plan, why were they made in advance of the development and release of that plan?
- What effect will these changes have on the Postal Service's service performance and its ability to meet service standards, which measure its ability to deliver mail on time to all customers?
  - The Board must request that the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) submit an advisory opinion on any proposed change in the nature of postal services which will generally affect service on a nationwide basis. Did you seek Board approval or a PRC advisory opinion for any of these changes? Do you commit to doing so for any changes that will affect nationwide service?
- Management and the Board must consider a number of factors under statute, including but not limited to cost, in making operational changes and policy changes. What factors did you analyze and consider before making these changes?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters  
Ranking Member