

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4606

August 23, 2021

Mr. Gerald Roane  
Virginia District Manager  
United States Postal Service  
1801 Brook Road  
Richmond, VA 23232

Dear Mr. Roane:

We write to share great concern regarding the continued widespread mail delivery delays across Virginia in recent months. We have heard from hundreds of constituents, specifically in the Central Virginia region, who have shared stories about severe delivery delays adversely impacting their lives. Additionally, we continue to seek answers about staffing shortages and other circumstances that have led to such delays and actions that are being taken to prevent future issues.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States Postal Service (USPS) has played an especially critical role in keeping Virginians connected and safe. Whether it is the delivery of groceries, household necessities, or medications, countless Virginians continue to depend on USPS as a critical link to vital resources. For this reason, we are deeply troubled to see that timely mail delivery has precipitously continued to decline in Virginia.

We are seeking a general explanation of the factors contributing to substandard mail delivery rates and two primary issues raised by our constituents:

1. USPS government liaisons have cited temporary staff shortages and capacity challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic as contributing factors to recent delays. Constituents have shared stories about USPS's inability to replace postal carriers who are temporarily out due to illness, injury, or on leave.<sup>1</sup> Insufficient staffing has had profound impacts on our constituents.
2. Many of our constituents in Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and surrounding jurisdictions are reporting that they are not receiving any mail for days or weeks at a time.<sup>2</sup>

We understand that many of these challenges could be due to staffing shortages, but implore you to create additional contingency plans to ensure that delivery routes do not miss mail deliveries for days at a time because a letter carrier is out.

This troubling decline in on-time mail is causing constraints to many Virginians who are now receiving unexpected late fees due to delayed payments, missed paychecks, late

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<sup>1</sup> [https://dailyprogress.com/news/local/area-mail-delivery-only-seems-to-be-getting-worse/article\\_4fc6d38a-d604-11eb-8a89-d30ac8bdd890.html](https://dailyprogress.com/news/local/area-mail-delivery-only-seems-to-be-getting-worse/article_4fc6d38a-d604-11eb-8a89-d30ac8bdd890.html)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbs19news.com/story/43286908/local-residents-are-not-receiving-their-mail>

prescriptions on critical medications, and much more.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, we would like to direct your attention to one of our constituents, Deborah from Charlottesville, who recounts her firsthand frustration with recent USPS service.

Deborah shares that, “In addition to the nationwide problems with mail and the post office, those of us living in ... Charlottesville, Virginia, have a special, additional difficulty hinging on the failure ... to assign a mail carrier to our route. The person assigned our route went on maternity leave, as I understand it, in October, 2020, and as this is a new year, her additional 12 weeks maternity leave means she will stay off until approximately April 2021. During 2020, we had a wonderful substitute ... But, starting in January, *it seems we have had no person assigned this route. Hence, starting in January, we have had virtually no first class mail delivery ... I personally have received none of my “informed delivery”, [and] have received in the last few weeks a total of approximately 5 pieces of first class mail, though I would normally get at least 3-5 times that much. Two of the 5 pieces were received on Friday January 29, but had been mailed Dec 28, and Jan 4. There are important items I need which cannot be emailed, and which have been remailed due to the apparent loss, and neither mailing has been received. I am also missing bills, tax documents and who know[s] what else. The rest of the community is in the same boat. Most urgently, I was contacted last night by an elderly neighbor who is desperate because she and her husband are not getting their pension checks. She visits the local P.O. regularly, she told me, pleading for her mail, but she says no one seems to care...*”

Deborah’s story is among countless others that we have received. Additionally, despite numerous requests, USPS officials have not provided relevant and updated data and mail delivery times. However, the outpour of constituent outreach demonstrates the substantial decline in on-time delivery in recent months and the devastating impact that it has had on millions of Americans. We urge you to review and implement processes to fill vacant postal positions and expedite the delivery of mail.

Americans depend on the Postal Service for high-quality, reliable service, especially during the extraordinarily difficult times that they have experienced due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

To that end, we ask that you answer the following questions by September 3, 2021:

1. To what does USPS attribute the rapid decline in on-time delivery rates of mail in the Charlottesville region?
2. Since December 2020, has USPS pursued any changes to remedy these drastic delays in mail and significant personnel shortages needed to meet the demand in mail? Please describe, in detail, if there were any efforts to surge resources and staffing in Charlottesville.
3. Please describe, in detail, the steps you have taken to respond to customers who have been harmed by these mail delays. Has USPS pursued initiatives to locate packages and mail that are significantly delayed (more than two weeks beyond expected delivery) and to expedite their processing and delivery?

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<sup>3</sup> [https://richmond.com/news/state-and-regional/mail-delays-wreaking-havoc-with-bill-paying/article\\_3e01e605-64f2-59ea-8877-424ad6af4ca4.html](https://richmond.com/news/state-and-regional/mail-delays-wreaking-havoc-with-bill-paying/article_3e01e605-64f2-59ea-8877-424ad6af4ca4.html)

4. Please provide monthly staffing numbers for postal carriers and mail handlers in all of the USPS offices in Charlottesville, Virginia since December 2020. How many postal carrier positions are currently vacant? How many positions need to be filled to meet capacity needs and ensure that the mail delivery division is properly staffed?
5. Please share any data that you have on the delivery rates of mail-order medications in Charlottesville and the Virginia district. What action has USPS taken and does it plan to take to prioritize mail-order medications in light of mounting mail delays?
6. Please share any data on mail delivery performance in Charlottesville and the Virginia district.

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to working with the United States Postal Service during the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress to ensure that it remains a working institution for all Americans.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator

Cc:

Mr. Louis DeJoy, Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer, United States Postal Service