

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 28, 2020

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

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy,

We are writing to express deep concern with the reported removal and dismantling of United States Postal Service (USPS) sorting machines across Washington Stateⁱ and your testimony before Congress that you will not reverse these removals.ⁱⁱ If you truly wish “to avoid even the appearance of any impact on election mail”ⁱⁱⁱ of recent controversial reform orders for the Postal Service, we urge you to immediately reinstall USPS sorting machines removed in Washington State and across the country. This will help ensure the timely delivery of essential medication and checks to vulnerable Americans and protect mail-in voting capabilities.

On August 14, 2020, one press report indicated that the USPS had begun to disconnect high-speed letter-sorting machines from facilities across Washington State.^{iv} On August 18, 2020, the same day you stated the USPS would suspend changes to mail delivery until after the election, another press report indicated that 40 percent of these machines in the Seattle-Tacoma area had already been disconnected.^v That same day, postal workers reportedly received an email from the USPS’ director of maintenance operations, Kevin Couch, ordering them not to reconnect any mail sorting machines that had previously been disconnected.^{vi}

We are deeply concerned that Mr. Couch’s order will leave Washingtonians without the necessary infrastructure to receive medical supplies, veteran’s benefits and small business assistance in a timely manner. As of August 25, 2020, the South DDC Post Office in Kent had four of its ten Delivery Bar Code Sorter (DBCS) machines removed but not restored. The East DDC in Redmond lost five of its twelve DCBSs and its only Advanced Flat Sorting Machine (AFSM). The Seattle Processing and Distribution Center in Tukwila had six of its sixteen DCBS machines dismantled.^{vii} While postal workers were able to restore machines at some locations, including Kent, Tacoma and Wenatchee,^{viii} the removal of these sorters could dramatically impact USPS’ ability to fulfil its mandate. DCBS machines, for example, sort letters and postcards at a rate of 36,000 pieces of mail per hour, far faster than workers could do by hand.^{ix} USPS has yet to provide a thorough accounting of the impact of sorting machine removals.

To that end, we ask that you provide answers to the following questions no later than 10 business days after receipt of this letter:

- Please provide the location and operating status of all machines decommissioned in Washington State since May 15, 2020, including the date it was dismantled, destroyed or removed.
 - Please provide an analysis of the impact of these removals on on-time mail delivery, including election mail.
- Will any additional machines in Washington be decommissioned prior to November 3, 2020? If so, please provide a list by location and type of machine.

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- Please provide the location and operating status of all machines slated to be decommissioned and/or removed after November 3, 2020.
- Please provide a detailed analysis of how the removal of 15 percent of letter sorting machines, as reportedly proposed in an internal USPS document,^x would impact delivery times in Washington State.
- Please provide the rationale for Mr. Couch's order to postal workers not to reinstall decommissioned sorting machines, despite your stated intention to reverse operational changes.

In addition, we ask that you immediately reverse Mr. Couch's "do-not-reinstall" order, allow workers to use overtime to reinstall the machines as needed and provide timely technical support to recommission dismantled machines. In short, to protect our constituents' ability to receive timely mail service and to ensure their participation in our vote-by-mail system, we ask that you urgently act to ensure that is no slowing of mail delivery as we enter the last weeks before the November election.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your timely response to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



PRAMILA JAYAPAL
Member of Congress



PATTY MURRAY
United States Senator



ADAM SMITH
Member of Congress



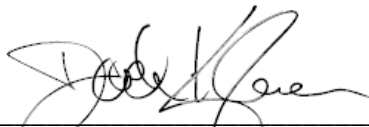
RICK LARSEN
Member of Congress



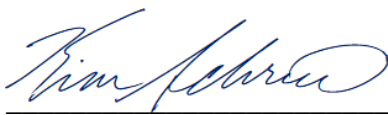
SUZAN K. DELBENE
Member of Congress



DENNY HECK
Member of Congress



DEREK KILMER
Member of Congress



KIM SCHRIER, M.D.
Member of Congress

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- ⁱ <https://www.kuow.org/stories/nearly-half-of-mail-sorting-machines-in-seattle-area-already-dismantled>
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.businessinsider.com/usps-will-not-replace-removed-mail-sorting-machines-2020-8>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2020/0818-postmaster-general-louis-dejoy-statement.htm>
- ^{iv} <https://www.kuow.org/stories/mail-machines-removed-from-post-offices-in-washington-worry-about-november-election>
- ^v <https://www.kuow.org/stories/nearly-half-of-mail-sorting-machines-in-seattle-area-already-dismantled>
- ^{vi} <https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/20/politics/usps-reconnect-sorting-machines/index.html>
- ^{vii} <https://www.kuow.org/stories/nearly-half-of-mail-sorting-machines-in-seattle-area-already-dismantled>;
updated statistics provided on August 25, 2020 via phone call by David Yao, USPS employee and Vice President of Seattle Local American Postal Workers Union
- ^{viii} Ibid; <https://www.kuow.org/stories/post-offices-ordered-not-to-reinstall-recently-removed-mail-sorting-machinery>
- ^{ix} <https://facts.usps.com/innovation/>
- ^x https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/pkyv4k/internal-usps-documents-outline-plans-to-hobble-mail-sorting