



## 2020 Election: Secure Your Vote

# Postmaster General Defends His Actions In Acrimonious Marathon House Hearing

August 24, 2020 · 9:00 AM ET

ALANA WISE

PHILIP EWING



Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, pictured at the U.S. Capitol on Aug. 5, denies any slowdowns at the U.S. Postal Service are part of any attempt to reduce voting by mail this year.

Alex Wong/Getty Images

### Updated at 4:18 p.m. ET

Postmaster General Louis DeJoy defended his management of the U.S. Postal Service to the House on Monday amid concerns that his cost-cutting measures have jeopardized the agency's ability to serve Americans.

Mail service has slowed across the country, according to internal documents obtained by the House Oversight Committee, but DeJoy denies the slowdowns are part of any attempt to reduce voting by mail this year.

In fact, he said in his prepared opening statement, DeJoy expects the Postal Service to be able to accommodate all the mailed ballots that Americans send.

The postmaster general encouraged voters to request ballots early and return them early but said he is confident that the Postal Service can handle any surge in ballot traffic, which in the most extreme case would amount to less than one day's worth of the current volume.



#### POLITICS

Louis DeJoy Vows Post Office Can Handle Mail-In Ballots, In Senate Hearing

DeJoy also said as much Friday when he testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

Those were his first public remarks since agreeing to postpone a number of controversial changes at the agency, such as reducing employee overtime hours and eliminating hundreds of postal-sorting machines.

---

**Article continues after sponsor message**

**POLITICS****Post Office Chief Suspends Controversial Changes Until After Election**

DeJoy acknowledged the problems caused by the initiatives but said many of them had been long in the works or were routine. In most cases, they were steps by lower-level managers without his involvement, he said.

DeJoy said he expects the Postal Service to work out the kinks and get through the backlogs and dips in service it has experienced.

"Transitions don't always go smoothly; you need a recovery process. ... Our recovery process should have been resolved in a few days," he said. "There are a lot of things that are impacting our service. ... We should have cleared it up quicker. We have to focus on it now, and we'll recover quite rapidly."

**Political flap**

The internal changes to the Postal Service have proved contentious to lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, but Democrats on Monday waged a multiprong attack on DeJoy, an ally of President Trump's and a major Republican donor.

Lawmakers pressed him about his commitment to handling this year's expected surge in election mail; about the effects disrupted mail is having on people who rely on the Postal Service for their medications and other essential deliveries; and about DeJoy's financial position and partisan background as a Republican fundraiser.

The postmaster general stood his ground and acknowledged his background as a Republican and Trump supporter. He also said that anecdotal accounts about mailboxes being removed or sorting machines being withdrawn were part of normal operations at an agency that has spent years acclimating to the steady decline in mail volumes.

---

2020 ELECTION: SECURE YOUR VOTE

Why Is Voting By Mail (Suddenly) Controversial? Here's What You Need To Know



DeJoy's main initiative, he said, was instructing that mail trucks operate on schedule, which in some cases mean they leave depots without a full load of mail — or, reportedly, in some cases, any mail at all.

That resulted in a disruption in service as the balance of the mail system acclimates to that change in its operations. Critics called it unacceptable; DeJoy said he believes the Postal Service will work through the disruptions and ultimately improve its performance.

Democrats charged that DeJoy has damaged a legendary and widely popular institution in American life. Critics repeated anecdotes about medicines not being delivered or businesses being caught short by interruptions in service.

"You have ended a once-proud tradition," said Rep. Stephen Lynch, D-Mass.

Oversight Committee Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., also complained about what she called a lack of responsiveness from the Postal Service following questions about DeJoy's changes and their effect on the mail.

Some Republicans have also criticized the changes, which they say hurt constituents in rural areas who rely on the Postal Service. Rep. Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., said she and her husband have personally "endured some very poor performance on the part of the Postal Service."



#### POLITICS

House Approves Bill That Blocks Changes At Postal Service Until After The Election

## **GOP claims "political stunt"**

But Republicans' core political position on Monday was to scoff at the notion that DeJoy is some kind of factotum for Trump who is hurting mail service in support of the president's years-long and unfounded claims about fraud in elections.

"This is a political stunt," said ranking member Rep. James Comer, R-Ky. "I am disappointed by the hysterical frenzy whipped up by our colleagues and their friends in the media."

He and other Republicans pointed to legislation passed Saturday in the House that would infuse \$25 billion into the Postal Service.

The bill also would block the Postal Service from making any service or operations changes through at least January and would require the agency to prioritize delivery of all election-related mail. DeJoy says ballots already are a priority.

Though 26 House Republicans sided with Democrats to approve the legislation, the White House has threatened a veto, and the bill is not expected to advance through the Republican-controlled Senate.

Moreover, as Comer observed, action on the bill took place *before* the hearing convened on Monday — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and the majority had acted ahead of their own ostensible fact-finding process for the sake of headlines, he said, as opposed to truly wishing to govern.

"Meaningful reform is going to take bipartisanship — something we have seen precious little of in the past few days," Comer said.

The chairwoman rejected the idea that now is the time for a wholesale restructuring of the Postal Service. That can only come after the ongoing emergency, she argued.

"After the pandemic we can revisit and have other statements and work can go forward — but let's not dismantle these services to the American people; veterans and seniors deserve to get their mail in a timely way," Maloney said.

The facts on the ground within the postal system also govern its practical capacity, DeJoy said. He discussed the removal of sorting machines with several members of

Congress, including those who asked whether he might restore them now as part of his pledge to suspend his operational changes until Election Day.

No, DeJoy said — but the machines were idle anyway, which is why they were removed.

## **Partisan acrimony**

Republicans' and Democrats' acid partisan commentary intensified over the course of the hearing.

Rep. Jim Cooper, D-Tenn., asked DeJoy whether he was expecting a pardon from Trump. Rep. Clay Higgins, R-La., apologized to DeJoy for the tone of the questioning over the course of the day and told the postmaster general he shouldn't appear at future hearings unless he gets a formal subpoena.

Rep. Katie Porter, D-Calif., quizzed DeJoy about the cost of stamps and other postal rates. The postmaster general told her that he knew a first-class stamp costs 55 cents, but he said he didn't know the cost to send a postcard.

Democrats' suspicions about DeJoy originate in years' worth of remarks by Trump, who has complained about plans to boost mail-in voting during the coronavirus pandemic. That follows earlier assertions by the president, which are meritless, about what he calls widespread fraud in U.S. elections.

Trump cast a mail ballot in Florida last week.

DeJoy also repeated he plans to vote by mail, and he said that he has sought to "put word around to different people" that Trump's attacks on the Postal Service and on voting by mail are not "helpful."

The postmaster general said he had "spoken to friends of mine who are associated with the campaign" working for Trump. The appeals evidently were not directly to Trump. DeJoy said he has spoken to Trump and other administration officials but he said not about his duties at the Postal Service.

Meanwhile, Republicans, including Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, on Monday linked what they called Democrats' groundless fears about the Postal Service to other political attacks over the Ukraine affair and the Russia imbroglio — hoaxes, as Jordan called them, intended to hurt a president whom Democrats believe they cannot dislodge through an honest election.

## Subscribe to The NPR Politics Podcast

NPR ONE

APPLE PODCASTS

GOOGLE PODCASTS

POCKET CASTS

SPOTIFY

RSS



## More Stories From NPR



### ELECTIONS

## A 2020 Surprise: Fewer Absentee Ballot Rejections Than Expected

<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/24/904435736/watch-postmaster-general-dejoy-testifies-in-house-oversight-hearing?t=1598448810983>



**ELECTIONS****Former Election Security Official Says It Will Take 'Years' To Undo Disinformation****ELECTIONS****Trump's Conspiracy Theories Raise Concerns About Turnout In Georgia Senate Runoffs**





**ELECTIONS**

**Fired Official Says Correcting Trump's Fraud Claims The 'Right Thing To Do'**



**ELECTIONS**

**With 2020 Called A Success, Big Questions Lie Ahead For Election Security**



**ELECTIONS**

**Trump Push To Invalidate Votes In Heavily Black Cities Alarms Civil Rights Groups**

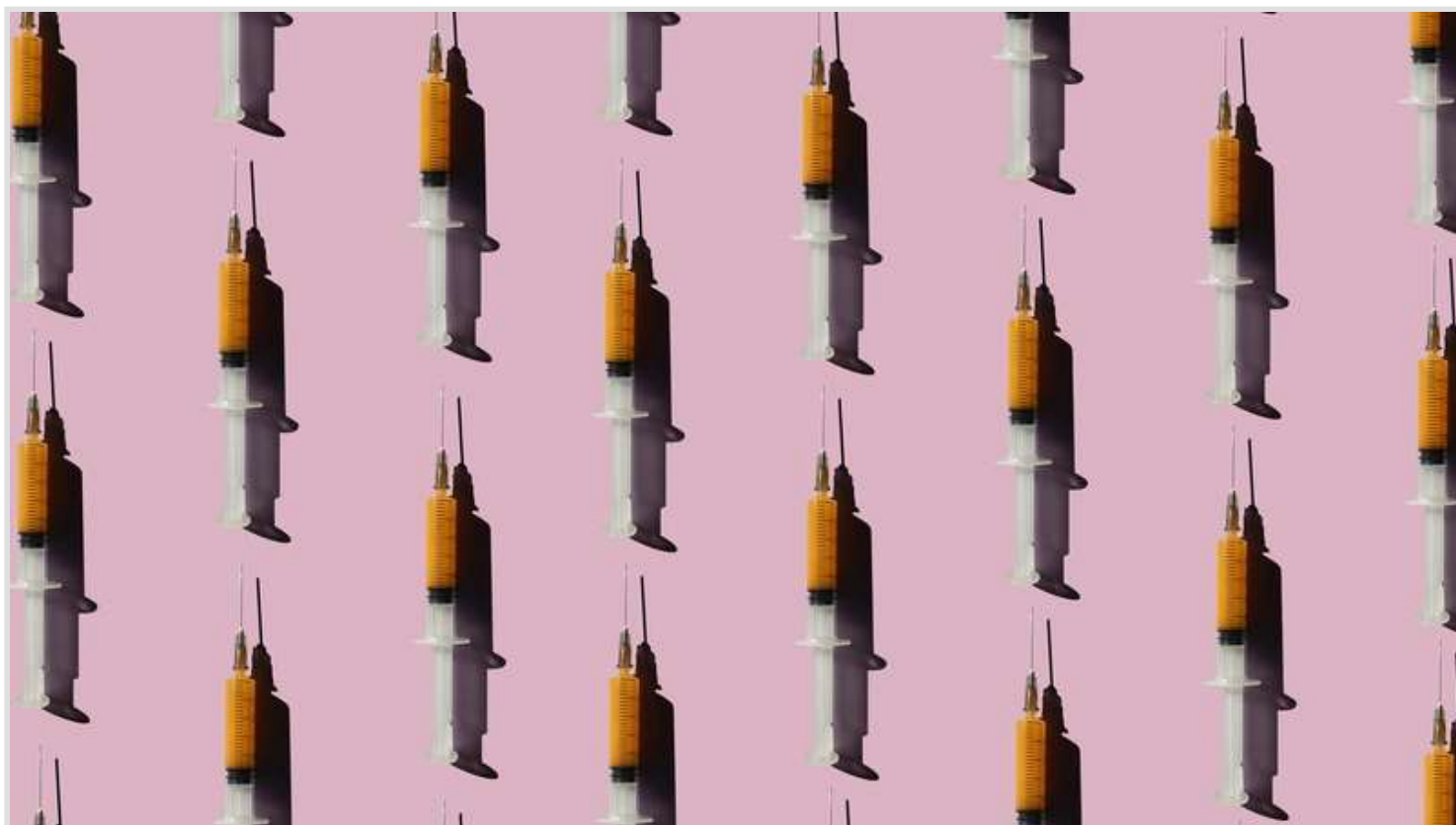
Popular on NPR.org

**HEALTH**

**CDC: If You're Vaccinated, You Don't Need To Mask Outdoors (Unless You're In A**



## Crowd)



### HEALTH

## You Don't Have To Suffer To Benefit From COVID Vaccination — But Some Prefer It



### ECONOMY

## There Is Growing Segregation In Millennial Wealth



INVESTIGATIONS

## How Extremists Weaponize Irony To Spread Hate



NATIONAL

## Prancer, The 'Haunted Victorian Child' Dog From Viral Ad, Has Been Adopted





**POLITICS****Biden's 1st 100 Days: A Look By The Numbers****NPR Editors' Picks****NATIONAL****With Slow Progress On Federal Level, Police Reform Remains Patchwork Across U.S.**





**NATIONAL**  
**Biden Nominates Harris County, Texas, Sheriff To Be Director Of ICE**



**NATIONAL**  
**NY Man Accused Of Threatening To Kill Members Of Congress Says It Was Just 'Blather'**



## HEALTH

**Why New Guidelines For Opioid Treatment Are A 'Big Deal'**

## LAW

**Ketanji Brown Jackson, Hot Supreme Court Prospect, Faces Senate Judiciary Committee**

## SCIENCE

## Here Come The Cicadas

---

### 2020 Election: Secure Your Vote

READ & LISTEN

**Home**

**News**

**Arts & Life**

**Music**

**Podcasts**

**Programs**

CONNECT

**Newsletters**

**Facebook**

**Twitter**

**Instagram**

**Press**

**Contact & Help**

ABOUT NPR

**Overview**

**Diversity**

**Ethics**

**Finances**

**Public Editor**

**Corrections**

GET INVOLVED

**Support Public Radio**

**Sponsor NPR**

**NPR Careers**

**NPR Shop**

**NPR Events**

**NPR Extra**

---

[terms of use](#)

[privacy](#)

[your privacy choices](#)

[text only](#)

© 2021 npr