

Duckworth, Durbin Join Tester, Peters in Demanding Postal Service Address Delivery Delays of Veterans' Prescription Drugs

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), a member of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) who served in the Reserve Forces for 23 years and still receives prescriptions from the VA by way of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), and Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) joined Senators Jon Tester (D-MT), Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, and Gary Peters (D-MI) to [demand immediate action](#) following reports of significant delays in Veterans' prescription medications through the USPS. In a letter to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy and VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, the Senators are urging USPS to correct

operational changes that are needlessly delaying Veterans' access to life-saving prescriptions.

“Veterans and the VA should be able to count on USPS for the timely delivery of essential prescription drugs,” the Senators wrote. “No Veteran should have to wonder when their antidepressant or blood pressure medication may arrive – and the effects can be devastating if doses are missed.”

The Senators continued, “USPS needs to immediately cease operational changes that are causing mail delays so that Veterans do not needlessly suffer from illnesses exacerbated by delayed medication deliveries. Those who gave so much to serve this country should be able to count on the nation's Postal Service to deliver their medications in a timely manner.”

The VA fills about 80 percent of its prescriptions through their Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy (CMOP), which primarily uses the U.S. Postal Service to deliver to Veterans' homes. The VA CMOP fills almost 120 million prescriptions a year, with deliveries arriving daily to about 330,000 veterans across the country. According to the VA website, “prescriptions usually arrive within 3 to 5 days.” Reports from Veterans and VA staff have said that recently these medications are sometimes taking weeks to be delivered and causing veterans to miss doses of vital medications.

A full copy of the letter is available below and online [here](#).

Dear Postmaster DeJoy,

Millions of veterans rely on timely deliveries from the United States Postal Service (USPS) to receive their prescription medications from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Recent operational changes you ordered at USPS are needlessly delaying veterans' access to lifesaving prescriptions, when the health and lives of Americans are already at high risk due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

VA fills about 80 percent of veteran prescriptions by mail, due to the high accuracy and lower processing costs of the Department's mail-order pharmacy service, the Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy (CMOP). The VA CMOP fills almost 120 million prescriptions a year, with deliveries arriving daily to about 330,000 veterans across the country. Veterans and the VA rely on USPS for timely delivery of these prescriptions, since approximately 90 percent of CMOP packages are shipped to veterans by the Postal Service. VA's mail-order pharmacy service is also extremely popular among veterans, with an “among the best” rating in customer satisfaction according to the J.D. Power U.S. Pharmacy Study.

However, since you directed USPS to institute harmful operational changes that have restricted mail movement and limited carriers' ability to timely deliver mail, we have received many troubling reports from veterans waiting weeks for their prescriptions to arrive due to delays at USPS. VA's website states that "prescriptions usually arrive within 3 to 5 days." Veterans and VA staff have said that as of recently, these medications are often taking weeks to be delivered and causing veterans to miss doses of vital medications. Most troubling is that these delays appear to be entirely avoidable. Veterans and the VA should be able to count on USPS for the timely delivery of essential prescription drugs.

Access to prescription medications is especially integral during the COVID-19 pandemic when routine health care appointments may be delayed or cancelled. No veteran should have to wonder when their antidepressant or blood pressure medication may arrive – and the effects can be devastating if doses are missed. Thousands of veterans, including more than 2,300 veterans who were VA patients, have already died from the novel coronavirus. USPS needs to immediately cease operational changes that are causing mail delays so that veterans do not needlessly suffer from illnesses exacerbated by delayed medication deliveries.

Those who gave so much to serve this country should be able to count on the nation's Postal Service to deliver their medications in a timely manner. We request that the Postal Service examine the impact of its recent operational and policy changes on veterans' access to prescription drugs, and work with VA to ensure no veteran suffers from further medication delivery delays.