

Duckworth, Durbin Join Blumenthal to Criticize USPS Operational Changes and their Disproportionate Harm on Deployed Servicemembers

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), a combat Veteran who still receives her own medications from the VA through the United States Postal Service (USPS), and U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) joined U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and 26 of their Senate colleagues today in writing Postmaster General Louis DeJoy to raise concerns over the heightened impact of harmful USPS policy and operational changes to servicemembers and their families. Because USPS is the only service that can deliver to the Army Post Office (APO) and Fleet Post Office (FPO) addresses used by our military overseas, deployed servicemembers and their families are uniquely impacted by changes that have left USPS “intentionally hamstrung and severely strained.” Active duty servicemembers who are deployed domestically also

rely heavily on USPS to vote, pay their bills, receive packages and stay in touch with family members and loved ones.

“This population of Americans is disproportionately affected by any actions that restrict or delay the mail, which is sometimes the only reliable connection they have with loved ones during their military service. Servicemembers rely on USPS for the delivery of medicines, ballots, bills, and countless other pieces of vital mail,” the Senators wrote.

The Senators continued, “Even more alarming is the reality that servicemembers depend on the mail to exercise their most important rights as American citizens: the right to vote. Absentee ballots are the only way that most of the military community can use their constitutionally protected right to cast a ballot. Making absentee voting more difficult disenfranchises the very Americans who serve and sacrifice on the front lines in defense of our right to vote and live in a democratic society – a cruel irony to our men and women in uniform that must be remedied immediately.”

Today’s letter was also signed by Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), U. S. Senators Gary Peters (D-MI), Jack Reed (D-RI), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Jon Tester (D-MT), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Tina Smith (D-MN), Bob Casey (D-PA), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Tom Udall (D-NM), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Chris Coons (D-DE), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Mark Warner (D-VA).

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

Dear Mr. DeJoy:

As it has become more obvious that your oversight of the postal service is severely distressing the domestic mail system, we urge you to consider the impact of your recent changes to United States Postal Service (USPS) policy and operations on the 1.3 million servicemembers and their families who serve both domestically and overseas. USPS is the only service that can deliver to the Army Post Office (APO) and Fleet Post Office (FPO) addresses used by our military overseas. While your recent suspension of operational changes is a necessary first step and needed course correction, it is insufficient and unclear that this suspension will mitigate the damage that has already been done to the postal system, and prevent the disruption and harm to Americans who serve our nation in uniform. We are also concerned that your statements regarding suspension of these changes are not actually being carried out.

Since your appointment as Postmaster General, you have implemented many harmful operational and policy changes that have already resulted in mail being delayed in many areas by weeks. Reports of hiring freezes, scheduling and route changes, reshuffling of leadership, decommissioning and removal of mail-sorting machines, and other reorganization of operations have left a once proud and efficient system intentionally hamstrung and severely strained. In fact, USPS recently sent detailed letters to 46 states warning that it cannot guarantee that all mail-in ballots will arrive in time to be counted.

Your changes have also had a direct impact on deployed servicemembers who rely on USPS as the only avenue to deliver mail from the United States to the APO & FPO addresses used by our military overseas. This population of Americans is disproportionately affected by any actions that restrict or delay the mail, which is sometimes the only reliable connection they have with loved ones during their military service. Servicemembers and their families who are stationed overseas for months and years at a time also depend on the USPS, as do military families who are stationed domestically, but away from their home of record. Servicemembers rely on USPS for the delivery of medicines, ballots, bills, and countless other pieces of vital mail. There are virtually no members of the military who will be unaffected by these changes, which will negatively impact their quality of life and hamper their ability to communicate with their family members and loved ones – ultimately hindering military readiness.

Even more alarming is the reality that servicemembers depend on the mail to exercise their most important rights as American citizens: the right to vote. Absentee ballots are the only way that most of the military community can use their constitutionally protected right to cast a ballot. Making absentee voting more difficult disenfranchises the very Americans who serve and sacrifice on the front lines in defense of our right to vote and live in a democratic society – a cruel irony to our men and women in uniform that must be remedied immediately.

We urge the White House and all Trump Administration officials to reconsider their opposition to necessary stimulus funding for the USPS during this COVID-19 pandemic. The Heroes Act, which was passed by the House in May, would provide \$25 billion to the USPS and we must immediately pass this critical funding need.

The USPS is a public service that is critical to all American citizens, particularly our military. They are depending on us to provide this vital service, and we stand ready to protect it at all costs.