

American Bridge 21st Century: Trump says slow the mailing down, please

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*The only thing Donald Trump learned from Russia's attack on our democracy in 2016 was to not outsource the job next time around. Who needs Vladimir Putin when you can install a politically motivated Postmaster General willing to abuse his power and sabotage the postal service? By gaslighting the country with fraudulent claims that mail-in voting is unreliable and openly undermining the postal service's job to facilitate mail-in voting, Trump has proven he is willing to rig this election. We must protect the right to vote and ensure that the American people can make their voices heard in a free and fair election," **said Kyle Morse, an American Bridge Spokesperson.***

ICYMI: [HuffPost: If Donald Trump Controls The Mail, He Controls Democracy](#)

By Luke O' Brien on 8/11/20

Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night can slow the mail. But President [Donald Trump](#) can.

Late Friday, Trump's handpicked new postmaster general, Louis DeJoy, announced sweeping organizational changes that promise to further undercut the [U.S. Postal Service](#)'s ability to perform a vital democratic function: the timely delivery of mail-in ballots. This comes during an election when as many as 80 million Americans are expected to vote by mail because of the risk of contracting [COVID-19](#).

DeJoy, a major [Republican](#) fundraiser and Trump donor, reassigned or sidelined almost two dozen high-ranking USPS officials in a move to [centralize his control](#) of the agency, also instituting a hiring freeze and voluntary early retirements.

Rep. [Gerry Connolly](#) (D-Va.), chair of the House subcommittee responsible for oversight of the Postal Service, called the reorganization “[deliberate sabotage](#)” and an obvious attempt to interfere in the election.

“One way to suppress the vote — and they’re experts in vote suppression — is to slow down the delivery of mail,” [Connolly told CNN](#) on Monday.

Enfeebling the Postal Service would be among the most concerning attempts to subvert the institutions of democracy by a far-right administration that has turned the executive branch into a political cudgel unlike any wielded by a president in modern times. Trump has never made a secret of his distaste for democracy. After his election, his then-senior strategist, Steve Bannon, described the objective of the new administration as the “[deconstruction of the administrative state](#).” Coming from Bannon, an extremist who works with authoritarians around the world, these were baleful tidings.

Indeed, the effort to cripple the federal government — though a longtime goal of a Republican Party purportedly opposed to regulation and overspending — has taken on a more sinister hue under Trump, who has starved agencies of necessary resources and prevented them from carrying out their duties. The tragic consequences have been on full display during a pandemic that the government was unable — [or not allowed](#) — to control and that has killed more than 163,000 Americans.

But Trump has also worked [to corrupt the government](#), often at the highest levels by installing yes-men in what more closely resembles the operation of a Mafia organization. From the start, Trump’s lawlessness has been clear. During the 2016 campaign, he invited Russia to interfere in an election he falsely claimed Hillary Clinton had rigged. This year, he was impeached after allegedly soliciting the president of Ukraine to interfere on his behalf in the 2020 election by smearing former Vice President Joe Biden.

Since he took office, Trump has [badly abused](#) the Federal Vacancies Reform Act to install cronies at dozens of high-level Cabinet and sub-Cabinet positions — cutting out the constitutional role of the Senate to give advice and consent on presidential

nominees. Critical roles at the departments of justice, state, defense and homeland security, among others, have all had “acting” appointees put in place by Trump without the usual Senate confirmations. (The Senate has been controlled by Republicans for the entirety of Trump’s administration, but evidently even a modest level of scrutiny was unacceptable.)

For example, as the Department of Homeland Security has abused its legal authority this summer to launch violent suppression of largely peaceful protests, it has been led by Chad Wolf, who was never confirmed by the Senate for this role. He [was installed](#) last fall after a dizzying series of internal changes to DHS’s succession rules that many scholars argue were unconstitutional.

“Wolf’s unlawful service is far from an arcane constitutional question,” as a recent Lawfare [op-ed noted](#). “This scenario — high-ranking officials wielding the immense power of the U.S. government without being subject to the advice and consent of the Senate — is exactly what the Founders sought to avoid when they included the Appointments Clause in the Constitution.”

And in a span of six weeks earlier this year, Trump [removed five inspectors general](#) from their oversight roles, including those at the departments of defense, health and human services, and state, and for the intelligence community.

Now trailing Biden in the polls, Trump has apparently decided to tamper with the federal machinery overseeing aspects of the election — including the delivery of mail-in ballots. He is again claiming the contest will be rigged, asserting repeatedly and despite all evidence to the contrary that mail-in ballots are ripe for abuse. He has called mail-in voting “fraudulent” and “corrupt” and even suggested it might be a reason to postpone the election.

This has put the mail service squarely in Trump’s crosshairs. The most popular government agency in the country, with a 91% favorability rating, [according to a recent Pew poll](#), the USPS is made up of essential workers toiling on the frontline during the pandemic, 40,000 of whom have had to quarantine. At least 75 have died.

DeJoy, a union-busting former logistics executive who with, his wife, has up to \$75.3 million invested in USPS competitors and contractors, took over the agency in June. He soon started making changes that have concerned Democrats, democracy watchdogs and postal workers themselves. In July, he eliminated overtime, reduced

hours and cut back other services, including the late-delivery trips from processing stations to post offices that keep mail flowing on time. There has even been [an indication that he might close some offices.](#)

DeJoy's explanation for these decisions: cost-cutting measures to increase efficiency.

But the changes have already hamstrung a stressed and financially beleaguered agency, [creating huge backlogs of mail](#) around the country and, in some places, slowing the arrival of ballots during primary elections. In Philadelphia, unsorted mail [has piled up in post offices](#) and overwhelmed mail carriers. In Michigan, a key battleground state, some [ballots didn't arrive until the day before the primary, if they arrived at all.](#)

"Let me be clear that with regard to election mail, the Postal Service and I are fully committed to fulfilling our role in the electoral process," [DeJoy said on Friday.](#)

"Despite any assertions to the contrary, we are not slowing down election mail or any other mail."

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and other top Democrats on Friday [asked the USPS inspector general to investigate](#) the recent operational changes. And before last week's USPS slashing, what Democrats are referring to as the "Friday night massacre," Sen. Gary Peters (D-Mich), the ranking member on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which oversees the Postal Service, [opened an investigation](#) into its policy changes.

"We're trying to find out exactly what were the policies put in place, over the last few weeks, by the new postmaster general that appears to be slowing down the mail," [Peters said.](#)

Congressional investigations, however, have done little to check the turpitude and authoritarianism of the Trump administration or change the minds of compliant Republicans as the country hurtles toward one of the most important elections in its history. And Democrats have so far unsuccessfully pushed for billions in additional funding for the USPS as part of COVID-19 relief packages as they come up against years of ingrained resistance in a Republican Party that has long sought to privatize mail delivery. The Republican National Committee and the Trump campaign, for example, have [already spent \\$20 million in an effort to limit voting by mail](#) in several battleground states.

When asked by Democracy Now on Monday if he thought Trump was trying to sabotage the Postal Service in the lead-up to the election, Mark Dimondstein, the president of the American Postal Workers Union, [didn't mince words](#):

[In June], the Office of Management Budget of the White House put out, in writing, a proposal to privatize — i.e. break up — the Postal Service and sell it to private corporations, where they can then make private profit. And, of course, whether people get postal services at all will then depend on who they are, where they live, and how much it would cost, if they can even get services at all, because somebody would have to then be able to make or want to make a quick buck. So, it's in writing. It is their plan.

The battle for the integrity of the 2020 election may now happen within a government service that's under attack itself. One whose employees [risk their lives today](#), as they have for over two centuries, to hold a nation together.

[Read the article here.](#)