

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Calls on Postmaster General to immediately reverse operational changes to the U.S. Postal Service causing delays of critical medications to Americans

Posted on Tuesday, Sep 15, 2020

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin joined more than 30 of her Senate colleagues in a letter to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy calling on him to immediately reverse all operational and organizational changes that have resulted in delays of critical medications to Americans.

“The Postal Service is an essential public institution that must uphold its duty to serve every community. Your recently implemented changes pose an unacceptable threat and continue to have a devastating effect on communities that rely on consistent access to medication through the mail. We have received numerous reports from seniors about delays in receiving their prescriptions through the mail, leaving some without life-sustaining medication for days. Others have been forced to obtain emergency prescriptions from their doctors and pay out-of-pocket for medication because their original prescriptions covered by insurance never arrived,” **wrote the Senators.**

“We call on you to immediately reverse all operational and organizational changes that have resulted in life-threatening delays of critical medications to Americans. As you noted, “it is imperative for the Postal Service to operate efficiently and effectively, while continuing to provide service that meets the needs of [its]

customers.” Right now, the Postal Service is failing to meet the needs of many Americans and adhere to its mission of “prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas.” As we continue to fight this pandemic, the Postal Service is integral to keeping millions of Americans safe, especially seniors, people with chronic conditions, and people with disabilities,” **continued the Senators.**

Today’s letter was led by Senators Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) Ranking Member Gary Peters (D-MI), Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA), Special Committee on Aging Ranking Member Bob Casey (D-PA), and Committee on Finance Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-OR), and also signed by Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Tom Carper (D-DE), Charles Schumer (D-NY), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Tom Udall (D-NM), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Mark Warner (D-VA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Bernie Sanders (D-VT), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Tina Smith (D-MN), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Chris Coons (D-DE), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Ed Markey (D-MA), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Jack Reed (D-RI), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Kamala Harris (D-CA).

The full text of the letter can be found [here](#) and below:

Dear Mr. DeJoy:

In your three months as U.S. Postmaster General, you have made detrimental operational and structural changes to the U.S. Postal Service. After facing criticism from members of Congress, states, and the public as well as lawsuits from multiple state attorneys general you announced the reversal of some—but not all—of these policies. Damage from your decisions has already been done as Americans continue to experience potentially life-threatening delays in the delivery of prescription medications. These delays will continue to disproportionately harm the same individuals who are most at risk during the COVID-19 crisis, including seniors, people with chronic conditions, and people with disabilities.

While we hope that your recent policy reversals will curtail some of the harmful effects and delays we have seen, we continue to have grave concerns regarding widespread delays in the delivery of critical medications that millions of Americans rely upon every day. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now more important than ever for Americans to have safe and timely access to their medications from their homes. For years, Americans have entrusted the Postal Service to deliver essential goods—yet during this public health crisis, a number of Americans continue to await needed medications that are lost or delayed in the mail.

The Postal Service is an essential public institution that must uphold its duty to serve every community. Your recently implemented changes pose an unacceptable threat and continue to have a devastating effect on communities that rely on consistent access to medication through the mail. We have received numerous reports from seniors about delays in receiving their prescriptions through the mail, leaving some without life-sustaining medication for days. Others have been forced to obtain emergency prescriptions from their doctors and pay out-of-pocket for medication because their original prescriptions covered by insurance never arrived.

The National Association of Letter Carriers reported that the Postal Service delivers 1.2 billion prescription drug shipments each year – amounting to four million shipments every day, six days a week. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Mail Order Pharmacy provides prescriptions to approximately 80 percent of all veterans via mail, processing 470,000 prescriptions daily. Despite these figures, “prescription medication can only be as effective as a patient’s ability to access it.”

The Postal Service’s role in delivering medications to Americans has only grown during the COVID-19 crisis. When COVID-19 stay-at-home orders began in March, mail-order prescriptions reportedly increased by 21 percent from the year prior. What was previously a routine visit to the pharmacy now places millions of Americans at an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises Americans to “limit in-person visits to the pharmacy” and, if possible, to use drive-thru windows, mail-order, or other delivery services to pick up medications. As Postal Service delays cause Americans to worry when, if at all, they will receive their next supply of medication in the mail, patients across the country may be forced to seek their prescriptions in person at a

pharmacy—increasing their risk of exposure to COVID-19 at a time when staying home is vital to their health and well-being.

We call on you to immediately reverse all operational and organizational changes that have resulted in life-threatening delays of critical medications to Americans. As you noted, “it is imperative for the Postal Service to operate efficiently and effectively, while continuing to provide service that meets the needs of [its] customers.” Right now, the Postal Service is failing to meet the needs of many Americans and adhere to its mission of “prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas.” As we continue to fight this pandemic, the Postal Service is integral to keeping millions of Americans safe, especially seniors, people with chronic conditions, and people with disabilities.

To that end, please provide the following information by September 21, 2020:

1. What considerations did you give to mail-order medications before implementing the recent operational and structural changes throughout the Postal Service?

1. What, if any, actions did you take to prevent potential delays in the delivery of mail-order medications? If you made no specific adjustments or considerations, please explain why.

1. What steps, if any, does the Postal Service intend to take to address existing delays in the delivery of mail-ordered prescriptions that have occurred as a result of the operational and structural changes you implemented?

1. Please identify the operational and structural changes implemented during your tenure that you plan to reverse.
 1. Please explain how you decided which changes to reverse, as well as your rationale for each reversal.
 2. Do you plan to re-implement any of these changes after the November 2020 election? If so, what safeguards will you put in place to avoid significant mail delays and keep Americans safe?

1. Please identify the operational and structural changes implemented during your tenure that you chose not to reverse.
 1. Please explain your justification for each decision.
 2. Please explain the consequences these changes could have for the ability of Americans to receive their medications in a timely and consistent manner through the mail, and whether the Postal Service has adopted safeguards to address these issues.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

An online version of this release is available [here](#).