

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1304

August 8, 2023

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW Room 10300
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Attorney General Garland and Postmaster General DeJoy:

On August 1, in the middle of the afternoon, an on-duty letter carrier with the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) reportedly was shot on the northside of Chicago during an armed robbery. Fifteen minutes later, near the same area, a second letter carrier was robbed at gunpoint. The next day, two suspects, one armed with a handgun, robbed a letter carrier and stole their bag in Berwyn, a suburb west of Chicago.

This violence against letter carriers, theft of mail, and any related crimes that result from the theft of mail are unacceptable and must be stopped. In addition to my concern about this brazen criminal activity and its impact on victims, I also worry deeply about the downstream consequences of such crime. For example, certain neighborhoods may become delivery deserts where residents cannot rely on the mail for delivery of critical items like medication and food. In addition, more letter carriers may leave the service because of dangerous working conditions.

It also is obvious that the security of the mail is directly related to the security of our elections, as the use of voting by mail continues to expand. Ballots may not be the target of mail thieves, but they could easily get swept up in letters stolen from carriers or collection boxes. Every time a ballot is not delivered to its intended location, a voter is disenfranchised, and confidence in the outcome of our elections is undermined. To bolster the security of elections, we must take steps to bolster the security of the mail, and this work cannot wait until the eve of an election, or, even worse, after one takes place.

I wrote to you in April asking what actions you have taken to address the alarming increase in letter carrier robberies. In particular, I urged USPS to reinstate a system of local area crime alerts and reduce the incentive for this crime by updating cluster mailboxes to require two-factor authentication. I urged the Department of Justice (DOJ) to prioritize enforcement of federal laws applicable to these reprehensible assaults on the men and women who deliver the nation's mail.

In response, USPS cited a nationwide initiative to replace arrow locks with electronic locks that require two-factor identification. USPS also referenced another nationwide initiative

to harden blue collection boxes and institute dual authentication for change-of-address protocols. USPS also suggested that crime alerts are taking place in a geographically targeted manner. USPS further noted that the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) pays the salaries and benefits for Special Assistant United States Attorneys to bring federal prosecutions related to crimes involving the mail.

DOJ did not provide an informative response about its efforts to work with USPS and USPIS to hold accountable those committing these crimes.

To better understand the current efforts and commitments of USPS and DOJ with respect to preventing and addressing letter carrier robberies, mail theft, and related crimes; and election security, please provide answers within three weeks to the following questions:

1. Please provide an update on the rollout of replacements of arrow locks and hardened blue collection boxes, including:
 - a. Why did USPS decide to replace arrow locks on just 49,000 collection boxes when there are an estimated 130,000 boxes in service? What are the criteria for replacement?
 - b. How many of the planned 49,000 replacement locks and 12,000 hardened collection boxes have been installed? What is the projected timeline for completing these replacements?
 - c. In what cities have the upgrades taken place?
 - d. What is the strategic plan and timeline for replacing all arrow locks, including on cluster boxes?
 - e. What is the procurement process for the replacement arrow locks and hardened collection boxes?
2. Please describe efforts to inform the public of measures individuals can take to secure the mail, and provide any information you have on the efficacy of those efforts.
3. Please describe the internal measures deployed to keep track of arrow keys, including any changes to those measures implemented in the last five years.
4. Please provide a breakdown of work hours over the last five years by investigative program and by division for:
 - a. U.S. Postal Inspectors;
 - b. USPIS contract support, task force officers, and professional technical and administrative employees; and
 - c. Postal Police Officers.
5. How many personnel does USPIS currently have dedicated to data analytics with respect to studying and evaluating letter carrier robberies and theft of mail and arrow keys?
6. Please provide information over the last five years on the number of letter carrier robberies, by state and by division, separately indicating the number of robberies involving a deadly weapon.
7. Please provide information from USPS or USPIS on the number of volume attacks on mail receptacles over the last five years.
8. A May 31, 2023, USPIS press release described “Project Safe Delivery,” a surge operation that took place in Chicago to “protect postal employees and facilities, prevent mail and

package theft and enforce the law against individuals who perpetrate crimes against postal employees or engage in mail and package theft.”

- a. What effect has Project Safe Delivery had?
 - b. How many arrow keys were recovered, and how many suspects have been identified, arrested, indicted, or convicted?
 - c. What actions have been taken since? Please indicate other locations where you have conducted surge operations, and the results.
9. Over the last five years, how many prosecutions for crimes against USPS employees, the mail, and USPS property have been brought by state or local authorities?
 10. What measures are being taken by DOJ to address letter carrier robbery and mail theft and ensure the security of voting by mail?
 11. Please indicate when and how often over the last two years USPIS has engaged with senior DOJ officials on letter carrier robberies, mail theft, and election security, and any actions taken as a result.
 12. How many U.S. Attorney’s Offices currently have a grand jury investigation open related to letter carrier robberies or theft of mail or Postal property?
 13. Disaggregated by statute, year, and district, please provide the number of prosecutions for violations of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1701, 1702, 1704, 1705, 1706, 1707, 1708, 2114, and 2115 over the last five years.
 14. How many USPS or USPIS attorneys currently are serving as Special Assistant United States Attorneys? By district, what percentage of their time is spent prosecuting cases involving crimes against USPS employees, theft of mail and USPS property, and crimes against or involving the mail?

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

cc: USPS Board of Governors
Chief Postal Inspector Gary Barksdale