

BERNARD SANDERS  
VERMONT

COMMITTEES:  
BUDGET, RANKING MEMBER  
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS  
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND  
PENSIONS  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4504

August 26, 2015

332 SENATE DIRKSEN OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510  
(202) 224-5141

1 CHURCH STREET, 3RD FLOOR  
BURLINGTON, VT 05401  
(802) 862-0697  
1 (800) 339-9834

[www.sanders.senate.gov](http://www.sanders.senate.gov)

Megan Brennan  
Postmaster General  
United States Postal Service  
475 L'Enfant Plaza S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Ms. Brennan:

I am writing to express my serious concerns about the delays in mail service since the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) eliminated overnight delivery for first class mail in January.

According to a recent report by the USPS Inspector General, nearly 500 million pieces of mail were not delivered on time during the first six months of this year, a 48 percent increase from last year. This is unacceptable and must change.

The serious slowdown in mail service has been felt by communities all across the country, but it has been particularly acute in rural areas. I have heard from people all over this country who have reported serious delays in receiving life-saving prescription drugs, and the bills that they need to pay to keep the lights and electricity on in their homes. For example, veterans and seniors have complained that it is now taking 9, and sometimes as much as 11 days, for them to receive life-saving prescriptions through the mail. This delay means that some of the most vulnerable people in this country are going without the medications they need, or they are being forced to travel long distances because they cannot rely on the timely delivery of mail.

In light of the significant slowdown in mail delivery, I am writing to urge you to reinstate regional overnight delivery standards and to do everything possible to speed up these services.

It is abundantly clear that the Postal Service's decision to shut down more than 140 mail processing plants a few years ago and to eliminate overnight delivery standards this year has been a disaster that is negatively impacting Americans all over this country. While I was encouraged that the Postal Service announced that it would delay closing even more mail processing plants this year, we must do a lot better than that.

USPS and many Republicans have argued that these cuts are necessary because of the decline in the volume of First-Class mail. But the most significant reason for the financial problems at the Postal Service is due to a mandate imposed by the George W. Bush Administration to pre-fund 75 years of retiree health care benefits over a 10 year period. In fact, excluding this mandate, the Postal Service has made a profit of more than \$2 billion since the fall of 2012.

In my view, it is time to eliminate this pre-funding mandate and allow the Postal Service to offer more, not fewer, services that the American people want and need. I will be re-introducing legislation to do just that.

In the meantime, I would urge the Postal Service to re-instate overnight delivery standards and speed up the delivery of mail as soon as possible.

Improving delivery times has broad bipartisan support in Congress, and returning to previous standards would help accomplish that goal. During the debate over the Budget Resolution this spring, the Senate approved an amendment that I offered calling for a moratorium on postal plant closures and a reinstatement of regional overnight delivery standards, and likewise voted to instruct conferees to include this amendment in the conference report by a bipartisan vote of 85-11. In addition, the House Appropriations Committee passed an amendment that would return to the July 1, 2012 standards.

You have stated that any delivery beyond 2-3 days is a "failure" and I agree. At a time when the Postal Service is competing with the instantaneous communications of e-mail and high-speed internet services, we should be putting in place policies to speed up delivery of mail, not slow it down. I look forward to working with you to ensure that communities all across the country, rural and urban, receive their mail on time and without unnecessary delays.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator