



May 6, 2020

**Officers**

**Chair**

Judith L. Lichtman  
National Partnership for  
Women & Families

**Vice Chairs**

Thomas A. Saenz  
Mexican American Legal  
Defense and Educational Fund  
Hilary Shelton  
NAACP

**Secretary/Treasurer**

Lee A. Saunders  
American Federation of State,  
County & Municipal Employees

**Board of Directors**

Kevin Allis  
National Congress of American Indians  
Kimberly Churches  
AAUW

Kristen Clarke  
Lawyers' Committee for  
Civil Rights Under Law

Alphonso B. David  
Human Rights Campaign

Rory Gamble  
International Union, UAW

Lily Eskelsen Garcia  
National Education Association

Fatima Goss Graves  
National Women's Law Center

Mary Kay Henry  
Service Employees International Union

Sherrilyn Ifill  
NAACP Legal Defense and  
Educational Fund, Inc.

David H. Inoué  
Japanese American Citizens League

Derrick Johnson  
NAACP

Virginia Kase  
League of Women Voters of the  
United States

Michael B. Keegan  
People for the American Way

Samer E. Khalaf  
American-Arab  
Anti-Discrimination Committee

Marc Morial  
National Urban League

Janet Murguía  
UnidosUS

Debra L. Ness  
National Partnership for  
Women & Families

Rabbi Jonah Pesner  
Religious Action Center  
Of Reform Judaism

Lisa Rice  
National Fair Housing Alliance

Anthony Romero  
American Civil Liberties Union

Maria Town  
American Association of  
People with Disabilities

Richard L. Trumka  
AFL-CIO

Toni Van Pelt  
National Organization for Women

Randi Weingarten  
American Federation of Teachers

John C. Yang  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice |  
AAJC

**President & CEO**

Vanita Gupta

## Congress Must Provide Robust Funding for the United States Postal Service

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the 100 undersigned organizations, we urge you to support robust funding for the United States Postal Service (USPS) in the next coronavirus response package. The hundreds of thousands of people who make up the USPS are essential workers providing a critical public service to the people of our nation amid a global pandemic, all while facing uncertainty about their own personal health and the fiscal health of the constitutionally-mandated agency at which they work. Congress must act now to save the USPS, the hundreds of thousands of jobs included in its diverse workforce, and the communities that depend upon this critical federal agency. A vote against adequate, timely funding for the USPS is an anti-civil rights vote.

We are deeply concerned about the financial insecurity facing the USPS as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. The USPS does not accept appropriations and is dependent on the sale of postal services and products for revenue to carry out its public service mission of connecting our country. Today, the USPS projects that it will lose \$2 billion each month because of loss of revenue from an unprecedented drop in mail during the pandemic. Despite this financial hit, USPS carriers have been essential in our nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, continuing to deliver essential mail and parcels, such as prescriptions, food, and household necessities.<sup>1</sup> And their service during this pandemic has come at a cost and at great personal risk. Nearly 1,979 postal workers have tested positive for the coronavirus and 1,000 others are sick, in quarantine, and presumed to be positive. More than 40 postal employees have died; over 6,000 are in self-quarantine because of exposure.<sup>2</sup> Just as in 2001, when the nation was facing bioterrorism from anthrax attacks in the wake of 9/11, it was postal workers on the front lines.<sup>3</sup> We owe it to these brave essential workers to shore up the financial health of the Postal Service.

The USPS has long been the most popular federal agency in the nation, with 91 percent of people in our country holding a favorable opinion about the agency.<sup>4</sup> The USPS is legally required to deliver all mail at a flat rate to all postal addresses in all regions in our country,

<sup>1</sup> Bogage, Jacob. "White House rejects bailout for U.S. Postal Service battered by coronavirus." *The Washington Post*. April 11, 2020. <https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/white-house-rejects-bailout-for-u-s-postal-service-battered-by-coronavirus/>

<sup>2</sup> The American Postal Workers Union. "Response to President Trump's remarks today that he will block coronavirus aid for the U.S. Postal Service." April 24, 2020. <https://www.apwu.org/news/reponse-president-trump%E2%80%99s-remarks-today-he-will-block-coronavirus-aid-us-postal-service>

<sup>3</sup> Rein, Lisa. "Postal workers mark 10-year anniversary of anthrax attacks." *The Washington Post*. October 21, 2011. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/postal-workers-mark-10-year-anniversary-of-anthrax-attacks/2011/10/21/gIQA4E1F4L\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/postal-workers-mark-10-year-anniversary-of-anthrax-attacks/2011/10/21/gIQA4E1F4L_story.html)

<sup>4</sup> Pew Research Center. "Public Expresses Favorable Views of a Number of Federal Agencies." October 1, 2019. <https://www.people-press.org/2019/10/01/public-expresses-favorable-views-of-a-number-of-federal-agencies/>



no matter how far it may have to travel or how profitable the work. It has more than 31,600 retail locations and employs more than 650,000 people from diverse backgrounds that serve every rural, suburban, and urban community around the country.

Over the years, the USPS has also been an important employer of people of color and served as one of the linchpins of many communities. The USPS is one of the only federal agencies whose workforce reflects our nation's demographics. The agency is one of the leading employers of people of color and women, who each make up 40 percent of the workforce.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, 21 percent of USPS employees are African American, 8 percent are Hispanic, 8 percent are Asian American Pacific Islander, and .67 percent are American Indian or Alaska Native.<sup>6</sup> The USPS has also long been a path to the middle class for African Americans in particular, paving the way for economic opportunity for a community that has faced countless barriers due to years of structural and economic racism.<sup>7</sup> Postal Service careers provide a steady stream of income and benefits to employees, serve as a vehicle for families trying to work their way out of poverty, and support the same communities that they serve. USPS has been a career lifeline for many, and we should aim to preserve these opportunities for the individuals, families, and communities that rely on them to achieve economic security rather than throwing its more than 650,000 employees into the unemployment line.

The Postal Service's accessibility and affordability is also important to rural communities, seniors, and people with disabilities, who might not otherwise be able to afford the cost of a private business to deliver essential medications and daily necessities. More than half the people who have their medicine delivered at home are over the age of 65, and 54 percent of this group takes more than four different types of medication.<sup>8</sup> Were USPS to shut down, these individuals would be left without an affordable option to access vital medicines. People with disabilities rely on the USPS to mail their prescriptions for similar reasons. Many of these individuals are unable to leave their homes, let alone travel to the closest pharmacy or city to pick up their prescriptions. A number of these individuals are veterans enrolled in the Veterans Affairs (VA) "Meds by Mail" program, which delivers medications to their homes.<sup>9</sup> A shutdown of USPS could ultimately disrupt the critical VA services that serve this vulnerable population.

The accessibility and affordability that USPS provides is particularly vital for rural and tribal communities. Without the USPS' public service commitment to provide the "last mile" of delivery, rural and tribal communities may be excluded from mail services entirely by private companies that may not find it profitable to continue rural postal routes. If they do provide services, the rates charged to rural and tribal people may be prohibitively high. A good example of what accessibility and affordability for rural and tribal communities looks like in the absence of a federal agency committed to a public service mission like USPS is their current access to broadband internet service. Currently, over 90 percent of

---

<sup>5</sup> United States Postal Service. "Workforce Diversity and Inclusiveness." [https://about.usps.com/strategic-planning/cs09/CSPO\\_09\\_087.htm](https://about.usps.com/strategic-planning/cs09/CSPO_09_087.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Jones, Sarah. "The U.S. Postal Service Needs Help Now: 'The Situation is Absolutely Dire.'" *New York Magazine*, April 17, 2020. <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/04/will-republicans-help-the-coronavirus-kill-the-post-office.html>

<sup>8</sup> National Community Pharmacists Association. "Medication Adherence in America: A National Report Card." [http://www.ncpa.co/adherence/AdherenceReportCard\\_Full.pdf](http://www.ncpa.co/adherence/AdherenceReportCard_Full.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. "Prescription medications delivered right to your door!" [https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/brochures/MbM\\_brochure.pdf#](https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/brochures/MbM_brochure.pdf#)



tribal reservations lack access to broadband.<sup>10</sup> On tribal lands, the Federal Communications Commission estimates that Native Americans have to pay approximately one and half times the average rate providers charge for users in less remote areas.<sup>11</sup> And where broadband service is available, many Native Americans report anecdotally that the quality of service is also much poorer. Given this astounding lack of access to broadband, tribal and rural communities often rely on mail service to conduct their business affairs. Cutting service to these communities will further depress economic development and further isolate these vulnerable American citizens.

The USPS is also essential to having a fair and accurate 2020 Census. The Census Bureau and community advocates working on census outreach depend on the USPS to reach hard to count populations in communities across the country. A fair and accurate 2020 Census is essential for effective governance, fair representation, and implementation of civil and human rights protections. An incomplete census robs communities of their fair share of federal resources. While the Census Bureau has adjusted many of the major counting operations in response to the pandemic, it continues to rely on the mail to promote and provide a way for people to respond on their own. The USPS' ability to deliver to every address makes it uniquely suited to help the Census Bureau achieve its goals. Without an effective USPS, rural and remote communities especially are at risk of being missed in the census.

Without Congressional action, the USPS could become insolvent by the end of September 2020.<sup>12</sup> In early April, Postmaster General Megan Brennan asked Congress for \$89 billion in assistance for the USPS to help cover losses from the pandemic, for infrastructure modernization, to deal with debt related to the benefits retirement mandate, and to address other agency needs.<sup>13</sup> The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) provided the USPS with a \$10 billion loan to ensure continued services throughout the pandemic. This loan, however, is subject to the Treasury Department's approval and is insufficient to address the financial crisis facing the USPS. The bipartisan Postal Service Board of Governors has asked for \$50 billion in emergency grants and appropriations, as well as access to \$25 billion in borrowing authority.<sup>14</sup> The Leadership Conference and the undersigned organizations are supportive of this request. We urge Congress to act swiftly and approve this level of funding to ensure that USPS operations can continue, and to provide critical relief for this agency.

In addition to the financial impact of COVID-19, much of the current fiscal situation that the USPS faces is due to the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) of 2006. PAEA envisioned the USPS as a self-sustaining, quasi-governmental entity and set the unprecedented requirement that the agency set aside \$5.5 billion per year to prepay health care benefits for future employees. This mandate alone, which Congress has attempted to repeal multiple times, has left the USPS with \$160.9 billion in debt, rendering

---

<sup>10</sup> Parkhurst, Nichole Deschine, Traci Morris, Emery Tahy and Karen Mossberger. "The digital reality: e-government and access to technology and internet for American Indian and Alaska Native populations." *dg.o '15 (2015)*.  
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4bb4/f5efcd1cf4ec342b5d45dd824bb10d9bb0f2.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> "BROADBAND INTERNET: FCC's Data Overstate Access on Tribal Lands." United States Government Accountability Office. September 2018. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/694386.pdf> at 20-21.

<sup>12</sup> Fox, Lauren & Herb, Jeremy. "US Postal Service warns Congress it could become insolvent amid coronavirus." CNN. April 10, 2020.  
<https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/10/politics/postal-service-congress-help/index.html>

<sup>13</sup> The Editorial Board. "What's an Essential Service in a Pandemic? The Post Office." *The New York Times*. April 14, 2020.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/14/opinion/usps-coronavirus.html>

<sup>14</sup> <https://cleaver.house.gov/sites/cleaver.house.gov/files/Cleaver%20Postal%20Letter%20Final.pdf>



the agency unable to turn a profit in recent years.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, comprehensive Congressional reform legislation for the USPS is needed. But in the current term, our nation requires immediate fiscal relief for the USPS.

For the reasons mentioned above, Congress must take action to protect the USPS in the next coronavirus response package. USPS carriers are delivering masks and respirators to the front lines. They are moving test kits to labs. They are ensuring that seniors and people with disabilities can receive the prescription medication they need to survive. At a time where people in America need the Postal Service more than ever, we must prioritize funding to ensure that this agency has the resources it needs.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Emily Chatterjee at [chatterjee@civilrights.org](mailto:chatterjee@civilrights.org).

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
Advancement Project  
AFL-CIO  
AFSCME  
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas  
All On The Line  
Alliance of Baptists  
American Federation of Teachers  
American Muslim Health Professionals  
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)  
Andrew Goodman Foundation  
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)  
Asian Counseling and Referral Service  
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO  
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)  
Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)  
Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Brennan Center for Justice  
Center for Disability Rights  
Center for Responsible Lending  
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues  
Coalition of Labor Union Women  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Common Cause

---

<sup>15</sup> Bogage, Jacob. "The Postal Service needs a bailout. Congress is partly to blame." *The Washington Post*. April 15, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/04/15/postal-service-bailout-congress/>

Community Change Action  
Congregation of Our Lady of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces  
Democracy 21  
Demos  
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Equality North Carolina  
Fair Count, Inc.  
Faith in Action  
Faith in Action Fund  
Farmworker Association of Florida  
Feminist Majority Foundation  
Hispanic Federation  
Human Rights Campaign  
ICNA Council for Social Justice  
Indivisible  
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)  
Justice in Aging  
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement  
Lake Research Partners  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
League of Conservation Voters  
League of Women Voters of the United States  
Let America Vote / End Citizens United Action Fund  
Matthew Shepard Foundation  
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger  
Multicultural Efforts to end Sexual Assault (MESA)  
Muslim Advocates  
Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)  
NAACP  
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)  
NALEO Educational Fund  
National Action Network  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)  
National Association of Human Rights Workers  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Center for Law and Economic Justice  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Coalition for Literacy  
National Community Reinvestment Coalition

National Congress of American Indians  
National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients)  
National Council of Churches  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Fair Housing Alliance  
National Lawyers Guild  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Urban League  
National Women's Law Center  
Native American Rights Fund  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates  
Organizacion en California de Lideres Campesinaa, Inc.  
People For the American Way  
PFLAG National  
Poligon Education Fund  
Public Advocacy for Kids  
Public Citizen  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
SPLC Action Fund  
Stand Up America  
State Voices  
Texas Progressive Action Network  
The Arc of the United States  
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society  
UnidosUS  
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Steelworkers  
Voto Latino  
Workplace Fairness