



National Association of Letter Carriers

100 Indiana Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20001-2144
202.393.4695
www.nalc.org

Fredric V. Rolando, President

March 25, 2021

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bill Pascrell, Jr.
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Connolly, Pascrell and Blumenauer:

I write on behalf of the 290,000 members of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC). As you know, city letter carriers have been on the front lines during this most challenging of times. Now more than ever they hope to see bipartisan postal reform become a reality.

Your March 18th letter to President Biden urged him to fire all six governors on the U.S. Postal Service's Board of Governors in response to the deterioration of service under the leadership of Postmaster General Louis DeJoy. We certainly share your concerns about service. In response we have initiated a National Joint Task Force with postal management and the other unions to analyze and correct the underlying factors that have led to recent service failures. We greatly appreciate your heartfelt and long-demonstrated dedication to the Postal Service and its mission, but we would like to explain why we disagree with your suggested approach.

While we do not support firing any of the members of the Board of Governors, we strongly oppose removing the two members that we aggressively supported to serve in two Democratic seats on the Board last year – Governors Ron Bloom and Lee Moak. Their deep ties and experience with the American labor movement bring an incredibly important perspective to the Board. Understanding that Congress may not have direct insight to the inner workings of the Postal Board of Governors or our interaction with them, I can assure you that they have had a very positive impact on the Board and that their contributions should not be dismissed or attacked.

With regards to your letter, I think it is important to point out some inaccuracies and provide some context that you may not be aware of.

First, page one of your letter states, “Under the tenure of this BOG, the Postal Service was blatantly misused by President Trump in an unsuccessful gambit to influence a presidential election.” While there was plenty of speculation and overheated conspiracy theories in the media during the campaign, there is simply no evidence to support this allegation. President Trump tried to influence the election by spreading misinformation about vote by mail, but he got no help from the BOG or the Postal Service.

To the contrary, I asked the Postmaster General to expand the Postal Service’s National Election Task Force to include representatives of the four postal unions so that we could help make sure that every ballot cast by mail would be delivered on time to be counted. He agreed to my proposal and all the employee organizations worked with the Postal Service’s election team to set up monitoring groups in every facility in America that handled ballots. For several weeks we worked closely together, identified and fixed problems as they arose, and took extraordinary measures to ensure that every American that chose to vote by mail had their ballots delivered. The Postal Service performed magnificently; we safely and securely handled 135 million mail ballots with a 98% on-time delivery performance. Governors Moak and Bloom served as the Board’s subcommittee on election mail and worked tirelessly to make sure we delivered for our democracy when it needed us most. To suggest that the agency was misused perpetuates a dangerous and factually inaccurate depiction of the Postal Service and its employees. This sentiment has real implications for the future as we all work to increase voter participation, especially through vote-by-mail, which out-performed all expectations in 2020 due to the hard work and diligence of postal employees.

Second, the letter suggests that “The entirely Trump-appointed Postal Service BOG has politicized the most beloved agency in the federal government and allowed its service standards to tank.” Yes, President Trump appointed all the members of the Board because gridlock in the Senate left the Board vacant at the end of President Obama’s term, but Democratic Governors Bloom and Moak were proposed by then-Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer – with broad support from the postal community. In any event, it was the Trump campaign that did all it could to politicize the Postal Service, not the Board of Governors.

Third, yes, the quality of First-Class mail delivery plummeted during December, which was truly regrettable. But comparing the on-time delivery scores for December to scores between March and July and to dismiss the impact of the pandemic ignores important context. First, the negative operational impact on USPS during the pandemic was much worse in December than it was in the spring. For example, there were nearly four times more postal employees quarantined and unavailable for work in December than in May. Second, every year, the holidays pose operational challenges as the peak shipping season leads to dramatically higher volumes. This year was the ‘mother of all peak seasons’ because of Covid-19. In addition to heightened e-commerce volume from the pandemic itself, the holiday surge was even larger than normal because tens of millions of Americans stayed home and sent gifts by mail instead of bringing them to their loved ones in person. On top of that, over-burdened private delivery firms simply turned business away, an option that is thankfully not available to the Postal

Service. That added to our huge volumes – at a time when staffing was deeply compromised by the pandemic. These factors drove the service crisis.

Fourth, the letter suggests that the “BOG’s only public statement has been to the media – stating that they are ‘tickled pink’ with the new PMG,” citing a *Washington Post* article. The board did not issue any such statement. Rather, the *Post* article quoted two GOP board members and only one said he was “tickled pink.” It simply is not fair to characterize that statement as speaking for the board. Nor is it fair or accurate to say the board has “remained silent” in the face of gross mismanagement. Based on my conversations with Governors Bloom and Moak, they have been extremely active and vocal on the board. It is the nature of most boards of directors that members do their talking behind closed doors, not in public statements.

Indeed, Bloom and Moak have both been strong advocates for the public interest. They urged the adoption of the Postal Service’s new mission statement that embraces the agency’s role as an essential public service. They joined their fellow Republican governors in rebuffing the Trump Administration’s improper attempt to use credit negotiations with the Treasury Department’s Federal Finance Bank to interfere with the management of the Postal Service. They fought for broad relief for the USPS in the various Covid-19 recovery bills. They strongly support maintaining 6-day service for letters and 7-day service for packages – a position now embraced by Postmaster General DeJoy, unlike his three immediate predecessors. And they have been strong voices for including a both a growth strategy and a commitment to electrify 100 percent of the postal vehicle fleet by 2029 in the agency’s just-released business plan.

Unfortunately, former President Trump irresponsibly created a partisan divide in Washington surrounding Mr. DeJoy and the Postal Service with his relentless attacks on voting by mail. We should avoid unnecessary actions that would only widen that divide.

As I recently noted in testimony submitted to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform in March, “The Postal Service is not a partisan institution. Indeed, the Post Office is older than our Constitution and is the ultimate American institution – one with the explicit mission to unify our country. Last April, Pew Research released its regular poll on federal agencies. It found that the most popular agency in the government was, once again, the U.S. Postal Service – and that, quite remarkably, 91 percent of both Democrats and Republicans have a favorable opinion of the agency.” It is a modest bit of common ground – but it would be good place to start in efforts to bring our country together again.

Your passion, energy and strong support of postal employees has always been appreciated. I also understand you and your colleagues’ frustrations with recent service problems under the Postal Service’s new leadership. But I believe that our top priority right now should be to build bipartisan support for postal reform in the House of Representatives. It is essential because we will absolutely need bipartisan support in the Senate to achieve such reform, which is in turn essential for our long-term survival. I also think that a bitter partisan

fight over the Postal Service and its Board of Governors at this moment, justified or otherwise, will undermine the achievement of this top priority.

Let us keep our eyes on the prize. The targeted consensus reforms proposed in the COR Committee's discussion draft (the agreement bill) will strengthen the Postal Service and pave the way in the future for bills to promote innovation, sensible investment policies and improved governance. In the meantime, President Biden has already nominated three new governors to serve on the board, and the Senate is acting quickly to confirm them. We are confident that they will fulfill their oversight duties and work with the existing governors to restore the quality of service and establish a positive postal agenda for the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fredric V. Rolando', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Fredric V. Rolando
President

Cc: Co-signers in Congress