

VOTING RIGHTS LAB

August 19, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chairwoman Maloney, and Ranking Member Comer:

I write on behalf of the Voting Rights Lab (VRL) to express our support for H.R. 8015, the Delivering for America Act, introduced by Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney. Mail ballot usage will play a critical role in protecting the health and safety of voters during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, recent changes in United States Postal Service (USPS) operations have resulted in significant mail delays that have cast doubt on USPS and, therefore, the reliability of our absentee voting systems. Congress must act quickly to reverse these changes.

As the [U.S. passes 5 million Coronavirus cases](#), election officials and legislators nationwide have been working to adapt our state election systems to the realities of the ongoing pandemic. To that end, VRL has been working in partnership with state and national partners to expand access to mail voting to ensure that voters can cast ballots from the safety of their homes and to reduce the burden on polling places for in-person voting. Many states have expanded their vote by mail infrastructure in some form. For example, of the 17 states that require an excuse to vote absentee, [14 have already expanded absentee ballot eligibility](#)¹ to all voters for at least one election this year. As a result, we saw dramatic increases in mail voting during recent primary

¹ Alabama, Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia

elections across the country and we will inevitably see an unprecedented surge of mail ballots in November.

Given the anticipated increases in mail voting, we are dismayed by reports of significant mail delivery delays resulting from policy changes such as removing or locking mailboxes, removing mail sorting machines, limiting postal worker's overtime, and directives to leave mail at distribution centers. In fact, in an unprecedented move, USPS recently warned states that mail ballots may be delivered too late to be counted. These changes, which can only be seen as a coordinated voter suppression campaign, have left voters worried about the delivery of their mail ballots and states, local officials, and advocates scrambling to make adjustments. While Postmaster General Louis DeJoy recently announced that he is suspending the above-referenced changes, the damage has already been done. Mr. DeJoy's actions have served to create distrust around what may be the safest voting option for many people during this global pandemic - casting a ballot by mail. Congress must pass the Delivering for America Act both to hold Mr. DeJoy accountable and to restore voter's confidence in the system. Further, we recommend clarifying the legislation to ensure that USPS must not only stop making changes to operations or levels of service going forward, but also must reverse changes that have been made since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

USPS is a sacred public institution, not a political weapon of voter disenfranchisement. Mail ballot usage is essential to protecting the health and safety of voters during the COVID-19 pandemic. However public confidence in USPS has been undermined in the critical months before the General Election. In order to protect the integrity of elections, voters must be confident in USPS's ability to deliver every vote in a timely manner. With fewer than 80 days until the election, it is critical that Congress pass the Delivering for America Act to protect the electorate and ensure a safe, accessible, and democratic election in November.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this critical issue. If we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Megan Lewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Megan" being more prominent than the last name "Lewis".

Megan Lewis
Executive Director