



September 8, 2020

Honorable Jon Tester
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-2604

Dear Senator Tester:

This responds to your August 13 letter to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, regarding mail collection services in Montana.

I appreciate your concerns about the removal of collection boxes in Montana. Please know the U.S. Postal Service understands the value that our customers place upon the accessibility of our products and services. As the provider of universal service to the nation—serving everyone, everywhere—we continually evaluate our operations to ensure that our infrastructure is equipped to offer our customers the best possible service in the most efficient manner.

It is important to explain that the Postal Service has routinely reviewed collection box density on an annual basis for many years. Over the past 7 years, we have removed more than 21,000 collection boxes around the country, averaging 3,000 boxes per year, in an effort to reduce the inefficiency of maintaining and servicing boxes that receive very low volumes of mail. While this is a longstanding policy, the Postal Service is pausing removals until after the election, in light of recent concerns.

Please see our responses to your specific questions below:

- 1. Has the USPS removed any collection boxes in the past 30 days in Montana? If so, please provide the number of units removed by town. Specifically, my office received reports that units were recently removed from Bozeman and Lewistown.**

The decision to eliminate boxes in Montana was part of our national Collection Box Review. Specifically, collection boxes at the following locations in Montana were removed between July 16 and August 11:

- Lewiston: 1 business, 1 residential
- Livingston: 1 residential
- Manhattan: 1 residential
- Helena: 1 residential
- Glendive: 1 business

- Bozeman: 5 business, 2 residential
- Shelby: 1 business

2. Are there any ongoing orders to remove any collection boxes in Montana? For instance, my office received reports that the USPS is in the process of removing units in Billings.

Postal Service management has decided to pause all future removals. The order to cease removal of collection boxes in the Postal Service's Dakotas District, which includes Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota, was given to all postal facilities on August 14.

3. If the USPS has recently or is planning to remove collection boxes, what is the rationale being used?

For years, the Postal Service has been identifying redundant and seldom used collection boxes as a cost recovery initiative in response to the continued decline of First-Class Mail. The decision to remove collection boxes is based on the results of our density studies to identify underused and inefficient boxes. Chronically underused boxes create inefficiencies and added costs to the Postal Service, while providing little to no benefit to customers. Ultimately, the decision to remove a collection box is made on a case-by-case basis and if, for example, that collection box is the only means for sending a letter or other correspondence in a neighborhood, business center, or senior citizen complex, the Postal Service could decide to keep it there. This is a normal operational procedure to make sure the majority of our boxes are in high traffic areas and convenient for customers.

a. When were the last density tests conducted?

In accordance with this process, density tests were conducted in Montana over 14 consecutive business days in June of this year.

b. Will you make the results of those tests and any other data related to the removal of units public?

While density test data is not typically made available to the public, postal policy states that collection boxes receiving less than 25 pieces of outgoing mail per day on average are to be considered underutilized and eligible for relocation or removal.

4. How have you communicated with the public and local elected officials to ensure there would not be a disruption in the critical service the USPS provides to these communities?

Postal regulations do not require that public officials be notified when a collection box is slated for removal or relocated.

5. Has the USPS recently reassigned or added collection boxes to improve accessibility?

Density studies can result in a collection box being relocated within the neighborhood or community, if it is determined that there exists a potentially higher volume location. Since

Page 3

June 15, there have been no reassigned or added collection boxes in the Dakotas District.

To supplement our collection efforts, we place mail collection receptacles at all postal facilities. In addition, in delivery areas where customers receive door delivery, carriers will collect outgoing mail from individual mail receptacles whenever there is a delivery. For customers who receive mail delivery via a curbside mail receptacle, carriers will collect outgoing mail whenever the signal flag is raised.

Please be assured that the Postal Service is committed to providing all customers with accessible mail collection service. If I can be of assistance with other postal issues, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary Ann Simpson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Ann Simpson
Manager, Government Liaison