

United States Senate

August 31, 2018

The Honorable Megan J. Brennan
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, D.C. 20260-1137

Dear Postmaster General Brennan:

I write concerning new mail dispatch times that will have a negative impact on mail delivery times for folks in Lewistown, Montana, and the surrounding area. Specifically, according to local Postal Service officials, all mail deposited after 3:30 PM will be postmarked for the following business day. This effectively shuts down postal operations in Lewistown earlier than residents and businesses are accustomed to.

Whether this change was spurred by a recent rule from the Department of Transportation or one instituted by the US Postal Service (USPS), I request the return to regular hours in Lewistown and wherever customers in rural America are negatively affected by these changes.

According to Postal Service Dakotas District, mail collection times have moved from 5:00 PM daily to 3:30 PM in Lewistown, Montana. This change will have a cascading effect on residents and businesses. This new delivery time impacts lawyers, accountants, judges, lenders, county, and city officials who must have work postmarked the same day their services are rendered. My office has heard from multiple individuals, businesses, and local government leaders, all of whom face disruption in their personal and professional lives.

According to local postal managers, this change is due to new Department of Transportation regulations regulating hours-of-service and electric logging devices. The hours-of-service rule covers a wide range of driver safety proposals, including how to increase driver or workday time in adverse driving conditions and provisions for a mandatory 30-minute driver break after eight hours of continuous driving. While contractors are still subject to these regulations, the US Postal Service is exempted from them as a federal agency. If USPS has decided to shorten mail dispatch times in order to meet timeliness goals, this practice does not work in rural America. Because many mail processing facilities across the United States operate around the clock, incoming mail from towns like Lewistown should not overwhelm the local processing facility and route deliveries for letter carriers should not be dramatically altered as a result.

In order to prevent this reduction of hours in places like Lewistown, USPS has a range of options at its disposal. For example, USPS could hire more drivers for longer routes such as those in Lewistown and other rural communities. USPS could also negotiate a superior contract with any privately contracted carriers subject to the hours-of-service rules. To that end, USPS

also has an opportunity to weigh in with regulators at the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, who have issued a proposal that is seeking comments on proposed rule changes to the agency's hours-of-service rule. USPS could take a significant role in shaping the rule for the benefit of its contracted employees and Postal Service customers.

The Postal Service must uphold its responsibility to its customers no matter where they live, and I ask USPS to re-examine this reduction of hours in dispatch times in Lewistown. The Postal Service may think small communities like Lewistown are so small that these changes do not matter. That is incorrect, because rural America does matter and folks in these communities are some of the Postal Service's biggest defenders in a climate of privatization. I appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Tester". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Jon Tester