Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 16, 2026

The Honorable David Steiner
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Postmaster General Steiner:

We write to express serious concern regarding the United States Postal Service's (USPS) October 1, 2026, changes to Ground Advantage service between the contiguous United States and noncontiguous states and territories. Under the new policy, packages under one pound that previously traveled through a combination of air and surface transportation will now move primarily by surface transportation on these routes. We are concerned that this decision will compound longstanding delivery delays for our residents and businesses who are already facing rising shipping costs. We urge USPS to reconsider this policy and take immediate steps to preserve timely, affordable service for noncontiguous communities, especially ahead of the holiday season.

For many of the communities we represent, surface transportation requires lengthy maritime transit with no equivalent to the ground network available within the contiguous United States. Air transportation has therefore been essential to providing reasonable delivery times and reliable service, and even then, lengthy delays are already a reality, not an exception.

As part of its October 1 changes, USPS revised Ground Advantage delivery expectations for these routes to 10 days or more, acknowledging that some deliveries may take significantly longer. Yet, while contiguous communities continue to enjoy a two-to-five-day Ground Advantage service expectation, our constituents are expected to wait *at least* twice as long for their deliveries or be forced to pay more for Priority Mail.

Our offices have long heard from residents and small-business owners about lengthy package delays, and the October 1 change only signals longer wait times. Small businesses report lightweight packages taking weeks to arrive, resulting in lost sales, customer complaints, and negative reviews. Some feel they have little choice but to pay more for Priority Mail, forcing them to absorb the added costs, pass them on to customers, or risk losing business to competitors in the contiguous United States. Residents likewise report delays in receiving medications, household necessities, and everyday purchases. These problems come amid repeated USPS price increases. Ground Advantage prices rose by an average of 7.8 percent in January 2026, followed by a temporary 8 percent increase in April. In July, USPS eliminated ounce-based pricing distinctions for published commercial rates on packages under one pound, and additional holiday surcharges took effect in October. Residents and businesses are paying more while being asked to accept slower service, particularly as the holiday season approaches**.** That is unacceptable.

This decision is particularly disappointing given the delivery problems raised with USPS last year. In June 2025, several of us reported packages taking weeks, sometimes months, to reach noncontiguous communities, often with limited or inaccurate tracking information. In its August 2025 response, USPS acknowledged that some Priority Mail and lightweight Ground Advantage packages had been improperly transported by sea instead of air and said it had instructed processing facilities to correct these routing errors. Now, just over a year later, USPS is adopting a policy that threatens to make the very delays it previously committed to address the new standard for our communities.

USPS has stated that the October 1 change is intended to simplify transportation and reduce hazardous-material (HAZMAT) risks in its air network. We recognize the importance of protecting postal employees, carriers, and the public. However, a June 2025 USPS Office of Inspector General (OIG) audit, *Assessment of Changes to Air Transportation Contracts*, found that USPS employees did not consistently check packages for HAZMAT markings or follow required sorting and routing procedures, allowing hazardous-material packages to enter the wrong air carrier's network. USPS agreed to recommendations to strengthen employee screening and routing practices. Yet USPS has not explained why those corrective actions, or other targeted safeguards, would be insufficient to address these concerns. Nor has it communicated any evidence of heightened HAZMAT risks on the affected routes that would warrant such a broad reduction in air service. USPS has therefore not made a compelling case for this decision, and our communities should not bear the consequences of operational shortcomings that USPS is responsible for correcting.

We therefore urge USPS to reconsider the October 1 policy and restore air transportation for eligible lightweight Ground Advantage packages while conducting a broader review of the policy's effects on noncontiguous residents and businesses. We also request written responses to the following questions:

1. Did USPS identify an increase in HAZMAT incidents or routing errors involving packages on the affected routes? Please provide supporting data, including any findings specific to these destinations.

2. What corrective actions has USPS taken to address HAZMAT screening and routing errors, including those identified in the June 2025 OIG audit, and how has it assessed their effectiveness? Why are these measures or other targeted safeguards insufficient to preserve air transportation for eligible lightweight packages?

3. What other operational or financial considerations contributed to USPS's October 1 decision? Did projected cost savings or changes to air-carrier contracts factor into this decision? Please provide supporting data.

4. USPS has stated that affected packages will "primarily" use surface transportation. Under what circumstances will eligible lightweight Ground Advantage packages continue to travel by air, and what criteria will USPS use to make that determination?

5. How did USPS assess the impact the October 1 policy would have on residents and small businesses, particularly ahead of the holiday season? What consideration was given to the additional costs and existing delivery delays facing these communities?

6. What steps will USPS take to ensure Ground Advantage remains a reliable and affordable option for noncontiguous communities? How will USPS address persistent delays, improve tracking and customer updates, and maintain delivery standards comparable with those for the contiguous United States?

With the holiday season approaching, this matter demands immediate attention. We request your response by November 25, 2026, and urge USPS to work with our offices toward a solution that preserves affordable, reliable service for all Americans, regardless of where they live.

Sincerely,

Jill Tokuda
Member of Congress

James C. Moylan
Member of Congress

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

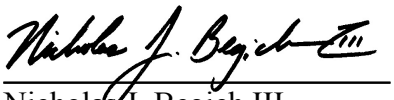
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