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Opening Statement Rep. Brenda L. Lawrence (MI-14) Subcommittee on Government Operations Hearing on “Postal Update” Monday, September 14, 2020

I want to thank Chairman Connolly for holding this important hearing.

Prior to serving in Congress, I spent 30 years at the United States Postal Service. During that time, I worked alongside some of our nation's most dedicated public servants—individuals who worked long hours to ensure that Americans across the country received their mail in a timely manner.

Each employee takes an oath of office when they start—declaring a commitment to uphold the standards of the Postal Service. Mr. DeJoy acknowledged that he, too, took that oath of office—yet it appears he does not take it seriously.

As the unofficial motto of the Postal Service notes: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." This epitomizes the dedication and commitment of the more than 600,000 employees who work at the Postal Service.

But unfortunately, it does not account for its current leader—a partisan mega-donor with no relevant experience who is threatening to unravel more than two centuries of dedicated mail service to our country in a little less than four months.

- The Postal Service’s existence as a critical government service began in 1775 when Benjamin Franklin was named the nation’s first postmaster general.
- Throughout history—whether it be world wars or global pandemics—the Postal Service rose to the challenge and continued to deliver mail across the country and the world.
- During the Civil War, the Postal Service did not cease operations—in fact, it actually introduced several IMPROVEMENTS to make it easier to send and receive mail.
- During the 1918 flu outbreak—just as during the COVID-19 pandemic we are living through now—the Postal Service continued to move the mail, even as hundreds of employees fell ill.
- And to this day, the Postal Service’s ability to deliver mail to our nation’s heroic service members serving at home and even abroad in war zones provides a vital link to their families and friends back home.

Never before have we seen a Postmaster General undermine the Postal Service workforce's ability to do its job by undertaking the kind of drastic and ill-informed operational changes Mr. DeJoy has instituted in recent months.

In a hearing before this very committee last month, Mr. DeJoy confessed that he didn't know the Postal Service's stated mission and couldn't explain some of his most harmful operational changes. I feel like I am stating the obvious, but a businessman with absolutely no experience serving in the Postal Service should not change operational procedures without first grasping the negative effects they will have on prompt mail delivery.

But that's what happens when the Board of Governors bypasses decades of precedent to select a Postmaster General without any relevant experience.

In just four months, Mr. DeJoy has:

- Overseen the removal of hundreds of collection boxes despite acknowledging he is not familiar with the density studies that are conducted to determine whether they should be removed;
- Ordered the removal of more than 700 mail sorting machines in **JUST THIS YEAR ALONE**—nearly double the average number of mail sorting machines removed annually from 2015 to 2019; and
- Unveiled a sweeping reorganization plan that displaced two dozen experienced executives, thereby removing decades of experience from the highest levels of USPS leadership
- **Let's not forget—Mr. DeJoy did all of this in an election year during which the President of the United States has continually attacked the Postal Service and its longstanding ability to deliver ballots.**

Thankfully, the American public has shown it will not stand for these partisan games. Following immediate and vocal opposition from the public, on August 18, Mr. DeJoy announced that many of his misguided operational changes would be suspended until after the election to, quote, "avoid even the appearance of any impact on election mail."

While I try to find the best in people, Mr. DeJoy's recent reversal can be better understood as an admission that his policies ended up being more disastrous to the Postal Service than expected. Regardless, mail sorting machines are still being removed, leaving us to question whether Mr. DeJoy is serious about correcting his disastrous mistakes.

We now have even more reason to question the interests Mr. DeJoy serves, as just last week, reports surfaced that Mr. DeJoy likely violated both federal and state campaign finance laws during his time as the chief executive of his former company, New Breed Logistics.

In the mere four months since Mr. DeJoy became Postmaster General, he has caused incredible harm to the reputation, and more importantly, trust, that the American people have in the Postal Service. Meanwhile, the Board of Governors—whom Mr. DeJoy reports to—have been eerily quiet and unwilling to comment on his actions.

The American people deserve a Postmaster General who understands the critical role of the Postal Service. While I agree that the Postal Service is in need of reform, I wholeheartedly disagree with Mr. DeJoy's belief that the agency should be run like a business.

We cannot take this situation lightly. In the midst of a global pandemic when millions of Americans make plans to vote by mail, the disastrous policies instituted by Mr. DeJoy jeopardize the American people's well-being and pose an immediate threat to our democracy.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today. Thank you, again, Chairman Connolly, and I yield back.

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