

# What's Up With the Post Office?



By Rob Pue

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I realize there are many more pressing problems in our nation and world today than what I'm about to discuss, but these issues are already being addressed very well right now by others. What's not getting much attention – and I feel needs to – are the ongoing failures within the US Postal Service.

The USPS has been in a nosedive, downward spiral for years and it's only getting worse. While this agency continues to raise prices and continues to operate as an unsustainable, failing business, the service has gotten so bad now I feel we must address the situation head on.

I visit the local post office just about every day. I know the workers there well, and they know me. Over the past six months, I've had three postal employees, on three separate occasions tell me that they believe the Postmaster General is deliberately trying to destroy the agency. They were referring to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, who resigned this past March. In July, David Steiner, who has served on the board of FedEx will take over that position. Maybe that will be a step in the right direction, but the agency is so messed up right now, it'll take years to straighten out, if it can be saved at all.

Just as an example, the mail service lost \$9.5 billion last year, and \$3.3 billion already this year. And recently, the

USPS announced "Service Standard Changes." Their fact sheet states the changes will come in two phases. The first began April 1st and the second will begin July 1st. While their fact sheet states that "all mail will benefit from more reliable service," here's what I've experienced since April 1st, when their first phase began.

As I ship large envelopes with copies of our printed newspaper to new subscribers, those envelopes, sent by first-class mail, which used to have estimated delivery times of 2-3 days are now showing up on my receipts as "expected in 7-8 days." So, I don't hold high hopes for their new "service standards."

Things were bad enough already. And I've had a lot of bad experiences. Several years ago, I sent a flier to all of our readers and supporters in Wisconsin, to promote an upcoming Conference. I also sent one to myself, so that I'd know approximately when people would be receiving these. I used the USPS bulk mail service, and I mailed the flier six weeks in advance of the Conference, thinking this would be plenty of time, since, after all, I was only mailing to Wisconsin addresses, from Wisconsin. This was thousands of fliers we're talking about.

They were shipped directly from our printing plant, which is approximately an hour away from my home. Take a guess as to how long it took for me to get my copy of the flier... eight weeks – two weeks after the Conference took place. Suffice to say that no one in Wisconsin received the mailing prior to our event, and we not only looked extremely foolish when people began receiving them two to three weeks after the Conference, but it was also a ton of money wasted on printing and postage.

We also use the USPS bulk mail service to ship subscriber copies of Wisconsin Christian News each month, since we're mailing thousands of copies and first-class mail for all would definitely be cost-prohibitive. On the front page of the newspaper, near the address box, I do print the words "Time

Sensitive Material – Please Deliver Promptly.” Of course, this really only serves to give the mailmen a good laugh. Even using bulk mail – and paying the bulk mail rate – we’re still spending a substantial amount of money to ship newspapers to subscribers, and it can take 2-4 weeks for our subscribers to receive their copies. Often times, they don’t receive them at all, and then I need to resend them, first-class.

Now, we’re shipping to subscribers in all fifty states, and the further away from Wisconsin you are, the longer it takes. Shipping bulk mail copies to subscribers in Texas or Florida – and other far-away states – can take 2-3 months to arrive, if they arrive at all. This, despite the Postal Service stating that bulk mail is delivered “nationally in 10 – 14 days, and locally within 4-6 days.” These are outright lies, because a large envelope, sent by first-class mail to an in-state address now shows me an “estimated” delivery time of 7-8 days.

This past November, we shipped our newspaper out as usual, but because it was bulk mail, even though our thousands of copies were hand delivered to the proper regional hubs that promised the fastest service, none of our newspapers went anywhere for a full three weeks. Then the long process of “bulk mail” service began. And although we shipped in mid-November, most didn’t get their papers until Christmas time or after, if they received them at all.

I’ve been doing all I can to get our newspaper to readers in a timely manner, but I’m at the mercy of the Postal Service. As an example, since we’re now mailing Wisconsin Christian News to subscribers nationally, for those who are not local or in a surrounding state, I “eat” the cost to have those subscriber copies sent in a first-class envelope and pay first-class postage. So instead of 2-3 months, most generally receive their papers in 7-10 days, but the cost to do this is extremely high.

Just one more example for you. This past year, with Christmas

time approaching, I sent packages of Christmas gifts to my grandchildren. One package went to Texas and another to Colorado. I shipped these the day after Thanksgiving, allowing nearly four full weeks for the packages to be delivered. Surely that would be plenty of time, considering I paid extra for “guaranteed 2-3 day delivery,” right? Incidentally, the cost to ship these packages was more than what I paid for the gifts inside them, but USPS was the cheapest way for me to ship them.

After a week or so, I started checking my USPS tracking numbers. Remember now, this was “guaranteed 2-3 day delivery.” But a week after shipping, they still hadn’t left Wisconsin. It was a full two weeks after shipping, that they finally moved. From then on, I checked the tracking daily. Those packages went on a cross-country journey like no other. Finally, a week before Christmas, the Colorado package made it to Colorado – this was three weeks after being shipped. Maybe there was still hope. Nope.

It went from a sorting facility in Denver to a sorting facility in Colorado Springs. Then back to Denver, then back to Colorado Springs. Then to a sorting facility closer to where my grandkids live...but then back to Denver again! And on went the odyssey until December 30th when my “guaranteed 2-3 day delivery” packages were finally delivered. It took a month and two days. The Texas package was delivered about that same time, again, well after Christmas time.

I understand the “holiday rush,” and all that. But when paying upwards of \$150 to ship a package with a so-called “guarantee” of 2-3 day delivery, and it takes more than a month, clearly there are problems.

And in this day and age of extreme rage and hatred of all things Christian by the radical Left, several of our subscribers have reported either not receiving their newspapers at all, or they receive them all torn up –

deliberately destroyed. In one case, one of our readers caught the mail carrier destroying her copy of the newspaper before placing it in her mailbox on her security camera. She took the video to the local postmaster. Nothing was done about it.

You may think all this is just more bureaucratic government inefficiency. But you should realize that the Postal Service is an independent federal establishment, mandated to be self-financing. It isn't supposed to receive any tax dollars for operating expenses, but instead, rely on the sale of postage to fund its operations. Which it used to do, and do quite well.

But it's had multiple government bailouts, including \$107 billion from Congress in 2022. And JudicialWatch.org wrote: "One federal audit slammed the agency for blowing the opportunity to save nearly \$22 million had it bothered to maintain its fleet of vehicles more efficiently. A few years before that the USPS blew hundreds of thousands of dollars on professional sports tickets, alcohol, and fancy meals while it claimed to be crippled by an \$8.3 billion deficit. The items were purchased by USPS managers and employees with special charge cards issued to U.S. government agencies. The USPS's top executives have also been found to receive illegally high salary and compensation packages that should outrage the public."

If that's not enough, the Postal Service has also been caught conducting surveillance operations unrelated to its official duties and even tracking and collecting Americans' social media posts and using hacking devices that can breach cell phones and spy on Americans. Need I mention the problems we've seen with mail-in ballots during election time – including postal workers destroying loads of ballots or, as happened here in Wisconsin, simply dumping them in ditches? While the USPS is supposed to be an independent agency, it's become just one more example of massive government corruption.

Oh, and you'd better stock up on those "forever" stamps, because on July 13th, regular stamps are going from 73 cents to 78 cents, and postcard stamps are going from 56 cents to 62 cents.

I'm not at all saying that all postal workers are corrupt or incompetent. I know many of them very well and they work very hard, but they're also very frustrated at the way the USPS has been run so poorly. Many who work there are just as upset at the situation as I am. I've always been as understanding and sympathetic to them as possible, even with all the problems I've had and continue to have. I doubt most in the general public are as kind to them as I am, and I'm sure they deal with more angry customers than most businesses do.

But right now, the system is badly broken, and like much of our infrastructure here in the US, may even be beyond repair. Part of the problem is Amazon.com. Years ago, the USPS gave Amazon a "sweetheart deal." They agreed to ship Amazon packages at a deep discount, and gave a similar deep discount to regular Ebay sellers. But for Amazon, they went even further, providing Sunday delivery. By the way, only Amazon gets that deal. And while they're giving deep discounts to Amazon – deals none of the rest of us could ever hope to get – they're also paying their workers much more to accommodate the online giant through overtime and bonus pay for working Sundays.

Interestingly, companies in China can also send packages through the USPS at a tiny fraction of what the rest of us pay. A package that would cost you and me upwards of \$20 to ship domestically, can be shipped by a Chinese company through the US Postal Service for less than \$1.

But now, Amazon has developed their own delivery service. After being a big part of the reason our Postal Service is bankrupt, Amazon now has their own distribution and sorting facilities, their own trucks and delivery drivers, so they're

using USPS much less than before and plan to phase it out completely. I'm no fan of Amazon, but given the incredibly unreliable service at USPS, can you blame them? If there was any reasonable alternative to our Postal Service, I guarantee I'd be using it. In the meantime, we're at the mercy of USPS incompetence.

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