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Dear Senator:

There is a crisis of confidence in the nation's postal system that has reached fever pitch across the country. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and set against the backdrop of a federal election in which voting by mail is expected to be at an all-time high, PRINTING United Alliance feels compelled to address this situation by letter to the full Senate. We are also providing recommended solutions that can be enacted by the Senate now to quell concerns regarding the reliability, security and affordability of mail delivered by the United States Postal Service (USPS).

PRINTING United Alliance represents a print, mail and packaging industry that relies on USPS as a critical logistics partner to deliver its products. Early in the pandemic, print, packaging and mail delivery were listed as "essential" as part of the Department of Homeland Security's guidance on critical infrastructure workforce. As public health alerts urge social distancing and stay at home orders remain fluid, the mail delivery of essential goods such as medicine, household and business staples, groceries, newspapers, and distance learning educational materials is vital. The need to keep rural citizens that lack mail alternatives (such as broadband) connected during the pandemic is especially acute in relation to USPS service. Additionally, advertising mail to inform consumers and to promote commerce during variations of economic shutdowns is important during this time and will continue to be as part of an eventual pandemic recovery. A viable USPS is necessary to keep delivery of essential goods, services and commerce flowing.

Obviously, one type of essential mail that is and will be in high demand in the coming weeks and months is election mail. It is important to note that the Department of Homeland Security also listed "elections personnel to include both public and private sector elections support" in its guidance on critical infrastructure workforce. PRINTING United Alliance represents companies that have a long and reputable history of producing election ballots, voter guides and other critical civic education materials. These companies are working diligently to ensure the surge in demand for printed, mail-in ballots can be met, and it is imperative that USPS be functioning at top performance level in order to deliver this printed material to and from voters.

In order to better ensure USPS is able to provide strong service during this time of pandemic and to help reverse the recent erosion in confidence in the postal system, PRINTING United Alliance urges the Senate to consider the following recommendations:

1. *Pass the Postal Service Emergency Assistance Act (Sen. Collins/Sen. Feinstein)*  
S. 4174 is a bipartisan bill that would provide financial relief to help offset losses caused by COVID-19. Prior to using these funds, USPS would need to certify in its quarterly and annual report to the Postal Regulatory Commission that the funds were needed to cover pandemic-related losses. Additionally, this bill would require the Board of Governors to transmit to Congress a plan to ensure the long-term solvency of USPS. Direct emergency cash assistance should be appropriated to USPS. The Senate should pass this legislation as a stand-alone bill or as part of a broader stimulus recovery or government-funding package.
2. *Pass the USPS Fairness Act (Sen. Dines/Sen. Schatz)*  
S. 2965 is a bipartisan bill that would immediately repeal the requirement that USPS annually prepay future retirement health benefits. This onerous prefunding mandate requiring USPS to prefund its retiree health care benefits 75 years in advance was legislated in 2006 and no longer comports with economic reality of the mailing industry. Repealing the pre-funding requirement would allow for the new Postmaster General (PMG) and his leadership team to better focus on investing and innovating rather than dragging along an outdated mandate as they seek to increase revenue. The Senate should pass this legislation as a stand-alone bill or as part of a broader stimulus recovery or government-funding package.

3. Conduct Active Congressional Oversight of USPS

PRINTING United Alliance appreciates the actions of Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee leaders Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Peters to urgently schedule the hearing “Examining Finances and Operations of the USPS During COVID-19 and Upcoming Elections” to occur on August 21. Continued hearings, data analysis, and dialogue to monitor USPS financial situation, business model and service standards are necessary to ensure the nation’s postal system is able to fill its requirement to provide universal delivery service to all Americans while also remaining solvent and viable into the future.

4. Suspend/Delay USPS Operational Changes During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As general principle, our association does not seek legislation that results in micromanagement of USPS leadership. However, the potential harm that could occur by experimenting with operational changes during a pandemic and prior to a federal election poses a serious threat to confidence in the postal system. Therefore, we support legislation that may be needed to ensure such changes are suspended or delayed in a time-specified manner tied to the duration of the official COVID-19 public health emergency. We do wish to recognize that on August 18 PMG DeJoy issued a statement that USPS would suspend operational changes regarding changing post office hours, removing of mail processing equipment and collection “blue boxes,” closing of mail processing facilities, and that postal management would approve overtime of postal employees as needed. While we await more specific details concerning the practical application of PMG DeJoy’s decision, PRINTING United Alliance is hopeful that the effect will indeed allow USPS to successfully handle election mail volume.

It is important to recognize that USPS has been financially troubled and operationally challenged for decades and that these problems were not caused by the pandemic nor by increased demand for election mail. The only thing new dynamic in postal policy is the glaring spotlight placed upon it due to COVID-19 world in which we are living. Reform to modernize USPS finances and operations and to spur innovation that will drive mail volume is still sorely needed, and, yes, that may likely include future financial and/or structural changes. It is understandable that PMG DeJoy (like other PMGs before him) is exploring options to achieve these goals, and PRINTING United Alliance stands ready to work with him to provide stakeholder input moving forward as the nation recovers from the pandemic. However, now is not the time for management changes resulting in higher prices or service cuts.

Our association and its member companies have spent countless hours over several years meeting with the White House and Congress to urge passage of legislation that would provide real-time stability and long-term viability of the postal system. We have engaged proactively with multiple Postmasters General and USPS executives to provide customer input and seek positive outcomes. Unfortunately, these efforts to date have generally led to the creation of task forces, requests for strategic plans, and bills languishing in both chambers of Congress. In essence: all talk; very little action.

The Senate now has the opportunity to act so that individual and business mailers alike may have revived confidence that USPS will keep delivering as citizens expect and as our economy demands – especially during this challenging time.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommended actions.

Sincerely,



Ford Bowers  
President and CEO