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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND FOREIGN
AFFAIRS

October 16, 2026

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

Mr. Gary R. Barksdale
Chief Postal Inspector
United States Postal Inspection Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Postmaster General Steiner and Chief Postal Inspector Barksdale:

I write regarding the suspicious mailings sent this week to congressional offices, and to request a briefing on what the United States Postal Service (Postal Service) and the United States Postal Inspection Service (Postal Inspection Service) know about these letters and what steps they are taking in response. As you know, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Postal Inspection Service are investigating a series of mailings, some containing a powdery white substance, sent to congressional offices and state election offices.¹ I commend the Postal Service and Postal Inspection Service employees who, according to state election officials and a Senate office, intercepted several of these letters before they were delivered. As the investigation continues, I want to make sure Congress has a clear picture of the threat and of any support the Postal Service needs to address it.

One Senate office has said that a letter mailed to it was intercepted by postal officials, and the House Sergeant at Arms has advised that no House Members have been identified as intended recipients.² According to state officials, the Postal Service also intercepted letters addressed to election offices in Ohio, Maryland, Mississippi, and South Dakota. Other letters were delivered,

¹ NPR, "Suspicious mailings to election officials, congressional offices under investigation," Eric McDaniel, Hansi Lo Wang, and Ryan Lucas, October 15, 2026, <https://www.npr.org/2026/10/15/nx-s1-6003857/suspicious-mailings-election-congressional-offices>.

² CBS News, "Feds investigating suspicious letters sent to election officials and congressional offices," October 15, 2026, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/suspicious-letters-election-officials-congressional-offices-fbi-us-postal-service/>.

and election offices in Louisiana and Oklahoma were evacuated after receiving them.³ In Louisiana, law enforcement found no evidence of harmful substances. The Postal Inspection Service has said it stopped delivery of at least one of these mailings, but the Senate Sergeant at Arms has warned staff that "it is possible that some letters may reach their destinations."⁴

These mailings show how much congressional offices across the country depend on the Postal Service. Since 2001, mail addressed to House and Senate offices in Washington has gone through additional screening before delivery, and offices in Members' districts and states rely on the Postal Service to stop dangerous mail before it arrives.⁵ Congressional offices have been targeted before. In 2012, letters containing suspicious powder were mailed to Members' home state and Washington offices, and the coordinated work of the Capitol Police, the FBI, and the Postal Inspection Service led to an arrest. In 2013, a letter addressed to a Senator that tested positive for ricin was stopped before it reached the Capitol.⁶ I am grateful for the Postal Service's work to keep dangerous mail from reaching congressional staff.

This week's mailings are also a reminder that the people most exposed to dangerous mail are the postal employees who handle it first. Our country learned this at great cost in 2001, when two employees of the Brentwood processing facility in Washington, D.C., both Maryland residents, died after anthrax letters addressed to Senate offices passed through their facility.⁷ We owe them and their families a lasting debt. The Postal Service responded by building a Biohazard Detection System and installing it in mail processing plants nationwide.⁸ As of fiscal year (FY) 2023, nearly 400 postal inspectors were specially trained to respond to dangerous mail, and the number of suspicious mail incidents they responded to had fallen to 1,675 that year, from 2,356 in FY 2020.⁹ I thank these inspectors, and the letter carriers, clerks, and mail handlers who keep doing this work every day, often without knowing what is inside the envelopes they carry.

³ Associated Press, "Authorities investigate letters with 'suspicious substances' sent to congressional, election offices," October 15, 2026, <https://wtop.com/elections/2026/10/fbi-and-postal-service-are-investigating-letters-with-suspicious-substances-sent-to-congressional-and-election-offices/>.

⁴ NPR, "Suspicious mailings to election officials, congressional offices under investigation," Eric McDaniel, Hansi Lo Wang, and Ryan Lucas, October 15, 2026, <https://www.npr.org/2026/10/15/nx-s1-6003857/suspicious-mailings-election-congressional-offices>.

⁵ Roll Call, "Capitol Police Investigate Another Suspicious Package; Senate Staff Warned of Mail Threats," October 24, 2018, <https://www.rollcall.com/news/politics/capitol-police-investigate-another-suspicious-package-senate-staff-warned-of-mail-threats>.

⁶ Roll Call, "Wicker Targeted With Ricin Mailing," April 16, 2013, <https://www.rollcall.com/2013/04/16/wicker-targeted-with-ricin-mailing/>.

⁷ United States Postal Service, "USPS News Release," October 23, 2001, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/sept11/usps_005.asp; Smithsonian National Postal Museum, "Anthrax," <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/behind-the-badge-case-histories-dangerous-mail/anthrax>.

⁸ United States Postal Service, "Biohazard Detection System," 2016, <https://smartbusinessmoments.usps.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2016SO1-148-Biohazard-Detection-System.pdf>.

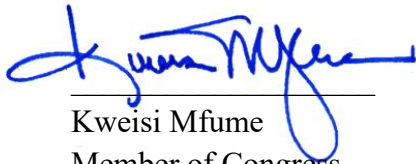
⁹ United States Postal Inspection Service, "2023 Annual Report," https://www.uspis.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/2023_USPIS-Annual-Report_FINAL.pdf; United States Postal Inspection Service, "Annual Report FY 2020," <https://www.uspis.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FY2020-annual-report-web-FINAL.pdf>.

To help Congress understand this threat and the Postal Service's response, I request a briefing as soon as possible that addresses the following:

1. The approximate number of suspicious mailings in this series identified to date, including how many were addressed to congressional offices and how many were intercepted before delivery.
2. A general description of how the Postal Service and the Postal Inspection Service identified and intercepted these mailings.
3. How and when the Postal Inspection Service shares information about threats in the mail with the Capitol Police and the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms, including when it notified them of these mailings.
4. The steps taken to protect postal employees who may have processed or delivered these letters, including medical evaluation, safety guidance, and notice to employee organizations, and the results of laboratory testing when available.
5. Any changes to Postal Service or Postal Inspection Service procedures adopted after earlier suspicious mailings to congressional and election offices, and any additional resources the Postal Inspection Service needs to address these threats.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and for the work of Postal Service employees.

Sincerely,



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress