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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

May 3, 2017

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
Government Accountability Office
441 G St NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro,

The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) is required to provide prompt, reliable, and efficient universal mail service to a customer base that is extremely diverse, ranging from individual households in rural areas to large businesses and government entities in major metropolitan areas. USPS's financial viability depends on how well its services and products meet the needs of its customers. In an increasingly competitive environment, including electronic communications and competition from private delivery companies, it is critical that USPS maintain strong customer service to deliver the mail as reliably and efficiently as possible across the country.

While USPS faced difficulty in the past few years meeting its service standards, it began to see service improvements in 2016. We would ordinarily be heartened to see improvements in service, but these reported improvements often do not align with feedback from our constituents or the reported confusion about how long it takes to send mail from point A to point B. For example, we continue to hear complaints that total transit time for mail seems to be longer than what USPS reports. Also, we have heard stories that pick up times on collection boxes are not always accurate, so USPS customers may not know when their mail enters the mail stream.

We are also aware of various studies from the USPS Inspector General and others that highlight potentially concerning practices on the part of USPS employees (e.g., scanning mail as delivered even when it may not have been). As a result, we are concerned that the reported performance data does not fully reflect postal customers' actual mail experience. As Senators from states with large rural populations, we understand that for many of our constituents USPS represents one of few mailing options, if not the only option.

We recognize that USPS is undertaking numerous efforts not only to improve service, but also to improve how it collects service performance data—especially in rural states. In order for these data collection processes to be as effective as possible, however, it is important to ensure that they are being correctly followed. We would like GAO's assistance to help provide this assurance. Specifically, we would like GAO to identify and evaluate:

- (1) what controls USPS has in place to ensure that employees comply with identified practices for the collection of service performance metrics;

- (2) what actions USPS takes if it is determined that required procedures are not followed;
and
- (3) whether there are formal or informal incentives or directives that may potentially cause postal employees to inaccurately collect or record mail performance data.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please contact Saundra Shropshire from Senator McCaskill's staff at (202) 224-2630 or at Saundra_Shropshire@hsgac.senate.gov or Ashley Poling from Senator Heitkamp's staff at (202) 224-4664 or at Ashley_Poling@hsgac.senate.gov with any questions.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on
Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs



Heidi Heitkamp
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on
Homeland Security and Governmental
Affairs, Subcommittee on Regulatory
Affairs and Federal Management