

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1304

April 24, 2023

The Honorable Merrick Garland  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Louis DeJoy  
Postmaster General  
United States Postal Service  
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW Room 10300  
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Attorney General Garland and Postmaster General DeJoy:

I write to urge the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the United States Postal Service (USPS) to work together to address the growing threat of armed robberies against USPS letter carriers, including by vigorously investigating these crimes and prosecuting those who commit them.

The Postal Inspection Service reports that armed robberies of letter carriers increased sharply between 2018 and 2021, rising from 36 incidents to 154 incidents. In previous letters to both Postmaster DeJoy and the USPS Board of Governors, I have urged USPS to reinstate a system of local area crime alerts, which it inexplicably has stopped sending to employees. Though some alerts continue to be sent via mail scanning devices, local postmasters can, and frequently do, opt out of the service. I reiterate my request for USPS to reinstate this system of crime alerts and encourage DOJ to consider how it may partner with USPS to further improve the safety of letter carriers. Knowledge of criminal activity in the vicinity can in some instances help letter carriers to avoid dangerous situations, including robberies.

I also urge USPS to reduce the incentive for this crime by updating cluster mailboxes to require two-factor authentication. The motive for letter carrier robberies often is the theft of master or "arrow" keys, and instituting a pilot program to update cluster boxes with new technology could only improve this dire situation. These arrow keys can command thousands of dollars on the clandestine market because they allow access to cluster mailboxes and their contents, which include checks and other valuable items.

The prosecution of these crimes is also an important means of holding armed robbers accountable for their criminal activity and deterring future robberies. Section 2114(a) of title 18 of the U.S. Code provides a penalty of up to 10 years for robbing, attempting to rob, or assaulting with intent to rob a letter carrier or other person having lawful charge, control, or custody of any mail matter or other property of the United States. The maximum penalty increases to 25 years if injury results or in the case of a repeat offender. Moreover, any person who receives or possesses property taken in such a robbery, knowing it to be unlawfully obtained, is subject to a penalty of up to 10 years under section 2114(b). I urge DOJ to prioritize enforcement of these statutes and all other provisions applicable to these reprehensible assaults on the men and women who deliver the nation's mail.

It is critical that your respective agencies work together to better protect these public servants and ensure the security of our mail system. I respectfully request an update on these efforts in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dick Durbin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator