

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 25, 2024

Mr. Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy:

We write to request an update on reopening the Post Office in Baring, Missouri and urge you to expeditiously reopen other post offices that the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) has placed under “emergency suspension” due to natural disasters or the need for repairs. The Baring post office and other suspended post offices remain critical lifelines for constituents in rural areas and other USPS customers.

The Baring facility closed after receiving severe tornado damage in August 2023,¹ but residents have received no information about when it will be reopened. This situation reflects similar delays nationwide in repairing post offices and resolving suspensions, which USPS should promptly address.

On September 6, 2023, Senator Hawley sent a letter to USPS requesting the expeditious reopening of the Baring Post Office building.² In response, USPS claimed that within 90 days, it expected to have a timeline for rebuilding the facility, in cooperation with the building’s landlord.³ USPS policies also require it to develop a “plan of action” for resolving a post office emergency suspension within 3 months of the suspension.⁴ Although 90 days have now passed since USPS’s reply, USPS has not shared this timeline or additional details on when Baring’s post office will reopen.

Post offices closed due to “emergency suspension” are a concern for USPS customers nationwide.⁵ Since this initial letter, we have heard about this issue on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee from Commissioner Robert G. Taub of the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC), who affirmed that USPS tends to “drag their feet” in decisions to resolve

¹ U.S. Postal Service, *The Baring, MO Post Office will be temporarily closed due to structural damage* (Aug. 5, 2023) (<https://about.usps.com/newsroom/local-releases/mo/2023/0805-baring-mo-po-will-be-temporarily-closed.htm>).

² Letter from Senator Hawley to U.S. Postal Service (Sept. 6, 2023) (<https://www.hawley.senate.gov/hawley-urges-postal-service-prioritize-rebuilding-post-office-destroyed-baring-mo-tornado>).

³ Letter from U.S. Postal Service to Senator Hawley (Sept. 13, 2023).

⁴ U.S. Postal Service, *Handbook PO-101*, at 43-46.

⁵ A post office is “suspended” when USPS stops operations there due to a natural disaster, irreparable or severe damage, termination of a lease, lack of personnel to operate, or threats to safety of the facility and the mail. *Id.*

suspended post offices like the Baring Post Office.⁶ In its oversight of suspended post offices, the PRC highlighted that at the end of FY 2022, there were 381 suspended post offices, including 88 post office suspensions that remain unresolved since 2017 and 98 newly suspended in FY22.⁷ As of the end of 2023, USPS reported to the PRC that there are a total of 373 suspended post offices.⁸ The PRC has ordered USPS to provide a detailed plan and timeline for resolving post offices suspended in recent years (from FY 2017 through FY 2023).

As you know, Americans living in rural areas face severe challenges to daily life without a functioning post office. This includes significant barriers to accessing reliable medical delivery, payment disbursements, and communications. We urge you to finalize and disclose USPS's plan to reopen the Baring Post Office within 30 calendar days. We also urge you to cooperate with the PRC by providing detailed plans and timelines for resolving all post offices suspended from 2017 through 2023.

As members of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which has oversight over USPS, we know the important work that USPS performs on a daily basis for millions of Americans. We are committed to ensuring USPS maintains a high level of service for all customers, including for rural residents and those impacted by natural disasters.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Josh Hawley
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

⁶ Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, *Hearing on the Nominations of the Honorable Robert G. Taub to be a Commissioner, Postal Regulatory Commission, and [nominees to be] Associate Judges, Superior Court of the District of Columbia*. 118th Cong. (Sept. 7, 2023).

⁷ Postal Regulatory Commission, *Annual Compliance Determination Report, Fiscal Year 2022*, at 179-183 (Mar. 29, 2023) (<https://www.prc.gov/docs/124/124784/FY%202022%20ACD.pdf>).

⁸ U.S. Postal Service, *Annual Compliance Review*, "USPS-FY23-33: Consumer Access to Postal Services" (Dec. 29, 2023) (<https://prc.arkcase.com/portal/docket-search/advanced/filing-details/127594>).