



11 May, 2020

USPS Deputy Postmaster General Ron Stroman
United States Postal Service
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Suite 2P600
Washington, DC 20260

Deputy Postmaster General Stroman,

It has come to my attention that today, May 11, 2020, the United States Postal Service (USPS) delivered 317 ballots to the Butler County Board of Elections. The ballots were postmarked April 27th, meaning they had been in the possession of the USPS for a whopping 14 days.

H.B. 197, which was passed unanimously by the General Assembly and signed into law by the Governor, states, "ballots received by mail at the office of the board after 7:30 p.m. on April 28, 2020, and not later than May 8, 2020, are eligible to be counted if they are postmarked on or before April 27, 2020..."

The May 8th end date for counting ballots in this legislation mirrors a standard deadline for each election which has been in law for many years. That deadline – 10 days – is intended to provide the USPS sufficient time to deliver ballots and to ensure that boards of elections have all absentee ballots returned before they begin their official canvas on the 11th day following the completion of an election.

Because it took the USPS 14 days to deliver these ballots to the Butler County Board of Elections, these voters have effectively been disenfranchised in the 2020 primary election. When I say, "every vote counts and every voice matters in our democracy" -- those are more than just words, it's a sacred commitment. For 317 of our fellow citizens that commitment has not been kept, their voice was silenced and there must be action to make sure this situation is corrected for the future.

As you'll recall, on April 24th, after we shared significant concerns about the unacceptable delay in election mail delivery, I had a conversation with you and Chief Operating Officer David Williams. In that conversation, the USPS agreed to the following:

1. USPS will institute "all clear" processes to ensure all election mail is processed each day.

2. USPS will set up hand-to-hand delivery for election mail as it makes its way through processing on Saturday, from the board of elections to the distribution center.
3. Staff will recheck collection bins each day to ensure late arriving ballots are retrieved.
4. Postal facilities will track election mail deliveries to Ohio's boards of elections starting on Monday, April 27th and continuing through May 8th.
5. To avoid further delivery delays in northwest Ohio, election mail will not be routed through the Detroit Regional Distribution Center. Instead it will be kept in-state. Additionally, an Ohio manager will be assigned to Detroit to ensure any mail mistakenly sent there is handled appropriately.
6. The United States Postal Service will assign their independent investigative unit to do additional "all clear" checks at Ohio facilities.

Either these procedures were not followed, or they were insufficient. This is simply unacceptable and must never happen again.

I am asking the USPS to do the following:

Conduct an investigation that details:

- how this happened
- what specific protocols were not adequately followed
- the security of the ballots while they were in the possession of the USPS

Provide my office with a list of additional protocols the USPS will institute for the fall's general election to ensure this doesn't happen again.

I sincerely appreciate your responsiveness to the delays we experienced in the days prior to the completion of our primary election and I know that your organization faces numerous challenges as you continue to perform a crucial function for our nation amidst this emergency. However, the plans you laid out did not work for 317 of our fellow citizens who deserved to have their voices heard, so you can certainly understand my deep frustration.

Our democratic republic is built upon the power of the vote and the trust citizens have that their vote will be counted. For these Ohioans that trust was violated. Ensuring that the citizens we serve have their voices heard is the cornerstone of our system of government. Mistakes happen. Obstacles are placed in our way. It must be the job of the USPS to institute the necessary contingencies to ensure those mistakes and obstacles can be overcome by November.

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose

Ohio Secretary of State