

A GRAND ALLIANCE

TO SAVE OUR PUBLIC POSTAL SERVICE

A People's Postal Agenda

The U.S. Postal Service was created nearly 250 years ago to help bind people together into one unified nation. Since its founding, the Postal Service has continually reinvented itself in response to changes in technology and social needs. Once again, it's time to re-imagine how this public service can innovate to meet today's challenges. The People's Postal Agenda rejects austerity approaches that will drive customers to private competitors by slowing deliveries, reducing services, and hiking prices. Instead, this agenda focuses on innovations to address unmet needs and ensure this treasured public agency can continue to serve all Americans for generations to come.

1. **Provide affordable financial services:** USPS should do more to help meet the need for affordable, trustworthy financial services, particularly among low-income communities and families of color who now must pay predatory fees just to access their own money. In the short term, this could include low-fee ATMs, check cashing, bill-paying and expanded wire transfer services. Ultimately, USPS should provide no fee checking and savings accounts in partnership with the Federal Reserve or the Treasury, a modernized version of the postal savings system in operation until the 1960s. Right now, USPS should explore partnering with the Treasury department to make current check-cashing pilot services more affordable.
2. **Shift to a clean renewable energy economy with union labor:** With its vast infrastructure and vehicle fleet, USPS could play a major role in driving the transition to a clean renewable energy economy. Replacements for the aging delivery fleet should be made by union labor and electric. USPS should also strive to install EV charging stations for public use at post offices and expand solar panel installation on its properties.
3. **Make communities safer and governments smarter:** Postal workers already play an informal "neighborhood watch" role. Monitors on postal vehicles could expand that role by gathering data on public safety and environmental risks, such as air quality, potholes, traffic and bridge conditions, snow and ice in winter storms, natural gas leaks, and cellular performance and coverage.
4. **Protect our democracy and build community:** In the 2020 general election, the Postal Service delivered more than 135 million ballots to or from voters. Allowing all Americans to mail in their election ballots would help counter racist voter suppression and increase participation, particularly among low-income, disabled, older, and rural voters who face challenges getting to the polls.
5. **Narrow the digital divide:** USPS should anchor initiatives to expand broadband access, particularly in underserved rural areas. This might include offering free wi-fi in post office parking lots or lobby areas. USPS might also explore the potential for providing affordable broadband as a public service and a revenue opportunity, as public postal services in some other countries already do.
6. **Support good jobs:** The Postal Service has been a critical source of good, unionized jobs with benefits, particularly for the Black workers who currently make up nearly 30 percent of the postal workforce. USPS should ensure that all postal workers have career jobs with

decent pay and benefits and the right to bargain collectively. And policymakers should crack down on private sector competitors that are attempting to undercut good postal jobs by misclassifying their delivery drivers as independent contractors to deny basic labor rights. The Postal Service can also support good unions jobs through procurement, which is why the \$6 billion Next Generation Delivery Vehicle should be made with union represented workers.

7. **Protect public health:** The success of the Covid test kit delivery program is just one sign of the vital role USPS can play in our nation's public health. The vast door-to-door postal network could be leveraged even more strategically in the face of future crises, for example to help with contact tracing or distribution of protective equipment. In the meantime, post offices, particularly in remote areas, could become community wellness hubs, with spaced rented out for health services or to help with Social Security and food assistance.
8. **Strengthen our care infrastructure:** USPS could play a valuable role in a comprehensive plan to address the care crisis that is putting enormous strain on families, particularly women. USPS already offers a limited "Carrier Alert" service that enlists postal workers to watch for signs of distress, such as a build-up of uncollected mail, at the homes of certain vulnerable residents. Some other countries have more robust check-in programs to help the elderly and disabled live independently at lower cost than in nursing homes while reducing the strain on their families. The introduction of such programs in the United States would require expanded personnel and training rather than being added to current employees' heavy workloads.
9. **Support food security and local producers:** USPS could expand on its experience with perishables to provide affordable delivery services for local food producers and people who have difficulty getting to grocery stores. For example, USPS drivers could pick up produce from farms along their usual routes and deliver them to people's doors or to designated drop-off locations. USPS could also explore opportunities for expanding into grocery delivery. During the pandemic, consumer demand for online grocery ordering and deliveries has expanded enormously, but these privately operated delivery services aren't always available in low-income neighborhoods or rural communities. USPS could also partner with local food banks that would drop food boxes at local post offices for "last mile" delivery to home-bound residents.
10. **Explore additional financing options to maintain universal service:** Most of the initiatives above would generate revenue while also addressing the urgent needs of 21st century America. This would build on the recently adopted Postal Service Reform Act to stabilize USPS finances. To ensure that USPS can continue to fulfill its obligation to provide affordable services to every U.S. address, we should explore additional reforms, including a shift away from the current self-financing model. Instead of requiring USPS to cover 100 percent of costs through income from services and products, Congress should consider appropriating funds to cover annual shortfalls and introducing fees on public utility bills to cover the cost of maintaining the universal service obligation.

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Through this alliance, more than 80 national organizations have joined forces with the American Postal Workers Union to protect and enhance vibrant public postal services. In 2021, the Alliance organized a People's Postal Summit to discuss a future vision for USPS. This is a summary of a discussion draft produced for that summit. It was updated in August 2022. For more info: <https://apwu.org/grand-alliance-save-our-public-postal-service>