



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POSTAL SUPERVISORS

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Statement of
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Hearing Before
House Oversight and Accountability
Subcommittee on Government Operations

July 23, 2025

Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Mfume and members of the subcommittee, thank you for permitting the National Association of Postal Supervisors (NAPS) the privilege to share with the subcommittee the views of the approximately 47,000 postal supervisors, managers and postmasters NAPS represents. I am Chuck Mulidore, Executive Vice President of NAPS.

As you know, NAPS members serve as front-line guardians in securing and enhancing our national mail system by managing its processing, delivery, retail, administrative and support functions. NAPS members are proud of the 250-year history of the United States mail system.

The very first “American” law enforcement agency dates to 1772 when Postmaster for the Crown Benjamin Franklin created “surveyors” of the mail. These Colonial Era government employees were tasked with law enforcement responsibilities, including combatting mail theft. Mail was so valued by our nation’s founding generation that, in 1792, the 3rd U.S. Congress passed legislation to impose the death penalty on individuals convicted of mail theft. To be clear I am not advocating in favor of capital punishment for mail theft, nor am I privy to how many individuals were apprehended, convicted or executed for mail theft in the 1790s. However, I can assure you that postal-related crime is a serious concern for NAPS members and the employees NAPS members supervise.

As this subcommittee knows, postal supervisors, managers and postmasters are essential to this nation’s most-trusted federal agency and, therefore, NAPS appreciates the subcommittee’s attentiveness to ensure the safety of postal employees and protect U.S. mail. Indeed, three years ago, NAPS President Ivan Butts testified before this subcommittee on the threat to postal personnel, postal assets and the mail because of the restrictions imposed on the authority of the uniformed members of the Postal Inspection Service by

the Postal Service. For this reason, NAPS strongly supports enactment of H.R. 2095, the Postal Police Protection Act.

As Ivan explained in 2022, the Postal Service implemented a 2020 policy that restricted uniformed members of the Postal Inspection Service, also known as postal police officers, to the confines of a postal facility. As a result, qualified, well-trained law enforcement officers were no longer empowered to protect postal personnel, U.S. mail and postal assets beyond the border of postal real estate. As could be expected, postal street crime escalated. This included mail theft, vehicle break-ins and attacks on postal personnel. Deterrence fell and the probability of arrests was significantly reduced in high-crime areas.

Prior to the implementation of the 2020 policy, postal police officers were permitted to escort letter carriers in high-crime areas. In addition, postal law officers were able to patrol locations where at-risk mail collection boxes were located and postal vehicles parked. These effective, protective strategies were terminated in 2020.

Moreover, over the past several years, the Postal Service has defunded the U.S. Postal Police force, resulting in dramatically reducing the number of officers available to protect postal assets, postal personnel and mail. In fact, two years ago, the USPS Inspector General concluded: “The USPS failed to effectively deploy postal personnel to combat postal-related crime and had yet to evaluate its personnel resources to address the issue.” NAPS has yet to see meaningful and consistent personnel deployment in response to the IG’s criticism.

NAPS notes that the USPS made an effort to replace “arrow keys” with electronic locks and other devices to “harden” mail collection boxes, but these efforts have fallen short. Equipping mail collection boxes with digital devices nationally has moved slowly. In addition, about nine months ago, the IG reported shortfalls in implementing the plan to use a handheld mobile scanning device to increase mail delivery security and electronically unlock mail collection boxes. In sum, the interface between the new Mobile Delivery Device–Technology Refresh (MDD-TR) and eLocks on mailboxes has not been as effective as projected. There have been connectivity issues between the device and the eLock, insufficient training in their use, limited deployment and problems with battery capacity.

Moreover, even if the mail collection boxes were secured, there is concern that postal criminals simply would shift their targets from mailboxes to letter carriers and postal vehicles. Therefore, any effective law enforcement strategy to protect mail, postal property and USPS employees must include the effective and smart deployment of postal police.

Consequently, NAPS believes the enactment of H.R. 2095 would be a prudent legislative strategy to combat postal crime and protect postal employees, in combination with H.R. 1065, the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act. The postal police legislation would reverse the 2020 USPS directive that limited the jurisdiction of U.S. postal police and does not authorize any additional funds. It would enable the Postal Service to prioritize safeguarding the mail and its employees. The letter carrier protection legislation would dovetail with H.R. 2095 by providing financial support for upgrading mail collection boxes, and enhanced prosecutorial attention and penalties to postal-related crimes. The two bills complement one another and, therefore, merit congressional support.

Once again, postal police officers would be able to protect postal personnel, postal property and the mail, as well as investigate crimes against employees and property, whether located on postal property or outside postal property. NAPS would point out that in the previous congress both bills carried the names of the lead authors of each respective bill, Reps. Garbarino and Fitzpatrick.

On a related matter regarding mail theft and sanctity of the mail, NAPS would like to caution those promoting the “privatization” of components of our trusted integrated mail system to the real threat that such a tactic would pose to the sanctity of our national postal system. At the June 24 subcommittee hearing, at least one private-sector witness suggested the possible outsourcing of the Postal Service’s mail processing and logistics functions. Just last week, the Postal IG found that mail was placed at risk by a private corporation retained to manage and run the Postal Service’s Denver Regional Transfer Hub.

In sum, the IG “identified deficiencies that put mail at risk of theft and unauthorized handling.” Specifically, private-sector employees removed and concealed destination tags, damaged mail and committed mail theft, particularly related to mail-order drugs. As the representative of postal supervisors, managers and postmasters, NAPS was alarmed there was a lack of adequate control, supervision and oversight of the privatized operation. Postal employees continue to be among the most-trusted individuals committed to public service and providing an essential and inherently governmental function. Consequently, any effort to safeguard the sanctity of mail – protecting it from theft – must include maintaining a government-administered mail operation, staffed by employees of the U.S. Postal Service.

Mr. Chairman, as the subcommittee charts the Postal Service’s route forward, NAPS invites continuing dialogue with the chairman and members of the committee to ensure the sanctity of the mail and the safety of postal personnel.

Thank you.