

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

Chief Postal Inspector Gary R. Barksdale
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20244

October 5, 2026

Dear Chief Postal Inspector Barksdale,

We write in response to recent reporting that the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) has deployed armed and unarmed guards to postal facilities in Colorado and across the country just as millions of Americans are preparing to cast their ballots by mail ahead of the 2026 General Midterm Elections.

In a memo distributed to the American Postal Workers Union, the USPIS has indicated that the guards will monitor entrances and parking areas, verify IDs, and observe and report purportedly suspicious activity in and around key postal facilities, including both Post Offices – which are open to the public – and US Postal Service processing plants – which are not open to the public.¹ These deployments come despite the agency's repeated assurances that no credible security or operational threat has necessitated the heightened presence, with USPIS characterizing this initiative as part of a longstanding, multiyear security plan.² Yet the agency has provided little public information for the timing of this deployment, failed to identify which facilities will be affected, and offered no detail regarding the safeguards that will be implemented to ensure that the presence of law enforcement personnel does not disrupt, intimidate, or otherwise interfere with postal workers, election officials, or votes during a critical period of the election cycle.

Postal workers have a crucial responsibility to deliver election mail safely and on time. We support appropriate measures designed to protect them and their ability to carry out this responsibility. At the same time, the presence of armed guards at facilities where voters may deposit ballots runs the real risk of making voters feel intimidated. Federal law prohibits voter intimidation, which is defined as the use of threats, coercion, or attempts to intimidate for the purpose of interfering with the right of another person to vote or to vote for the person of their choosing.³ Voters should feel assured that they can send their ballots without being questioned, monitored, or deterred by armed guards.

¹<https://www.denver7.com/news/local-news/us-postal-inspection-service-sends-security-guards-to-facilities-nationwide-including-denver>

² <https://www.cpr.org/2026/09/18/usps-private-guards-denver/>

³ <https://www.justice.gov/crt/media/1348556/dl?inline>

This issue is particularly poignant for Colorado, where over 90% of voters cast their ballots by mail.⁴ Colorado's 2024 General Election Fact Sheet shows that every audit demonstrated a 97% rate of statistical certainty that voting tabulation equipment worked correctly, demonstrating the strength and soundness of Colorado's election security system which has multiple layers of physical and network security measures designed to prevent unauthorized access and ensure accurate vote counts.⁵ Leading up to the 2026 General Midterm Election, the United States Postal Service (USPS) has disseminated best practices for voting by mail, which includes guidance that if and when feasible, voters should deliver their mail-in ballot to a postal facility or USPS retail facility to receive same-day stamping. The presence of armed and unarmed guards already deployed at postal facilities is not a hypothetical concern; it is a reality that voters and postal workers are confronting right now. Deploying armed and unarmed personnel at key mail-processing and ballot-return locations during an election, without a clear and compelling public justification, risks intimidating voters, discouraging ballot return, and eroding public confidence in both the Postal Service and the integrity of the electoral process.

As such, we request answers to the following questions to help us understand the circumstances surrounding this deployment and its potential impact on voter access:

1. When was the decision to deploy additional guards made, who approved it, and what prompted the deployment at this time?
2. How many armed and unarmed guards have been deployed nationwide and in Colorado? At which facilities, and for what anticipated duration?
3. What are the guards' duties and limits of authority? May they ask members of the public for identification, inspect mail or ballots, direct postal employees, restrict access to facilities, or interact with election officials?
4. What steps has USPIS taken to consult postal workers, their unions, state and local election officials, and USPS election mail personnel about the deployment and its potential effect on ballot processing?
5. Has USPIS received any request, direction, or input concerning this deployment from the White House, the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), or any other federal agency?
6. Will these guards have any role or authority in determining whether election mail is accepted, processed, or delivered?
7. What specific steps has USPIS taken to ensure that the presence and conduct of these guards do not intimidate voters or discourage them from mailing their ballots?

Coloradans deserve certainty that every eligible voter can return a ballot free from intimidation, disruption, or interference, and that every piece of election mail will be handled and delivered

⁴ <https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/newsRoom/pressReleases/2024/PR20241206Election.html>

⁵ <https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/RLA/faqs.html>

securely and on time. Postal workers, election officials, and voters alike are entitled to clear assurances regarding the scope, purpose, and conduct of these deployments of armed and unarmed guards. In light of the urgency and significance of these concerns, we request a prompt and comprehensive response no later than October 16th, 2026.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brittany Pettersen", is written over a solid horizontal line.

Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress