

BARBARA LEE
13TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA
**DEMOCRATIC STEERING
AND POLICY COMMITTEE**
Co-Chair



**Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-0509**

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Member, Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
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COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

REPLY TO OFFICE CHECKED

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August 28, 2020

Mr. Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W. Room 4012
Washington, D.C. 20260

Postmaster General DeJoy:

Today the Bay Valley District of the U.S. Postal Service informed my office that it has removed up to 12 collection boxes in downtown Oakland in anticipation of protests in the area.

I wish to express my strongest objection to this action.

The removal of essentially all sidewalk collection boxes in our city center less than three months before a national election is alarming to say the least. And doing so in response to protests is a highly unusual and unfair penalty for communities like Oakland that often engage in dissent and protest against injustice.

According to testimony this week to the House Oversight and Reform Committee, in recent months the Postal Service has removed or locked collection boxes across the country, removed high-speed mail sorting machines, and changed operating procedures resulting in significant delays to service. I remind you that you testified under oath that you would postpone any further equipment removals or operational changes until after the election.

As I said on the floor of the House, my constituents are terrified and outraged about delays in delivery of medications, about harms to local small businesses, and about the potential obstruction of their constitutional right to vote.

Downtown Oakland is one of the most accessible and easiest places in the East Bay for people to use collection boxes. I am extremely concerned that the loss of collection boxes in this area will make it harder for residents in our community to vote in November. Even if some or all these boxes are back in service before mail-in voting begins in October, their sudden disappearance so close to the election will cause confusion and could have a chilling effect on voting in my district.

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I understand from my conversation today with the Bay Valley District Manager that USPS has removed collection boxes for safety reasons during large gatherings in other cities. However, protests have been happening in downtown Oakland for decades, and to our knowledge, USPS has not removed all boxes in the area in response to past protests. I also understand that we have had no reports of damage to collection boxes or to mail related to the protest in Oakland this week over the horrific shooting of Jacob Blake by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

I appreciate that the boxes may be replaced as early as Monday – provided that USPS does not expect further protests in Oakland. However, continuing to remove collection boxes any time we expect a protest in Oakland will create an undue burden on this community, and certainly will interfere with services, including mail-in voting.

I ask that you immediately reverse the decision to remove collection boxes from Oakland and honor your commitment to Congress to not remove any additional collection boxes anywhere in the U.S. prior to the election. And I again ask that you reverse any operational orders or equipment removals that could result in the disenfranchisement of millions of Americans who are relying on mail-in voting in this election.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Lee".

Barbara Lee, Member of Congress