Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

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Postmaster General Steiner and Vice President Kuo:

On Wednesday, October 14, 2026, my office was informed that the United States Postal Service (USPS) had abruptly shut down the Akron, Alabama Post Office. Akron Mayor Rollins reported that USPS had chained the doors, begun moving mail to Moundville, and dismantled P.O. boxes that have served local families for generations. Many Akron residents rely on their local post office, which is within walking distance, to access essential mail services. The sudden closure has left these residents without access to their P.O. boxes, despite USPS having previously informed residents and local news outlets that the Post Office would remain open until at least October 30, 2026. This unexpected disruption is particularly alarming just weeks before the November midterm election, when residents are relying on timely mail delivery to receive and return absentee ballots, and exercise their fundamental right to vote.

The USPS claims that operations at the Akron Post Office are being temporarily suspended due to failed lease negotiations. However, information and documentation provided to my office directly contradict USPS's account of the circumstances surrounding this abrupt closure:

- **Failed lease negotiations:** USPS maintains that negotiations to renew the five-year lease, which expired in August 2026, "failed." However, my office has documentation demonstrating that, after extended negotiations, the lessor agreed in writing to USPS's demand to maintain the rental rate established in August 2021 for an additional five years, through 2031.
- **Alleged notice to vacate:** USPS claims that the lessor issued a notice requiring USPS to vacate the property by October 30th, 2026. However, the lessor has explicitly denied issuing any such notice.
- **Premature closure and dismantling:** Despite publicly notifying residents that the Post Office would remain open until at least October 30th, USPS chained the doors on October 14th, a full 16 days earlier. USPS informed my office that the early closure was necessary to allow sufficient time to vacate the premises. Yet, within just 24 hours, my office received photographs showing that the Post Office's interior had already been fully dismantled, including the removal of residents' P.O. boxes.

These conflicting accounts raise serious questions about the justification for this closure, the decision to abruptly suspend postal services ahead of the publicly announced date, and whether USPS made a good-faith effort to preserve essential postal services for the residents of Akron.

I am also troubled that USPS's actions may constitute a de facto discontinuance of the Akron Post Office in violation of the procedural requirements under 39 CFR § 241.3. These regulations require advanced public notice and an opportunity for community input before permanently discontinuing postal services. While USPS has characterized this closure as a temporary suspension, its decision to chain the doors, remove residents' P.O. boxes, and completely dismantle the facility raises serious questions about whether USPS has circumvented the required discontinuance process. Furthermore, 39 CFR § 241.3(a)(5)(iv) specifically addresses anticipated lease expirations and the need to initiate discontinuance procedures sufficiently in advance. USPS's actions appear inconsistent with these requirements.

The conflicting information my office and the Akron community have received regarding this abrupt closure is unacceptable, particularly given its proximity to the November midterm election. By shuttering the Post Office without warning, USPS has jeopardized residents' ability to receive and return their absentee ballots in time to be counted. This is especially alarming for voters who have already requested absentee ballots, as completed ballots must be received by Hale County by October 27th, just 13 days after USPS abruptly closed the facility. To make matters worse, according to P.O. box holders, USPS provided them no instructions on how to retrieve their mail at the Moundville location, leaving residents uncertain about how to access essential correspondence, including their ballots. The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy, and USPS has a responsibility to ensure that its actions do not interfere with that right. The possibility that eligible voters could be disenfranchised because of USPS's unilateral decision to close this facility, without adequate notice or a plan to protect election mail, is wholly unacceptable.

The residents of Akron, Alabama have the right to access their mail, including but not limited to Social Security checks, medications, bills, and ballots so they can exercise their sacred right to vote in the upcoming election. For these reasons, I request that the USPS take immediate action and respond in writing by Monday, October 19, 2026, to the following requests that it:

1. Immediately re-open the Akron Post Office;
2. Explain why and how the decision was made to shut down the Akron Post Office due to an alleged breakdown in lease negotiations despite the lessor agreeing to keep the rent set at a flat rate established in 2021 until 2031;
3. Provide a written copy of the leaser's notice to the USPS stating that the USPS had to vacate the Akron property by October 30, which has been used by the USPS as the justification for why the post office abruptly closed;
4. Develop a plan of action explaining what USPS will do to ensure that the citizens of Akron can drop off and process their mail at the location of the Akron Post Office through at least the noticed October 30, 2026 closure date;
5. Explain why and how the decision was made to abruptly close the Akron Post Office with no notice on October 14, 2026, 16 days before the noticed October 30, 2026 closure date;
6. Detail all actions being taken to ensure that any mail related to the upcoming 2026 midterm elections, including that which was present at the Akron Post Office on the date of its closure (October 14, 2026) is protected, processed, and delivered to the Hale County Absentee Election Manager, Catrinna Perry, and that no election mail is or was lost due to this closure.
7. Provide documentation demonstrating USPS's compliance with 39 CFR § 241.3, including any emergency suspension determination, feasibility study, public notice, community consultation, and discontinuance proceedings, and explain how the complete dismantling of the Akron Post Office is consistent with a temporary suspension rather than a permanent discontinuance.

I look forward to your swift response to rectify this situation and restore essential services to the residents of Akron, Alabama.

Sincerely,

Terri Sewell

Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress