

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 18, 2012

Mr. Patrick Donahoe
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 Lenfant Plaza SW, Room 10804
Washington, DC 20260-0004

Ms. Michele M. Leonhart, Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration
Mailstop: AES
8701 Morrisette Drive
Springfield, VA 22152

Mr. Robert Mueller, Director
Federal Bureau of
Investigation Headquarters
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

Dear Postmaster General Donahoe, Administrator Leonhart, and Director Mueller:

We write to express our concern about reports that, due to insufficient postal inspectors, there have been significant shipments of drugs transported through the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) into Alaska communities, especially in Southeast Alaska. We urge the USPS, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to coordinate to authorize Alaska local law enforcement to inspect USPS shipments for illegal drugs.

Currently, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service has only one inspector assigned to Alaska, and that individual is located in Anchorage. While this inspector is responsible for postal enforcement across the entire state, the inspector has neither the time nor the resources to fulfill inspection duties for Southeast Alaska due to Anchorage's substantial postal enforcement needs.

Over the last few months, we have repeatedly discussed this issue with the USPS and urged them to collaborate with local or state law enforcement on drug interdiction efforts throughout Southeast Alaska. The USPS has informed us that a cooperative agreement with local law enforcement would be difficult to implement under the current statutory and regulatory framework. While the USPS has a cross-deputization arrangement with the Alaska State Troopers for alcohol interdiction, we understand the USPS cannot unilaterally carry out the deputization process for local law enforcement to perform drug inspection. In a letter of response to Congressman Don Young, which is enclosed, the USPS stated the DEA and the FBI must deputize local and state law enforcement for drug inspection efforts.

The lack of postal inspectors in Alaska has been an issue for many years. In 2003, in response to reports of illegal trafficking, the USPS brought up a team of inspectors from the Lower 48 for interdiction efforts on a one-time basis. Following this incident, in 2005, the Federal Alaska Rural Justice & Law Enforcement Commission (Section 112 of PL 108-199) studied this issue and made the following recommendation:

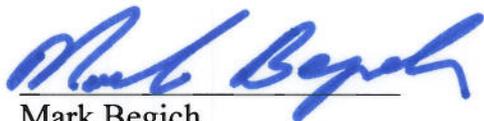
“Collaboration should also take place between the state and the federal government to enhance drug and alcohol enforcement. Lack of adequate Postal Service Investigator staffing in Alaska is a significant impediment to alcohol and drug interdiction in rural villages... Success for this recommendation will be measured by an increase in seizures of alcohol and drugs, forfeitures, and documentation of cases that could not have been possible without cross-designation authority.”

As a result, we urge the USPS, DEA and FBI to immediately coordinate their efforts in order to authorize local or state law enforcement in Alaska to inspect postal shipments for specifically Title 21 drug offenses. We request the DEA and FBI provide guidance with regards to their legal authority, qualification standards, and procedures for entering into cooperative agreements and deputization arrangements with local law enforcement agencies. It is our expectation your response will detail the options available for the USPS, DEA and FBI to coordinate in authorizing local law enforcement for drug interdiction in Alaska. While recent reports have indicated drug trafficking is particularly problematic in Southeast Alaska, it may also be or become a serious issue in other parts of the state as well because of the lack of inspectors statewide. We therefore request your response also address the possibility of entering into collaborative agreements with local law enforcement agencies in other communities across Alaska.

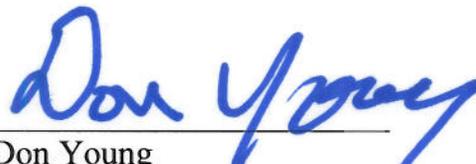
We share the frustration of Alaska communities about the apparent lack of means to protect their citizens from drug trafficking through USPS. A letter we recently received from Alaska State Representative Cathy Muñoz highlighting these concerns is also enclosed.

We respectfully request a timely response regarding this matter.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator



Don Young
Congressman for all Alaska

Enclosures: 2

CC: Cathy Muñoz, Alaska State Representative, District 4



March 7, 2012

The Honorable Don Young
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0201

Dear Congressman Young:

This is in response to your February 8 letter to Postmaster General Patrick R. Donahoe, regarding the use of the postal system to send illegal drugs to Petersburg.

Thank you for your letter, in which you encouraged the U.S. Postal Inspection Service to examine additional steps that could be employed to stem the flow of illegal drugs into rural Alaskan communities like Petersburg. You can be assured that the Postal Inspection Service is committed to preventing and detecting criminal misuse of the postal system, including the mailing of illegal drugs, and its efforts in this regard have done much to help safeguard the world's leading and largest postal service. The Postal Inspection Service has conducted many successful investigations in Alaska involving illegal drugs that have resulted in significant drug seizures, arrests, and convictions, and very often, intelligence and cooperation from state and local law enforcement agencies played an important role.

In your letter, you referenced the Postal Inspection Service's work with the Alaska State Troopers, which includes a deputization program, related to the mailing of alcohol. The Postal Inspection Service reports that the deputization program has been successful due to the commitment of the State Troopers and their adherence to the Inspection Service's guidelines, training, and oversight. It is important to note that the deputization is done through the U.S. Marshalls, and that deputization only is for United States Code Title 18 criminal offenses; not Title 21 drug offenses. Special deputies are not authorized to participate in federal drug investigations unless they also are deputized by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) or Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Therefore, the Postal Inspection Service cannot unilaterally enable local law enforcement officials to participate in federal drug cases; the DEA and/or the FBI would have to carry out the process of deputizing them.

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Please know that the presence of the Postal Inspection Service in Alaska exceeds the staffing of one Inspector (currently there are four based in Anchorage), and our Inspectors have conducted substantive investigative activity in Southeast Alaska. Postal Inspection Service officials informed us that the majority of their investigations in Southeast Alaska have resulted from intelligence provided by sources that include local police departments. Inspectors are willing to work with any local police department, including Petersburg's, to share intelligence that it may have regarding narcotics distribution through the mail. Postal Inspectors could discuss with local law enforcement officials various investigative techniques that may be of mutual assistance to local and federal authorities. Such cooperative efforts can be particularly helpful in Alaska.

If Petersburg police department officials have any further questions about this matter, they may contact Postal Inspector April Hindin at (907) 261-6322.

Please let me know if I can be of assistance in other postal matters.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Mary Ann Simpson
Manager, Government Liaison

Alaska State Legislature



State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska
99801-1182

June 11, 2012

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
709 Hart Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-0202

The Honorable Mark Begich
825C Hart Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Don Young
2111 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0291

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Begich and Congressman Young:

Please assist us in ensuring that a postal inspector is assigned to Southeast Alaska. It has come to our attention that our Drug Enforcement Teams have been very successful in closing other avenues of drugs shipments into our communities by closely working with Alaska Airlines and FedEx in interdicting drug shipments. The U.S. Postal Service has become the primary source of shipments of heroin and methamphetamines in Southeast Alaska. The problem lies with the lack of postal inspectors available. For example, in Juneau in the last two years only one interdiction was permitted for a two and half day inspection. During that time ten packages were found with over \$300,000 in street value narcotics.

As we understand it, there are three vacancies for postal inspectors in Alaska and we respectfully request that when these positions are filled, one of these inspectors be assigned to Southeast Alaska. Thank you for assisting us in ending the scourge of drug abuse in our communities.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Rep. Kyle Johansen.

Rep. Kyle Johansen
District 1

Handwritten signature of Rep. Bill Thomas.

Rep. Bill Thomas
District 5

Handwritten signature of Senator Albert Kookesh.

Senator Albert Kookesh
District C

Handwritten signature of Rep. Beth Kerttula.

Rep. Beth Kerttula
District 3

Handwritten signature of Rep. Peggy Wilson.

Rep. Peggy Wilson
District 2

Handwritten signature of Rep. Cathy Muñoz.

Rep. Cathy Muñoz
District 4

Handwritten signature of Senator Dennis Egan.

Senator Dennis Egan
District B