

# Trump's Postal Privatization Plan Met With Bipartisan Rebuke in Congress

ERIC KATZ | JUNE 21, 2018

The White House's proposal to privatize the U.S. Postal Service is unlikely to find much traction in Congress, with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle criticizing the suggested fundamental overhaul of the mailing agency.

Lawmakers across the ideological spectrum who have expressed an interest in postal issues showed little interest in Trump's transformation, defending the Postal Service as an essential government service. They pointed instead to reform proposals they have themselves put forward and refined after years of tense negotiations among an array of stakeholders.

The proposal came in President Trump's plan to reorganize the federal government. It followed an [executive order](#) Trump issued in April, creating a task force to recommend a path to put the cash-strapped agency on firmer financial footing. The reorganization plan preempted that process, however, as the task force is currently [meeting](#) with stakeholders and plans to issue a report by Aug. 10. The White House [suggested](#) the Postal Service institute those recommendations to get itself into better shape before it is sold off to the private sector.

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"Instead of working with us, President Trump unilaterally appointed a task force to review options for the Postal Service," said Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., who cosponsored a bipartisan bill to overhaul USPS that is awaiting a vote on the House floor. "Then, without even waiting for his own task force's results, President Trump rushed to propose eliminating the Postal Service entirely. Like so many other ideas that come out of this White House, President Trump's proposal to privatize the Postal Service is disorganized, unilateral, nonsensical, and frankly, incompetent."

Cummings' bill, as well as a similar measure in the Senate, would shore up USPS' finances in large part by shedding many of its obligations, including shifting most retirees to Medicare for their health coverage. Those measures would aim to expand postal services, however, and firmly keep the agency in place as a government entity.

A spokesman for Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., who cosponsored the Senate bill, pointed to a letter the senator wrote to the Trump administration imploring it to maintain and strengthen a public postal agency. In it, Moran called the 2018 Postal Service Reform Act a "finely tuned piece of legislation" and suggested Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, who is heading up Trump's postal task force, use it as a "blueprint for your work." Rather than pushing USPS to the private sector, Moran said the agency should grow and expand its offerings.

“The Postal Service can only find its way out of its current financial situation with more and better quality service,” Moran said. He suggested maintaining mandatory six-day delivery and keeping the current level post offices and mail processing facilities.

Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., who wrote the bill Moran lent his name to, pushed [his legislation](#) and said Trump’s proposal was dead on arrival.

“A plan to privatize the Postal Service would be laughable except for the fact that it will hit American consumers, especially those living in rural areas, the hardest,” Carper said. “Privatization efforts have been repeatedly and resoundingly rejected by Congress, industry and stakeholders alike because it is so obvious that it will not work.”

Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, D-N.D., another cosponsor on Carper’s bill, called Trump’s proposal a “careless solution” that runs counter to “the best interests of rural communities and small town businesses.”

“I’ve long said that there is no substitute for the Postal Service in rural America, so I’m deeply concerned that privatizing this critical agency would put timely and affordable mail delivery in North Dakota in jeopardy,” Heitkamp said. “Families and businesses depend on accessible and affordable mail service to obtain everything from daily newspapers to life-saving medications—and while the administration may think a privatized Postal Service would be a sustainable business model, it would also endanger a vital lifeline for North Dakota’s rural residents.”

Postal employee unions and coalitions representing large-scale mailers have similarly [denounced](#) the White House’s proposal.

The Postal Service itself, meanwhile, expressed a surprising openness to the plan. Postmaster General Megan Brennan said her primary concern was only that Congress allowed her agency to fix its “flawed business model.”

“Ultimately, it will be for Congress to decide whether the best path to financial sustainability is to preserve the Postal Service status as a government institution focused on our mission of public service, while giving us more authority to meet our responsibilities, or whether a profit-maximizing corporate model is preferable,” Brennan said.