

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Guy Molyneux, Hart Research Associates and Whit Ayres, North Star Opinion Research
DATE: July 20, 2020
RE: Voters Age 60+ and Federal Funding of USPS

Hart Research Associates and North Star Opinion Research have conducted a nationwide survey among 1,200 registered voters age 60 and over, including a substantial subsample of 336 military veterans age 60+, to measure support for federal financial support to USPS. The survey was conducted online from July 9 to 15, 2020, and has a margin of error of ± 3.1 percentage points. This memo reviews the survey's main findings.

Financial Support for USPS

Age 60+ voters overwhelmingly favor Congress appropriating funds for the Postal Service in the next round of financial relief legislation to maintain operations through the coronavirus crisis.¹ When voters learn that USPS is expected to run out of operating funds, fully 89% of all 60+ voters and 90% of 60+ veterans support congressional action. Agreement is bipartisan, including 83% of Republicans and 97% of Democrats. Support for funding also encompasses every region of the country, and both urban and rural communities (see table below).

These 60+ voters feel a strong sense of urgency about supporting the Postal Service. Fully 79% say it is essential (55%) or very important (24%) that Congress include funding in the next relief legislation, with 78% of veterans concurring. This sentiment for action crosses party lines, with 64% of 60+ Republicans joining 80% of independents and 94% of Democrats in calling for action soon.

Voters age 60 and over are of course a conservative-leaning constituency, relative to the entire electorate. They report voting for President Trump in 2016 by a 10-point margin (52%-42% overall, 57%-39% for vets), describe their views as more conservative (41%) than liberal (20%), and many continue to approve of the president's job performance (45%). Regardless of their political leanings, however, 60+ voters value the Postal Service and want Congress to provide financial support.

¹Question wording: "The Postal Service is funded entirely by the sale of postage. However, it expects to run out of funds to operate due to the coronavirus crisis. The CARE Act passed by Congress in March provided \$500 billion in taxpayer funding for airlines and other corporations, but did not include the Postal Service. Would you favor or oppose Congress appropriating funds in the next round of financial relief legislation for the U.S. Postal Service to maintain operations through the coronavirus crisis?"

Federal Support to USPS		
	<u>Total Favor</u>	<u>Total Oppose</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
All 60+ voters	89	11
60+ veterans	90	10
Northeast	86	14
South	88	12
Midwest	93	7
West	92	8
Urban	93	7
Suburban	89	11
Rural	89	11
Republicans	83	17
Independents	89	11
Democrats	97	3

A member of Congress who opposes federal support for USPS can expect a strongly negative response from his or her constituents. Fully 64% of 60+ voters—and 70% of 60+ veterans—report that they would be less likely to vote for their representative in that situation, while just 9% are more likely to provide support (8% of veterans). Such an incumbent is less likely to receive votes from Democrats (80% less likely, 5% more likely), independents (71%, 8%), and Republicans (47%, 14%). A “no” vote on this appropriation will also be a substantial political liability in the Northeast (67%), South (61%), Midwest (64%), and West (68%).

Importance of Postal Services

Underlying this call for congressional action is 60+ voters’ nearly unanimous view that the mail and package service provided by the U.S. Postal Service is important to them and their family today. Fully 96% say these services are important, including 74% who say *very* important. Just 4% feel that USPS’s mail and package services are not important. Veterans share this viewpoint, with a remarkable 99% rating postal services as important for themselves and their family (72% very important).

Voters age 60+ in every part of the country, in all types of communities, and of all political persuasions value postal services (see table). This includes 98% of urban voters and 97% of rural voters, no less than 95% in every region of the country, and 98% of Democrats and 94% of Republicans.

Importance of USPS Services		
	<u>Total Important</u>	<u>Very important</u>
	%	%
All 60+ voters	96	74
60+ veterans	99	72
Northeast	98	75
South	95	70
Midwest	97	78
West	95	76
Urban	98	78
Suburban	95	71
Rural	97	77
Republicans	94	67
Independents	98	74
Democrats	98	83

Benefits of Federal Support. Voters 60+ believe that financial support for USPS, and allowing it to continue operating through the coronavirus crisis, will provide many important benefits. In large numbers, they expect a positive impact on people’s ability to get needed medical supplies (87%), on the public’s ability to safely pay bills and conduct business (84%), and on the economic recovery (74%). This no doubt reflects the reality that large proportions value these same services provided by the Postal Service: prescription medication shipments (86% very important), monthly bills and payments (79%), and online purchases (71%).

Expected Positive Impact of Funding USPS		
	<u>All 60+ Voters</u>	<u>60+ Veterans</u>
	%	%
The ability of people to get prescriptions and medical equipment they need	87	86
The ability of people to safely pay bills and conduct financial business	84	84
The economic recovery	74	75
People’s ability to shop online and avoid visiting stores	73	72

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Indeed, postal services are considered so essential that a remarkable 82% of 60+ voters (and 79% of veterans) say that their local community will be hurt a great deal or a fair amount if Congress does not pass federal support for USPS. That figure includes 70% of Republicans, 82% in rural communities, and 72% of 2016 Trump voters.

60+ Voters and Veterans Reject Alternatives to Funding

Raise shipping rates instead? Support for federal funding remains strong even when 60+ voters consider an alternative policy response of requiring USPS to significantly increase rates for shipping packages. Just 19% want to address the funding problem through higher shipping rates, while 81% prefer federal funding. Even here we find a remarkable level of agreement across party lines, with 71% of Republican voters and 92% of Democratic voters rejecting higher shipping rates.

Voters Reject Alternative of Raising Shipping Rates

	<u>Federal funding</u> %	<u>Raise shipping rates</u> %
All 60+ voters	81	19
60+ Veterans	76	24
Northeast	82	18
South	79	21
Midwest	79	21
West	84	16
Urban	83	17
Suburban	79	21
Rural	82	18
Republicans	71	29
Independents	79	21
Democrats	92	8

Direct funding or loans? Finally, the survey presented 60+ voters with a debate over which of two responses to the Postal Service funding shortfall is better: loans or direct funding. Fully 74% reject the loan option, because it would weaken the postal system at a time when so many Americans are relying on it, and embrace direct federal funding instead:

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Congress should provide loans to the Postal Service but not direct funding. Taxpayers should not be asked to fix the Postal Service's financial problems, which started long before this crisis and are caused by charging package delivery rates that are too low. (26% agree) OR

Congress should provide direct funding to the Postal Service during the crisis, because increasing its already large debt will only weaken the Postal Service, and because we can't afford to lose our Postal Service when so many Americans rely on it for prescription medications, rural package delivery, and medical supplies. (74% agree)

Veterans prefer direct funding by 71% to 29%. Remarkably, even with loans offered as an alternative, Republicans agree (60% to 40%) that Congress should provide direct funding to the Postal Service rather than providing only loans. Democrats prefer federal funding by an even larger margin of 91% to 9%.