

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Guy Molyneux, Hart Research Associates and Whit Ayres, North Star Opinion Research
DATE: April 30, 2020
RE: Voters' Support for Federal Funding of USPS

Hart Research Associates and North Star Opinion Research have conducted a survey among 804 registered voters nationwide, to explore the importance voters place on postal services today and to measure support for Congress providing financial support to USPS. The survey was conducted online from April 10 to 12, 2020, and has a margin of error of ± 3.5 percentage points. This memo reviews the survey's main findings.

Importance of Postal Services

Nearly unanimously, Americans say that the mail and package service provided by the U.S. Postal Service is important to them and their family today. Fully 94% say these services are important, including 64% who say very important. Just 6% feel that USPS's mail and package services are not important.

Importance of USPS Services		
	<u>Total Important</u>	<u>Very important</u>
	%	%
All voters	94	64
Northeast	92	67
South	93	66
Midwest	95	65
West	93	55
Urban	91	64
Suburban	94	61
Rural	94	68
Republicans	92	62
Independents	91	56
Democrats	95	67

Americans in every part of the country, in all types of communities, and of all political persuasions value postal services (see table above). This includes 91% of urban voters and 94% of rural voters, no less than 92% in every region of the country, and 95% of Democrats and 92% of Republicans. Voters rely on USPS for a variety of highly-valued services, including delivery of prescription medications (93% important service), receiving and paying

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monthly bills (92%), and receiving items purchased online (91%). Significantly, they place the highest priority on the role the Postal Service is playing in responding to the coronavirus crisis: delivering official government recommendations, supplies, medications, and test kits related to COVID-19 (95% important, 75% very important).

How Americans Value Postal Services

	Total Important %	Very important %
Used to deliver official government recommendations, supplies, medications, and test kits related to COVID-19	95	75
Delivers 1.2 billion prescription medication shipments each year	93	76
Used by millions of Americans to receive and pay their monthly bills	92	64
Used by millions of people to receive items purchased online, such as from Amazon.com, Walmart, or eBay	91	58
Used by millions of people to send and receive birthday cards, holiday cards, invitations, and personal correspondence	78	40

Voters in rural communities place more importance than average on the delivery of prescription medications (82% very important), COVID-19 services (77%), and receiving and paying monthly bills (70%).

Seniors (voters age 65 and over) place more importance than average on the delivery of prescription medications (80%) and receiving and paying monthly bills (71%).

Financial Support for USPS

The survey reveals an overwhelming bipartisan consensus in favor of Congress appropriating funds for the Postal Service to maintain operations through the coronavirus crisis in the next round of financial relief legislation.¹ When voters learn that USPS is expected to run out of operating funds by September, fully 92% of all voters support congressional action, including 90% of Republicans and 96% of Democrats. Agreement is very widespread,

¹Question wording: "The Postal Service is funded entirely by the sale of postage. However, it expects to run out of funds to operate by the end of September 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 for the U.S. Postal Service to maintain operations through the coronavirus crisis in the next round of financial relief legislation?"

encompassing every region of the country and all generations of Americans (see table below).

Broad Support for Federal Appropriation to USPS		
	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
All voters	92	8
Northeast	95	5
South	92	8
Midwest	92	8
West	90	10
Urban	93	7
Suburban	93	7
Rural	90	10
Republicans	90	10
Independents	83	17
Democrats	96	4
18 to 34	93	7
35 to 49	94	6
50 to 64	89	11
65+	93	7
Whites	92	8
African Americans	92	8
Hispanics	91	9

Federal funding or raise shipping rates? Bipartisan support for federal funding remains strong even when voters consider an alternative policy response of requiring USPS to significantly increase rates for shipping packages. Just 22% of voters want to address the funding problem through higher shipping rates, while 78% prefer federal funding. Here again we find a remarkable level of agreement across party lines, with 74% of Republican voters and 83% of Democratic voters rejecting higher shipping rates.

Voters Reject Alternative of Raising Shipping Rates		
	Federal funding	Raise shipping rates
	%	%
All voters	78	22
Northeast	82	18
South	75	25
Midwest	82	18
West	75	25
Urban	73	27
Suburban	80	20
Rural	81	19
Republicans	74	26
Independents	74	26
Democrats	83	17
18 to 34	68	32
35 to 49	78	22
50 to 64	85	15
65+	81	19

Direct funding favored over loans. Finally, the survey presented voters with a debate over which of two responses to the Postal Service funding shortfall is better: loans or direct funding. Fully 70% of Americans 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 as the best solution:

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. (30% 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. (70% agree)

Even with loans offered as an alternative, Republican voters agree (61% to 39%) that Congress should provide direct funding to the Postal Service rather than providing only loans. Democrats prefer federal funding by an even more lopsided margin of 79% to 21%. Other groups that strongly prefer direct federal funding include rural voters (77% to 23%), middle-income voters making between \$50,000 and \$100,000 (73% to 27%), and white non-college voters (72% to 28%).