**Headline:** Why the Right Really Hates the Postal Service

**Teaser:** It’s not about USPS’s efficiency or viability. It’s about equity and collective good, values that are anathema to predatory capitalism.

By Sonali Kolhatkar

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**[Article Body:]**

President Donald Trump has tapped a former board member of the private mail delivery corporation FedEx to be the next United States Postmaster General. [David Steiner’s appointment](https://www.npr.org/2025/05/09/nx-s1-5384252/usps-david-steiner-who-is-the-postmaster-general) as head of the public service agency is a signal that Trump is going to take another stab at something he tried and failed to do during his first term: privatize the postal service.

In February 2025, when Trump said the USPS is a “[tremendous loser for this country](https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/fedex-board-member-tapped-lead-us-postal-service-2025-05-09/)” and that he’s considering merging it with the Department of Commerce, he wasn’t echoing a random claim that came up in conversation with his golf caddy. During his [first term](https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/21/business/trump-postal-service-privatization/index.html), Trump appointed a task force to study the postal service, which concluded the current system was “unsustainable,” and recommended privatization in line with the president’s desire.

Right-wing forces have long had their sights on the postal service—as they have on public education, libraries, Social Security, Medicare, and just about any publicly funded service—and have carried out an effective propaganda campaign against USPS’s financial viability to justify gutting it.

For example, the Heritage Foundation—the morally bankrupt trafficker of market fundamentalism and peddler of the Project 2025 blueprint for democratic destruction—has claimed for years that the nation no longer needs a postal service. In 2024, it asked if Americans still [needed their post office](https://www.heritage.org/budget-and-spending/commentary/do-we-still-need-the-post-office). In 2013, it wondered if the postal service had a [future](https://www.heritage.org/government-regulation/report/can-the-postal-service-have-future), and in 2010, it contended that postal workers were [paid too much](https://www.heritage.org/jobs-and-labor/report/inflated-federal-pay-how-americans-are-overtaxed-overpay-the-civil-service).

If the Postal Service is truly financially unsustainable, that has been, in part, by design. The federal government expects it to balance its books like any corporation, but, for years, [mandated](https://stories.uspsoig.gov/postal-retirement-funds-in-perspective-historical-evolution-and-ongoing-challenges/index.html) it pre-fund its workers’ retirements 75 years into the future—a ludicrous requirement that critics called a “[manufactured](https://ips-dc.org/how-congress-manufactured-a-postal-crisis-and-how-to-fix-it/)” crisis. The mandate was finally overturned in 2022. And, when most institutions, including private package delivery companies struggled during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trump White House [refused to bail out](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/04/11/post-office-bailout-trump/) USPS as it did its commercial counterparts.

But there’s one more aspect to USPS that makes it a prime right-wing target: it is the [largest unionized](https://www.labornotes.org/blogs/2025/02/viewpoint-targeted-postal-workers-are-bellwether-all-us-unions) federal workforce in the nation, employing 600,000 people, more than 90 percent of whom are members of various unions. Under the oversight of his billionaire buddy Elon Musk, Trump has fired [tens of thousands of government workers](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html), as part of his overt plan to run the government “[like a business](https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-says-government-change-service-regulations-career-government-employees-2025-04-18/).” Musk and Trump are presumably salivating at the prospect of dismissing unionized postal workers. It’s no wonder Don Maston, the president of the National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association, warned in late April 2025, “[the hounds are at the door](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/apr/24/usps-workers-sound-alarm-over-trump-efforts-to-dismantle-service-the-hounds-are-at-the-door).”

The [American Postal Workers Union](https://apwu.org/about-apwu) (APWU), which represents about 200,000 postal workers, has also issued a serious warning about Trump’s intentions. It recently [debunked](https://apwu.org/news/us-mail-not-sale/lets-get-truth-myths-and-facts-about-postal-privatization) several conservative claims about the agency’s financial viability and explained that “[t]his administration intends to break up and sell off the profitable portions of the Postal Service to billionaires and USPS competitors.”

It’s precisely because most postal workers are unionized that they enjoy decent wages and benefits—as all Americans deserve, and as most non-union blue-collar employees of private companies don’t get. Postal workers, who are currently in the [midst of negotiating](https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2025/02/11/usps-workers-union-contract/78050381007/) union contracts, have historically fought hard for their rights. The [Great Postal Strike of 1970](https://aflcio.org/about-us/history/labor-history-events/great-postal-strike) paved the way for the [Postal Reorganization Act](https://apwu.org/news/%E2%80%98collective-begging%E2%80%99-collective-bargaining), which President Richard Nixon signed into law later that year. That bill allowed postal workers the right to union representation and to get raises, and cleaved off the postal service as an independent agency.

It’s true that the modern-day transition to electronic bill payments and digitized news media is rendering a large percentage of USPS’s delivery services obsolete. But there are crucial things that can’t be delivered electronically or are extremely difficult to pick up in person, namely, [prescription medications](https://www.ancor.org/capitol-correspondence/senate-report-finds-mail-delays-particularly-affect-people-disabilities-aging/) and [vote-by-mail ballots](https://www.npr.org/2020/08/16/902977021/the-history-of-political-interference-in-the-usps) for elderly and disabled Americans. FedEx—one of USPS’s prime private competitors—is [more expensive](https://www.easyship.com/blog/fedex-vs-usps-for-ecommerce) than USPS for letter-sized and small packages, which is why your neighborhood postal worker is more likely to deliver meds and ballots to your grandparents on time.

Trump, Musk, the Heritage Foundation, and their ilk routinely claim private corporations are more cost-efficient and deliver greater value than publicly funded services. Precisely the opposite is true. Not only is FedEx operating with a [net debt of more than $14 billion](https://simplywall.st/stocks/us/transportation/nyse-fdx/fedex/news/is-fedex-nysefdx-using-too-much-debt-4), it doesn’t deem [delivery to remote rural areas](https://www.ttnews.com/articles/fedex-reduces-us-sunday-deliveries-some-rural-areas) profitable enough, [relying instead on USPS](https://www.aberdeennews.com/story/news/local/farm-forum/2020/08/20/he-delivers-where-amazon-and-fedex-wont-usps-worker-covers-the-last-mile-to-rural-america/115802592/) to pick up the slack. It takes hubris to claim up is down and black is white, but hubris is what purveyors of predatory capitalism have in spades.

Much of Congress realizes the postal service’s worth. The only reason Trump was unable to succeed in his plan to privatize USPS during his first term was [bipartisan congressional opposition](https://www.govexec.com/management/2018/09/dozens-senators-both-parties-push-measure-block-trumps-usps-privatization-plan/151396/). This time around, the same dynamic is shaping up, with U.S. [House Representatives](https://apwu.org/news/house-resolution-70-protecting-people%E2%80%99s-post-office) introducing legislation to protect the postal service in January 2025, and [senators](https://apwu.org/news/senate-introduces-resolution-oppose-usps-privatization) taking a similar step in late March.

In recent years, proponents of the USPS have been pushing to expand the agency’s purview by incorporating public banking as one of its services. The [Save the Post Office coalition](https://www.savethepostoffice.com/), formed in the wake of Trump appointing [Louis DeJoy](https://www.politico.com/news/2020/05/06/trump-donor-postmaster-general-241381) as the postmaster general, laid out [in great detail](https://takeonwallst.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Banking-Fair-The-promise-and-urgency-of-doing-postal-banking-right-FINAL.pdf) how millions of “unbanked” Americans would benefit from a public banking service that the USPS is well-poised to offer.

The right wants to gut the Postal Service precisely *because* it operates on a model of government serving the collective good, charging the same rate to all Americans, and giving them the same service regardless of location, even though it costs more to deliver mail to isolated rural communities than well-connected urban ones. This is a form of *equity*—ensuring that those who have the least are subsidized by the rest of us—and we all know how much conservatives hate that word.

It’s also the same concept that publicly funded health care is based on: everyone pays the same amount and each person draws according to their need, with younger, healthier Americans subsidizing the care of older, sicker people, and no corporate executives sucking out profits like leeches on skin.

The reason we still don’t have such a health system is essentially because the leeches don’t want to give up their unearned booty. Instead, they [craft laughable propaganda](https://www.heritage.org/political-process/report/moral-case-against-big-government-how-government-shapes-the-character) about public services shaping the character of Americans to become soft, as though reliance on one another was a moral failing.