



GARY R. BARKSDALE

CHIEF POSTAL INSPECTOR

UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

December 2, 2022

The Honorable Randy K. Weber
U.S. House of Representatives
107 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Weber,

This is in response to your November 3 and 11 letters, the latter of which was cosigned by Senator Ted Cruz, regarding reports of mail theft in your district.

I appreciate your interest in this matter and I assure you the U.S. Postal Inspection Service is committed to protecting the integrity of the U.S. Mail. I understand several of your constituents recently sought your assistance in addressing matters relating to mail security. Please know I am aware of the situation. Postal Inspectors are actively investigating these complaints, including reports of theft from a blue collection box in front of the Galveston Post Office. Postal Inspectors are collaborating with the Galveston Police Department and other local authorities to identify persons responsible for the thefts. Additionally, Postal Inspectors met with the Galveston Police Department to raise awareness about the theft of Postal Service equipment.

In southeast Texas, Postal Inspectors have seen an increase in mail theft activity over the past few years, comparable to what has been reported in other metropolitan areas across the country. In Galveston, 238 mail theft complaints were reported to the Postal Inspection Service over the course of our Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022. Of those, 48 were in connection with stolen and washed checks.

Postal Inspectors are engaged on multiple fronts with various partners to combat these crimes and prosecute mail thieves. Among those efforts, we work closely with local, county, state, and federal law enforcement, including the Department of Justice, to address mail theft and mail theft related crimes such as letter carrier robberies and assaults. We also utilize the latest technology and techniques to target cyber-enabled financial crimes, including those associated with mail theft.

Nationally, during Fiscal Year 2021, the Postal Inspection Service initiated 1,079 mail theft cases which resulted in 1,511 arrests and 1,263 convictions. (Please note that convictions often lag arrests due to several factors, including the time it takes to bring a case to trial.)

Postal Inspectors across the country are also working hand-in-hand with Postal Service managers to improve the security of mail deposited into blue collection boxes, including those in southeast Texas. In addition, we are prioritizing any mail theft investigation that involves a stolen and fraudulently cashed check.

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service is dedicated to educating the American public on steps they can take to better protect their mail. We promote mail security tips on our social media platforms, our website (www.uspis.gov), and through community outreach including through traditional media outlets. In the last two Fiscal Years, Postal Inspectors in our Houston Division, which is responsible for southeast Texas, have conducted more than 50 presentations to postal customers and local law enforcement related to mail theft/check washing prevention. We actively encourage the public to:

- Use the letter slots inside the Post Office, or hand outgoing mail to a letter carrier. Before depositing mail in a blue collection box, postal customers should check the times noted near the letter slot and only deposit mail *before* the last collection time, so mail does not sit in the box overnight.
- Pick up mail delivered to their mailbox as soon as possible after delivery.
- Tell the Post Office before traveling out of town, and request that mail be held until their return.
- Ask a trusted friend or neighbor to pick up mail delivered to their residential or business mailbox if they know they can't promptly retrieve it. This is especially important whenever checks, credit cards, or other negotiable items are expected.
- Sign-up for Informed Delivery at USPS.com. This service provides daily email notifications of incoming mail and packages addressed to a customer's residence or business.

We appreciate anything your office can do to assist us in communicating our mail security tips to the mailing public. Most importantly, if any of your constituents believe their mail is missing or has been tampered with, we ask that you encourage them to report it to the Postal Inspection Service as soon as possible by submitting an online complaint at www.uspis.gov/report or calling 877-876-2455. Each mail theft complaint received by the Postal Inspection Service is reviewed. Complaints are used to identify crime patterns and trends so resources can be directed to the areas most affected by mail theft.

Thank you for your letter. If I may be of further assistance with this or other matters under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Gary R. Barksdale
Chief Postal Inspector