



**TO: Interested Parties**  
**FROM: Whit Ayres and Jon McHenry**  
**DATE: April 30, 2020**  
**RE: Republicans, Rural Voters, and Seniors Support Financial Assistance for the Postal Service During the Pandemic**

---

Our firm partnered with Hart Research Associates to conduct a national survey online of 804 registered voters focused on voter perceptions of the importance of the Postal Service and how to deal with an operating fund shortfall caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The survey shows that virtually all voters say the mail and package service is important and favor Congress appropriating funds to maintain those operations in the next round of financial relief legislation. Even when presented a counterargument stating that the Postal Service's financial problems predate the pandemic and are "caused by charging package delivery rates that are too low," two-thirds of voters support "direct funding to the Postal Service during the crisis".

Key findings of the survey, conducted April 10-12, 2020 with a margin of error of  $\pm 3.5\%$ , are:

**1. More than 90 percent of voters say the mail and package service provided by the U.S. Postal Service is important.** Overall, 94 percent of voters say the service is important, including 64 percent who say it is very important, while just 6 percent say it is not important. Rural voters are the most likely to say the service is very important to them (68 percent, compared to 64 percent among urban voters and 61 percent among suburban voters). Republicans (92 percent important, including 62 percent very important) join Democrats (95 percent important) and independents (91 percent important) in placing a high priority on the service.

**2. Delivery of materials related to the pandemic and prescription drugs are particularly important services provided by the Postal Service.** When asked about specific services, over 90 percent of voters say several of the tested services are particularly important: "used to deliver official government recommendations, supplies, medications, and test kits related to COVID-19" (95 percent, including 75 percent very important), "delivers 1.2 billion prescription medication shipments each year" (93 percent, including 76 percent very important), "used by millions of Americans to receive and pay their monthly bills" (92 percent, including 64 percent very important), "used by millions of people to receive items purchased online, such as from Amazon.com, Walmart, or eBay" (91 percent, including 58 percent very important)

Rural voters are more likely to say each of those services is very important to them, led by prescription drug delivery (82 percent very important). Non-college whites (80 percent very important) and retirees (83 percent very important) find this the most important service as well.

**3. Not surprisingly given the importance attached to specific services, voters across the board favor providing funds for the Postal Service to maintain operations through the crisis.** Voters were asked the following:

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?

Overall 92 percent of voters favor this temporary funding, including 90 percent of Republicans, 83 percent of independents, 90 percent of rural voters, 92 percent of non-college whites, and 94 percent of retirees.

**4. Voters think it is better to provide federal funding to the Postal Service than to increase rates to make up the loss of revenue.** Voters prefer “provid[ing] federal funding to support the Postal Service during the crisis” over “requir[ing] the Postal Service to significantly increase rates charged for shipping packages” by a 78 to 22 percent margin overall. That figure includes a 74 to 26 percent margin among Republicans and an 81 to 19 percent margin among rural voters.

**5. Despite including an argument against funding, voters continue to support direct funding for the Postal Service by a wide, bipartisan margin.** Finally, we tested this argument against direct funding of the Postal Service:

*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.*

While that argument may be compelling in the context of long-term reform, voters support a pro-funding argument focused on medical and rural package deliveries by a 70 to 30 percent margin:

*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.*

A business-oriented argument also defeats the anti-funding argument, by a slightly smaller margin of 65 to 35 percent:

*Congress should provide direct funding to the Postal Service during the crisis, just as it provided support to many large companies and small businesses. Without the shipping services provided by a strong, functioning Postal Service, many of those businesses would be endangered.*

Rural voters support both pro-direct funding arguments, with a 77 to 23 percent margin when rural delivery is emphasized and a 70 to 30 percent margin when other businesses are emphasized. Republicans choose the direct funding arguments over the loan arguments by double-digits as well (61 to 39 percent and 58 to 42 percent, respectively).

As Republicans consider legislation to support the Postal Service, it is undoubtedly key to emphasize the temporary nature of the support and that it should cover the loss of revenue during the crisis, as opposed to being an open-ended grant. With those caveats in mind, the politics of the base align well with the overall view of the electorate that Congress should provide direct funding to the Postal Service at this time to address the shortfall of revenue created by the coronavirus pandemic.