**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** May 21, 2024

**CONTACT:**  [Elisabeth St. Onge](mailto:Elisabeth_St.Onge@welch.senate.gov), 202-841-4917

**Welch, Rounds Lead Bipartisan *Deliver for Democracy Act* to Help Local News Overcome Persistent Postal Delays, Surging Rate Increases**

**WASHINGTON, D.C**. — U.S. Senators Peter Welch (D-Vermont) and Mike Rounds (R-South Dakota) today led Senators Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont), Kevin Cramer (R-North Dakota), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minnesota), John Hoeven (R-North Dakota), Ron Wyden (D-Oregon), Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon), and Tina Smith (D-Minnesota) in introducing the bipartisan *Deliver for Democracy Act*, legislation that would help news outlets overcome the current crisis of local journalism by incentivizing reliable postal service and limiting excessive rate increases. In recent years, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) has consistently raised rates for Periodicals under the guise of increased efficiency and improved service. However, local news has yet to receive those benefits and instead continues to face persistent postal delays.

“A vibrant and healthy local press has always been a defining feature of American democracy. Today, local news offers a crucial alternative to online information ecosystems, which are too often distorted by algorithms that amplify disinformation and confine readers to inescapable echo chambers. But surging rate increases and poor service jeopardize local news outlets’ ability to reach readers and supply the information so essential to an engaged citizenry and a vibrant democracy. It’s time for USPS to remember its mission and meet the media’s basic needs,”said Senator Welch. “The *Deliver for Democracy Act*would help local news stave off extinction by requiring USPS to meet reasonable on-time delivery standards before raising rates.”

“Local newspapers work hard every day to deliver news on a timely basis, and the U.S. Postal Service should too,” said Senator Rounds. “Periodical rates have cumulatively increased by over 40% since August 2021. Meanwhile, the Postal Service’s on-time delivery performances have not improved, leaving local journalists to pick up the slack by handling mail delivery on their own in order to make certain their readers receive their papers on time. Our common sense bipartisan legislation helps protect rural newspapers and consumers from unjustified price hikes by making certain USPS is held to a standard for on-time deliveries.”

“If we want a functioning democracy with accountability, then we need local journalists covering everything from city council meetings to new business openings. Local newspapers who already face pressure from online platforms shouldn’t have to also worry about delayed delivery service,” said Senator Klobuchar. “This legislation will assist local papers by requiring the Postal Service to maintain reasonable delivery standards before raising their fees.”

 “In North Dakota, a dependable postal service isn't a luxury — it's a lifeline for our rural communities, and that's exactly why I support the *Deliver for Democracy Act*. Publications around North Dakota rely on the USPS for delivery, and a troubling pattern has emerged where rates have increased, coupled with a noticeable decrease in reliability,” said Senator Cramer. “If the Postal Service wants to increase rates, it should be held responsible and actually deliver Periodicals within a reasonable timeline. By tying rate increases to their ability to deliver on time, we safeguard our local news — the heartbeat of our rural communities. Efficiency and reliability must be the cornerstones of USPS delivery.”

“You can’t know what is going on in your backyard if you don’t have the information on hand. Local journalism is the lifeblood that helps protect American democracy, combat misinformation, and empower communities small or large,” said Senator Wyden. “The *Deliver for Democracy Act* ensures that USPS makes deliveries on time so local journalism doesn’t become history. As the son of a journalist and as an elected official who holds townhalls each year in each of Oregon’s 36 counties, I won’t stop fighting to help local journalism deliver news coverage right to your doorstep.”

“Local journalism is vital to keeping our communities informed of what’s going on in Minnesota and across the country,” said Senator Smith. “And it’s important to remember that a lot of people still get newspapers and other Periodicals in the mail. My mom grew up in a tiny town in the northern part of the Indiana, but throughout her life, no matter where she lived, from Ohio to Alaska, California and New Mexico, she always made sure she got that local paper in the mail. These weren’t just headlines; they were the stories of her friends, their children and grandchildren, and the issues that connected them all. This bill would help make sure the Postal Service makes on-time deliveries and institutes fair rates, an important step in helping protect local news outlets.”

“Our founders saw journalism as so critical to a functioning democracy that they included the right to a free press in our First Amendment,” said Senator Merkley. “Local papers are the backbones of our communities—they shine a light on the issues, large and small, that affect the daily lives of folks in Oregon and across the country. We need to do all we can to protect local journalism. The *Deliver for Democracy Act* is a critical piece of the puzzle of keeping local journalism alive — addressing the persistent local delivery delays that plague community news outlets and insisting on adequate service from USPS before any rate increases.”

In January 2021, the U.S. Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) adopted regulations that established three additional forms of rate authority, including one for non-compensatory classes of mail such as Periodicals and package services. Under the new regulations, USPS is provided an additional two percentage points of rate authority for any class or product of mail where costs exceed revenue. Since then, USPS has maximally exercised this authority and, if a recent notice goes into effect, will have raised Periodical postage rates by over 40%.

Despite such significant rate increases, however, the Postal Service has routinely failed to meet Periodicals’ basic needs and achieve the 95% on-time delivery performance standard outlined in Postmaster General DeJoy’s 10-year plan. As a result, local news outlets, which must already navigate other existential challenges, are simultaneously subject to high distribution costs and poor service.

The *Deliver for Democracy Act* would:

1. Require the USPS to either achieve at least a 95% on-time delivery rate for Periodicals or an improvement of at least 2 percentage points to unlock its 2% surcharge authority for that class of mail;
2. Direct the USPS to annually report to the Postal Regulatory Commission on its progress in including on-time delivery data for newspapers in its Periodical service performance measurement; and
3. Instruct the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study and submit a report to Congress on options for alternate USPS pricing schemes to improve the financial position of Periodicals.

The *Deliver for Democracy Act* is endorsed by the National Newspaper Association and News/Media Alliance.

“Our members are being forced to cope with unsustainable rates from the monopoly postal system. If something doesn’t change soon, they will be put out of business and residents will see more news deserts and an even greater loss of quality news and information. We thank Senator Welch and Senator Rounds for their leadership and support the *Deliver for Democracy Act*,” said News/Media Alliance President & CEO Danielle Coffey.

“NNA applauds the introduction of the ‘*Deliver for Democracy Act*.’ This bill highlights the responsibility of the USPS to accurately measure the service newspapers receive and will hold it accountable for failing to meet its service standards. For publishers who are struggling to keep their papers in circulation due to excessive rate increases, this bill is an important first step towards making the USPS a viable distribution partner again,” said John Galer, Chair, National Newspaper Association.

In April, [Sen. Welch partnered](https://www.welch.senate.gov/welch-partners-with-bipartisan-bicameral-colleagues-in-opposing-usps-consolidations-operational-changes-across-the-country/) with a bipartisan, bicameral group of colleagues in urging Postmaster General Louis DeJoy to reconsider the USPS’s plan to consolidate the national postal network, which threatened to severely diminish mail service across the country.

Senator Welch has pushed for postal reform to better serve rural communities and has [**c**alled for improvements](https://www.welch.senate.gov/icymi-senator-peter-welch-calls-for-improvements-to-usps-management-better-mail-service-for-rural-communities/) to USPS’ national management. He also led his colleagues in [urging](https://www.welch.senate.gov/welch-leads-colleagues-in-urging-president-biden-to-nominate-individuals-to-the-united-states-postal-service-board-of-governors-who-will-meet-the-needs-of-rural-customers/) President Biden to nominate individuals to the USPS Board of Governors who will hold Postmaster General DeJoy accountable for his failure to provide adequate mail services in rural communities. In March, Welch took to the Senate Floor to [call out](https://www.welch.senate.gov/senator-welch-calls-out-postmaster-general-dejoy-usps-failure-to-deliver-for-vermonts-residents-and-postal-workers/) DeJoy’s failure to deliver for rural America, pointing to the postal delays plaguing Vermont and other rural areas because of DeJoy’s policies, and the nearly nine month-long fight to re-open a fully-functioning Post Office in Vermont’s capital city after flooding.  Following Senator Welch’s advocacy, the Postal Service [announced](https://www.welch.senate.gov/news-vermont-congressional-delegation-statement-on-the-u-s-postal-service-signing-a-new-lease-to-restore-montpelier-post-office/) it would finally be re-opening a retail post office in Montpelier.

[Learn more](https://www.welch.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Deliver-for-Democracy-Act-One-Pager.pdf) about the *Deliver for Democracy Act*.

Read the [full text](https://www.welch.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Deliver-for-Democracy-Act-Bill-Text-5.2024.pdf) of the bill.

View a [digital version](https://www.welch.senate.gov/welch-rounds-lead-bipartisan-deliver-for-democracy-act-to-help-local-news-overcome-persistent-postal-delays-surging-rate-increases/) of this release.