

USPS turns 246, unions rally, vow to keep it going for years to come

Union and community members celebrated the 246th birthday of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) at a rally July 26 outside the East Portland Post Office on Southeast 7th Ave. Joining in the festivities was the first postmaster general, Ben Franklin, and Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum. Messages of support for the postal service were sent by Oregon's Democratic congressional delegation, and from Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler.

But as they celebrated with cake, balloons, and songs, partygoers also worried about the future of the USPS.

Leaders of the Republican Party have made no secret that they would like to see the Post Office privatized. USPS' current postmaster general, Louis DeJoy, is a corporate CEO and megadonor to the GOP. He is currently under investigation by the FBI for shady political campaign fundraising activity involving his former business.

In a letter to President Joe Biden earlier this year, Oregon U.S. Reps. Earl Blumenauer, Suzanne Bonamici, and Peter DeFazio wrote: "Postmaster General Louis DeJoy has demonstrated time and time again that he does not care about this critical service on which Americans rely. It is clear he is a danger to the future and integrity of the USPS. We again urge you to work with Congress and remove him from office."

The National Presidents' Conference, comprised of local and state presidents of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), passed a resolution in June calling for the immediate removal of



The first postmaster general, Ben Franklin (played by Letter Carriers Branch 82 retiree Dave Medford), enjoys a bite of birthday cake at the East Portland Post Office July 26 where union and community members celebrated the 246th birthday of the U.S. Postal Service.

DeJoy, citing "abdication of his oath of office, for pressing forward an agenda and 10-year business plan that will further degrade and delay service and in time destroy the U.S. Postal Service as we know it."

In May, DeJoy unveiled his 10-year plan for USPS that features slower first-class deliveries, reduced post office hours, and higher postage prices.

The Postal Regulatory Commission responded in July with a 232 page report warning DeJoy that his plan was unrealistic and did not meet the needs of the American public. The vice chair of the commission urged the USPS to pause the plan.

At the Portland rally, Ben Franklin (played by retired Branch 82 letter carrier Dave

Medford) said he was pleased to be back among "revolutionaries" and "postal protectors" to commemorate the founding of the USPS.

"We American revolutionaries and the Continental Congress established the postal service as a revolutionary network of post riders and post roads. I (Franklin) ordered surveys and created post routes from Maine to Florida. I

even established overnight delivery between New York and Philadelphia, a hot-bed of revolutionary organizing."

He reminded partygoers that it was Paul Revere, a post rider, who rode from Boston Harbor out on his post route to spread the alarm and warn that the British were coming.

"Today, we need another Benjamin Franklin, or Paul Re-

vere. We need a new revolutionary postmaster general who will fight for the postal service and against the tyranny of the privatizers and against the business model of cuts, closures, mail delays, and higher prices," he said.

Attorney General Rosenblum said she will do all she can to help protect the USPS.

Oregon is among 21 state attorneys general to submit a warning to the USPS opposing DeJoy's 10-year plan.

"This plan is just unacceptable. The proposed changes to first-class mail service standards would particularly harm rural residents in Oregon, and low income communities," she said. "This is also the opposite of what Congress has directed, in that the United States Postal Service is required by statute to give top priority to important letter mail."

Last year, Rosenblum joined other attorneys general to successfully sue to block DeJoy's plan that could have created delays around the 2020 election.

"The judge saw that plan to undermine the U.S. Postal Service for exactly what it was—a political move to hamper an essential service that millions were relying on to vote, to pay their bills, and even to receive life-saving medication," she said.



Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum was the keynote speaker at the Postal Heritage Day celebration July 26 in Southeast Portland. The event marked the 246th birthday of the U.S. Postal Service.



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