

CORRECTION: An early version of this story misspelled the name Bartlett. It has been updated with the correct spelling.

In recent weeks, President Donald Trump and Elon Musk have [floated the idea](#) of privatizing U.S. mail services.

But letter carriers say that would be detrimental to rural areas like northern Michigan.

Talk of privatization came up after the head of the U.S. Postal Service, Louis DeJoy, [resigned last month](#) after nearly five years in the position.

Trump said he's considering putting USPS under the control of the Commerce Department, which he says will help fix declining profits at USPS. The agency has been independent and mostly self-funded since 1970.

The idea has caused mass protests by postal workers and letter carriers across the country last month. A national "day of action" took place in more than 150 cities on March 20.

In a statement after the demonstrations, Mark Dimondstein, president of the American Postal Workers Union said, "If this administration succeeds in taking over the USPS, it will lead to higher prices and reduced service, especially in rural areas."

Doug Bartlett is the president of the Michigan Rural Letter Carriers Association. He was on Capitol Hill last week to meet with lawmakers. He says many of those he spoke to were against privatization.

Bartlett's main concern is that people who live in backcountry areas, like the ones in northern Michigan will be left out.

"If a private company comes in and takes over the post office, they're going to cherry pick where they can make money, and that's going to be our urban areas, short distances to get out and deliver stuff. And it's going to be our rural areas that'll be poor."

Doug Bartlett

Michigan Rural Letter Carriers Association

Trump's claims about the postal service losing money are true. The agency has lost more than \$80 billion over the last decade which experts attribute to the decline in profitable first-class mail.

However, profit loss has slowed in recent years as the agency expanded services under DeJoy's "[modernization plan](#)" which includes post offices providing things like basic banking, electric vehicle charging and U.S. Census work.

Bartlett said the postal service is the agency most responsible for delivering important documents and items to residents in rural areas — things like medicine, paychecks and election ballots.

"Rural delivery out in the real rural areas could be cut back to maybe as much as one or two days a week," he said. "That would be devastating for people that need those items."

For retired Petoskey mail carrier Cathy Long, it's about more than just potential cuts to rural communities.

She says postal service officials often form friendly relationships with people on their route and can provide important check-ins for people in need.

"Many years ago, we were having some blizzard type weather and the roads are really bad. I had a customer who was legally blind but would always go out of his way to clear his driveway for me," Long said. "I remember going out of my route to check up on him because I knew he'd be out in the cold clearing his driveway for me. The people were always the best part of the job."

Much of the agency's future will depend on the next postmaster general. The U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors, an independent group that oversees the Postal Service, is currently searching for DeJoy's replacement.

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