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USPS's Changing Board of Governors: DeJoy's Job is Safe and Four More Things to Know

By Paul Steidler

The U.S. Postal Service's Board of Governors will hold an unusual public meeting this afternoon at 4:00 p.m. where the [key agenda item](#) is "Board Leadership." This follows President Biden's November 19 nomination of two new members to the Board who would replace Governors appointed by President Trump.

What is not likely to happen today, or anytime in 2022, is the Board's removal of Louis DeJoy as Postmaster General. This is due to the composition of the Board, even assuming the Biden nominees sail through – which they probably will.

Entering 2022, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) is again at the center of several hot-button, high-profile political issues. These include whether to compel its workforce to become vaccinated; what percent of its new vehicles should be electric; and ongoing concerns about the USPS 10-year plan, a core component of which is slower delivery of 40 percent of first-class mail. There is also the mid-term 2022 election where mail-in voting will again be pivotal.

As such, 2022 will be a busy and high-profile year for the USPS Board of Governors. Below are the top five things that policy makers need to know.

DeJoy's Job is Secure in 2022

A host of progressive activists, including Senators Sanders, Warren, and Baldwin and dozens of members of Congress have called for the firing of Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, a one-time major fundraiser and megadonor for Donald Trump and the Republican Party. With the likely confirmation of Biden's two pending appointments, five members of the Board of Governors that select the Postmaster General will have been appointed by President Biden and four by President Trump.

So why won't DeJoy be gone?

When fully constituted, there are nine members of the Board of Governors who vote on the hiring decision. There are currently eight such governors and one vacancy. One of

those current governors, appointed by President Trump, would be replaced by a Biden nominee upon Senate confirmation.

Two of the current eight Governors voted against naming Ron Bloom, a DeJoy supporter, as chairman of the Board of Governors at a [November 10](#) meeting. That, however, is far different than the more drastic action of firing a Postmaster General.

The Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) also says that “an absolute majority of the Governors in office shall be required” to remove a Postmaster General. As such, abstaining is equivalent to voting to keep the Postmaster General in office. The practical effect is that five Governors will need to vote to remove DeJoy.

[Governor Amber McReynolds](#), who was nominated by President Biden and joined the Board in May, was not at the November 10 meeting and did not vote on the Bloom matter.

Earlier, on August 19, 2021, she was asked directly [on MSNBC](#) whether DeJoy should be fired and declined to say he should be, thus incurring much social media anger from progressives. Governor McReynolds is a nationwide leader in promoting election mail, which USPS has handled well under DeJoy. She is not going to want to jeopardize this in any way and will be very thoughtful and deliberate in her decision making.

Governor [Anton Hajjar](#), another Biden appointee, may also have trepidation with firing DeJoy. Hajjar previously served as general counsel of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU). Last month, the APWU reached a three-year collective bargaining agreement with USPS that union leadership [strongly lauded](#) and which is generally seen as a good deal for the union’s members.

Furthermore, President Biden’s two nominees on November 19 – Dan Tangherlini and Derek Kan – are by no means shoe-ins to vote to remove DeJoy. In fact, Kan served at several positions in the Trump Administration and has also worked for Senator Mitch McConnell.

Biden’s Picks Will Likely Get Confirmed

Both Tangherlini and Kan appear to be solid, well-qualified nominees who will be confirmed by the U.S. Senate with broad support. Both have been confirmed by the U.S. Senate for prior positions.

The Senate, however, is likely to move judiciously on the nominations, conducting extensive background checks and holding a hearing before the [Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee](#). Even proceeding rapidly by Senate standards, it is not likely the nominees will officially become Governors before mid-March, at the earliest.

From a practical and legal standpoint, Biden's nomination of Kan is understandable. Last Spring, the Senate confirmed three of Biden's nominees, none of them Republicans. The 50-50 Senate is simply not likely to go forward with two non-Republican nominees.

Importantly, PAEA is also designed to prevent the [Board of Governors](#) from becoming partisan. Under PAEA, not more than five of the nine Governors may belong to the same political party.

Dan Tangherlini – Appealing Governor, Especially for Progressives

[Dan Tangherlini's](#) impressive background includes taking the helm as Administrator of the [U.S. General Services Administration](#) after the organization was wracked by a high-profile scandal during the Obama Administration involving expensive travel and a related convention. He stabilized the organization while helping it to implement new technology, winning bipartisan respect. Tangherlini, also served as Chief Financial Officer with the Treasury and at several senior positions with the District of Columbia government.

Tangherlini now serves as Managing Director at the Emerson Collective, a philanthropic organization led by Lauren Powell Jobs, the widow of Steve Jobs. Emerson strongly advocates for policies to prevent climate change and other progressive causes.

More information about Tangherlini follows.

- MBA from Wharton, University of Pennsylvania; BA and MPP, University of Chicago
- Co-Chair [Reopen DC Committee](#) (COVID-19 Related)
- Managing Director, [Emerson Collective](#), and formerly Chief Financial Officer; began serving at Emerson in September 2017
- Administrator, U.S. General Services Administration (2012-15), helped organization to recover from high-profile scandal (confirmed by U.S. Senate)
- U.S. Department of Treasury, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Performance Officer, 2009-2012 (confirmed by U.S. Senate)
- District of Columbia government: served as City Administrator and Deputy Mayor under Mayor Fenty; as Interim General Manager of DC's Metro; Director of the DC Department of Transportation; and Chief Financial Officer of the DC Metropolitan Police Department
- Hosts a podcast, [GovActually](#), with Danny Werfel, who leads the Boston Consulting Group's Public Sector Practice; podcasts have aired since 2016
- Experience with numerous technology businesses

Derek Kan – Appealing Governor, Especially for Conservatives

[Derek Kan](#) is a veteran of the Trump Administration. He is currently an executive at Deliverr, an ecommerce fulfillment company. Stamford educated and with an accomplished technology background, he also served as an executive of the ride-share

company Lyft, in its early stages. Kan is also a former staffer to Senator Mitch McConnell.

He served as the number three person in the U.S. Transportation Department during President Trump's first term when Elaine Chao, McConnell's wife, was the Secretary of Transportation. Kan also served as the Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget and served on President Trump's [Coronavirus Task Force](#).

Additional information follows.

- MBA from Stanford
- Former General Manager for Lyft and numerous positions with technology companies, and an unpaid advisor to [Oaktree Capital Group](#)
- Former policy advisor to Senator Mitch McConnell and chief economist for the Senate Republican Policy Committee
- Management consultant, Bain & Company
- Member of President Trump's COVID-19 task force
- Deputy Director, Office of Management and Budget (confirmed by U.S. Senate)
- Member of Amtrak's Board of Directors (confirmed by U.S. Senate)
- Former Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy (confirmed by U.S. Senate), serving under U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, wife of Senator McConnell

Role of the Board of Governors

Congress has designed USPS to be insulated from political interference. The current "Fire DeJoy" push risks unduly politicizing USPS and distracting from the titanic operational and financial challenges USPS faces.

The [Governors' responsibilities](#) are major: to direct and control USPS's expenditures, review its practices, conduct long-range planning, approve officer compensation, and set policies on all postal matters. Simply put, it is not a job for political hacks. If the Board decides that Postmaster General DeJoy (or any other Postmaster General for that matter) is impeding these goals they will not hesitate to remove him.

With the public and policymakers closely watching how USPS addresses many important issues this year, the scrutiny on the Board and Postmaster General will remain intense. Such scrutiny is good, so long as it does not devolve into partisan, ideological rancor.

About the Author: Paul Steidler is a Senior Fellow with the [Lexington Institute](#), a public policy think tank based in Arlington, Virginia.