

DAN BURTON, INDIANA,
CHAIRMAN

BENJAMIN A. GILMAN, NEW YORK
CONSTANCE A. MORELLA, MARYLAND
CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, CONNECTICUT
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, FLORIDA
JOHN M. McHUGH, NEW YORK
STEPHEN HORN, CALIFORNIA
JOHN L. MICA, FLORIDA
THOMAS M. DAVIS, VIRGINIA
MARK E. SOUDER, INDIANA
STEVEN C. LATOURETTE, OHIO
BOB BARR, GEORGIA
DAN MILLER, FLORIDA
DOUG OSE, CALIFORNIA
RON LEWIS, KENTUCKY
JO ANN DAVIS, VIRGINIA
TODD RUSSELL PLATTS, PENNSYLVANIA
DAVE WELDON, FLORIDA
CHRIS CANNON, UTAH
ADAM H. PUTNAM, FLORIDA
C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER, IDAHO
EDWARD L. SCHROCK, VIRGINIA
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TENNESSEE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
FACSIMILE (202) 225-3974
MINORITY (202) 225-5051
TTY (202) 225-6852

www.house.gov/reform

November 7, 2001

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA,
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

TOM LANTOS, CALIFORNIA
MAJOR R. OWENS, NEW YORK
EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, PENNSYLVANIA
PATSY T. MINK, HAWAII
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, NEW YORK
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, MARYLAND
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, OHIO
ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH, ILLINOIS
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS
JOHN F. TIERNEY, MASSACHUSETTS
JIM TURNER, TEXAS
THOMAS H. ALLEN, MAINE
JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY, ILLINOIS
WM. LACY CLAY, MISSOURI
DIANE E. WATSON, CALIFORNIA

BERNARD SANDERS, VERMONT,
INDEPENDENT

The Honorable John E. Potter
Postmaster General and CEO
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, D.C. 20060

Dr. Bruce Alberts
President
National Academy of Sciences
2101 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20418

Dear Mr. Postmaster General and Dr. Alberts:

We are writing to request that the National Academy of Sciences and the United States Postal Service work together in analyzing the challenges that face the Postal Service in responding to the recent anthrax attacks.

The Postal Service faces the extraordinarily difficult challenge of drafting emergency plans in the midst of coping with the current crisis. As we understand it, the current plan is to sanitize all mail that is sent from households and unknown users, so-called "anonymous" mail. This is more than 100 million pieces of mail per day.

We believe timely input from the National Academy of Sciences will help ensure that the Postal Service takes the right steps in meeting this challenge and ensuring the safety of the mail for both customers and postal workers. For this reason, we request that the Postal Service work with the Academy to convene an immediate conference with a panel of experts to discuss and evaluate how to respond to threats to the mail.

We suggest that the conference consider issues such as:

- The strengths and weaknesses of various technologies that the Postal Service may be considering for sanitizing the mail, including an analysis of how these technologies can be most efficiently and effectively utilized;

The Honorable John E. Potter
Dr. Bruce Alberts
November 7, 2001
Page 2

- Whether the Postal Service should consider “low-tech” approaches that could reduce the volume of mail needing sterilization, such as steps that could reduce the anonymity of a significant portion or certain types of mail;
- Whether there are other options for safeguarding the mail from biological attack besides, or in addition to, sterilization that the Postal Service should be considering;
- The logistical and engineering challenge that the Postal Service will face in implementing a plan to secure the mail.

We urge you to act expeditiously on this issue, both because the Postal Service is in the process of formulating its response plan and because Congress may soon act on these issues. We have been advised that the National Academy of Sciences could convene a conference of experts as soon as the week of November 12 to 16. Holding such a meeting is an opportunity to focus the expertise of the nation’s top scientists on the problems confronting the Postal Service.

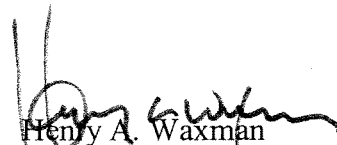
Congressional leaders could directly benefit from the information and advice exchanged between the Postal Service and the National Academy of Sciences on this urgent national problem. To the extent possible, we request that you share a transcript of the conference with us, along with any findings or summary that the Postal Service or the National Academy of Sciences is able to prepare.

We look forward to discussing these issues with you in greater detail.

Sincerely,



Dan Burton
Chairman



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member