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ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

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October 30, 2001

Robert S. Mueller, III  
Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
J. Edgar Hoover Building  
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

John E. Potter  
Postmaster General  
U.S. Postal Service  
475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20260-3500

Jeffrey P. Koplan, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control  
1600 Clifton Rd.  
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Director Mueller, Postmaster General Potter, and Dr. Koplan:

Across the country, and especially in the Washington, D.C., and New York/New Jersey areas, Americans are worried that their mail may be contaminated with anthrax. The recent disclosure of possible anthrax infections in two individuals who have no known exposure in postal facilities is fueling these concerns. One possibility, which has yet to be proven, is that letters that come in contact with mail containing anthrax during handling may become cross-contaminated and potentially lethal. To assure confidence in the U.S. mail, it is essential to know whether such cross-contamination occurs, whether it poses serious health risks, and how those risks can be avoided or minimized.

Currently, we are learning about potential cross-contamination by investigating the

potential exposures of citizens who fall ill with symptoms of anthrax. But this approach is reactive and encourages fear. A pro-active approach would be to examine mail known to have had contact with the Daschle letter to determine: (1) the presence of anthrax spores; (2) the quantity of anthrax spores; (3) whether such spores have the capacity to re-aerosolize and cause inhalation anthrax. Such mail was collected at the time of the closing of the House and Senate Office Buildings on October 17, 2001, and placed in the custody of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

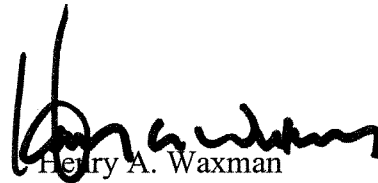
We have just learned, however, that testing of this mail has not even begun. Earlier today, at our hearing entitled "Oversight of the U.S. Postal Service: The Safety of Postal Employees and the Mail," James Jarboe of the FBI stated that the FBI has just located a suitable facility to examine the mail taken from Capitol Hill on October 17, 2001. This delay is very disturbing, as over two weeks have passed since the Daschle letter was opened. It is also a matter of concern that mail exposed to the Daschle letter will be sterilized before any testing takes place, thus potentially destroying the ability to test for cross-contamination.

Some believe that the deaths at the Brentwood Postal Facility may have occurred because the Postal Service and the CDC relied on an untested assumption that anthrax could not leak out of a sealed envelope. We hope that is not true. We are now currently relying on a similar untested assumption that the risk of cross-contamination is very small. This assumption may well be right, and we hope it is. Nevertheless, we have the opportunity to test this assumption, and we should do so immediately. We urge you to work together to expedite the testing of collateral mail to answer critical questions about cross-contamination. With attention to this matter, we can provide facts to counter the fear that is growing each day.

Sincerely,



Dan Burton  
Chairman



Henry A. Waxman  
Ranking Member