

**TAXPAYERS
PROTECTION
ALLIANCE**

Mr. Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 10300
Washington, D.C. 20260-1000

July 6, 2022

Postmaster General DeJoy:

On behalf of millions of taxpayers and consumers across the country, the Taxpayers Protection Alliance (TPA) writes to express concerns about search and seizure policies at the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). As America's mail carrier, the USPS has a responsibility to ensure that all households and businesses can send and receive mail without the agency singling them out for harassment.

The reported search and seizure of four ordinary-looking boxes containing thousands of COVID-19 face masks adorned with political messages raises fundamental questions about the USPS' fairness and neutrality. As taxpayers must foot the USPS' legal bills in what may be years-long litigation, it is imperative that the agency clear its name and put forward comprehensive guidance as to its search and seizure policies.

According to the Institute for Justice (IJ), the seized boxes belonged to "René Quiñonez, who operates Oakland-based Movement Ink LLC, a small, family-run, social justice-focused screen-printing company." After the tragic murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, Quiñonez and his team moved quickly to print "Black Lives Matter"-themed face masks and send them overnight to organizers across the country. But as IJ notes, these packages never reached their destination. Instead, "he and his clients were greeted by a disturbing 'Alert' on the Postal Service website: 'Seized by Law Enforcement.' René panicked. After all, he hadn't done anything wrong. He knew face masks were not illegal; in fact, at the time, they were required by law."

After Quiñonez reached out to his member of Congress and contacted the press, the USPS responded by issuing a refund but insisted that the packages looked suspiciously similar to boxes previously shipped by drug distributors. It is unclear, though, how the agency could have concluded that four neatly taped brown boxes were sufficiently suspicious to spur a search and seizure. What is clear is that the agency's hunch cost Movement Ink time, clients, and money. As IJ notes, "[s]ome of René's longstanding clients dropped him, and the organizers backed out of plans for future recurring apparel orders. To this day, Movement Ink is struggling to recover from these blows to its reputation and business."

Search and seizure by the USPS can be a useful tool to stop illegal drugs and contraband from entering the country or being sent within the U.S. Fentanyl and other illicit substances regularly flow into the U.S. via the USPS, and if anything, the agency should be making greater efforts to inspect its packages. America's mail carrier lags far behind its private competitors in setting up a comprehensive package screening program. The USPS must walk a fine line and ensure that this inspection process doesn't turn into a vehicle for First Amendment violations. There is an ugly history of politicians using the post office to punish "sedition" and unpopular religious materials, and we cannot return to those terrible practices. Rather, the USPS should forthrightly describe its inspection processes and honestly account for its seizures of Movement Ink's boxes.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a response from your office.

Sincerely,



David Williams
President