

0. *Pre-read for context.*

1. *Close read the text for understanding.*

2. *Perform one of the five analytical reading tasks.*

3. *Write a one-page reflection, connecting this article to your own experiences, reading, or observations.*

The Postal Service is America's Lifeline. Save It.

by The Editorial Board, *The Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 2020

As business skyrockets for Amazon and other online shipping and delivery services during the pandemic, it's tempting to ask whether it's time to pull the plug on the U.S. Postal Service, with its every-door every-day delivery schedule, its bricks-and-mortar neighborhood service centers, its unwieldy pension burden and the enmity of President Trump and much of the GOP establishment. It's widely projected to become insolvent this year, with drop-dead estimates ranging from June to September, and in any case before October — when vote-by-mail ballots are due to go out in much (and perhaps all) of the nation.

Trump's dislike of the Postal Service is so intense that he reportedly threatened to veto the recent \$2-trillion economic relief package if it included any postal bailout. Private airlines and other giant corporations, yes; the national lifeline that reaches virtually every American in good times and bad, no way.

Yes, the agency is premodern — in a good way. When the electricity goes out, the cell tower is down or the Internet isn't working (all of which could easily happen during a natural disaster or enemy attack), the Postal Service and its employees are the nation's vital link, as befits a publicly held resource. One emergency plan not (yet) in use is to have postal workers quickly deliver to each American an antidote like Cipro in the event of a wide-scale biological attack. Who else would be able to do that? As a recent *Wired* article notes, the plan could quickly and easily be retooled for a pandemic.

The agency plays an essential role in urban and suburban areas, where postal workers are the ones who bring many of those Amazon packages to the front door. And in rural and hard-to-reach areas, postal workers are the only ones who provide regular delivery service because there's not enough money in it for private courier businesses. Postal delivery is the only way many Americans can get their essential medications or pension checks — and yes, ballots, much to the chagrin of Trump, who accurately recognizes that broadening the voter base diminishes the election chances of Republicans like himself.

The agency is a little like face masks, ventilators and test kits — national goods too easy to forget about when there is no emergency, and to economize into oblivion just before you need them.

Congress has hamstrung the agency with an unsound plan to fund future retiree pensions. It also has prevented it from employing modern technologies or adding services that might compete with private companies. It should unleash the agency.

In the short term, though, Congress should do exactly what should be done for the nation's most essential services in times of emergency. It should properly fund the Postal Service to keep it serving us in normal times and to keep it ready for times like now.