

**DENNIS J. KUCINICH**

10TH DISTRICT, OHIO

1730 LONGWORTH OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515  
(202) 225-5871

14400 DETROIT AVENUE  
LAKEWOOD, OHIO 44107  
(216) 228-8850



**Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives**

**Committees:**  
Government Reform  
Education  
and the  
Workforce

[www.house.gov/kucinich](http://www.house.gov/kucinich)

February 17, 2004

Mr. Jay Eagen  
Chief Administrative Officer  
Office of the CAO  
US Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Mr. Bill Livingood  
Sergeant at Arms  
H 124 US Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Eagan and Mr. Livingood:

I write out of concern regarding the newly announced procedures for processing incoming mail to the House of Representatives. As you know, presently all first class mail delivered to the House is already subject to an inspection process following an irradiation treatment by the US Postal Service. During inspection, a corner of each envelope is cut, sampled for various substances, and then held in quarantine until test results qualify the letter as safe. I have made it a point to assure my constituents that although their mail is somewhat delayed through this process, the privacy of their correspondence is never compromised

But the new inspection process, as outlined in your February 13, 2004 communication with Members, casts grave doubts over the continued confidentiality of the mail received in my and every other Member's office in the House of Representatives. The new procedure will open, inspect, and reseal every letter to the House.

I believe these new procedures fundamentally damage the integrity of the chain of communication between constituents and Members of Congress. When a letter is mailed by a constituent to his or her Representative, there is a reasonable and justified expectation that the letter itself will not be taken from the envelope and potentially viewed and read – intentionally or not - by anonymous parties other than the Member or the Member's paid personal staff. Indeed, constituents and others writing to Congress have a right to know that the thoughts and ideas expressed in a letter are private and will be read only by the intended recipient.

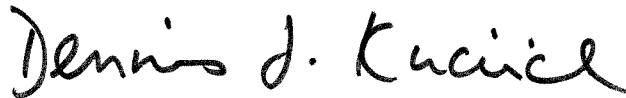
The harm associated with this serious loss of expected and necessary privacy is exacerbated if the task of opening and testing letters is outsourced to a private corporation – an entity primarily and perhaps solely accountable to a financial interest. The United States government, in contrast, is accountable only to the American people. As the current mail processes are in fact

outsourced, my concerns on this matter are greatly heightened. Your letter to Members was silent on this critical issue, and I believe it must be addressed in detail before any "enhanced" safety procedures are seriously considered.

The ability of constituents to efficiently and confidentially communicate with their elected officials remains a fundamental pillar of our democracy. While I certainly understand the importance of ensuring that mail sent to the House of Representatives is safe, the implicit privacy of a sealed letter is both a sacred and vital imperative.

I respectfully ask that plans to implement the new mailing procedures be halted until these privacy concerns, with a special emphasis on the implications of outsourcing, are adequately addressed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis J. Kucinich". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dennis J. Kucinich  
Member of Congress

DJK:mo