



UNITED STATES POST OFFICE
WHITE SALMON, WASHINGTON 98672

ENSURING FREE POSTAL DELIVERY

USPS is not meeting the Universal Service Obligation to residents within the city limits of White Salmon, Washington

Photo by Geoffrey Squier - used with permission

WHY IT MATTERS

- City residents are spending nearly \$300,000 a year on post office boxes they are required to have in order to receive mail. That number continues to increase as postal box renewal fees rise: the annual fee for a small box in 2018 was \$102; today that same box is \$210 a year.
- In 2011, the Washington Legislature required Vote By Mail statewide, which means any citizen wishing to exercise their right to vote - as established in the Voting Rights Act of 1965 - must have a mailing address. Within White Salmon, that means a citizen must currently pay in order to access this civic right. Despite the state declaring that every eligible voter receives a ballot, currently citizens within city limits who cannot afford to pay for a PO Box are being denied their right to vote.
- During the pandemic the required in-person mail acceptance and distribution for in-town residents limited the ability to mitigate an identified exposure risk for residents.
- Residents on fixed or limited incomes experience increased financial stress due to fee increases.
- Access to mail delivery is also a health issue. The Department of Veterans Affairs provides approximately 80% of all outpatient prescriptions to veterans via mail, and studies have consistently found that mail-order medications are associated with reduced healthcare costs and better health outcomes.

OVERVIEW

Historically, residents within the city limits of White Salmon have not been provided the option for home delivery. Instead, residents have been required to purchase a PO Box in order to receive mail, while residents outside of city limits receive home delivery via rural carrier routes.

EFFORTS SO FAR

Since 2020 the city has worked with the local Postmaster to request a new contract delivery service (CDS) route. City Council committed \$85,000 in ARPA funding to secure the necessary clusterboxes and establish the physical delivery route. **Creation of a new CDS route has been on hold indefinitely**, leading to a higher prioritization of pursuing no-fee postal boxes.

- Since Spring 2023 USPS district level approvals have not been received and pursuit of a delivery route has stalled.
- **Currently pursuing R777 designation for city addresses in order to receive no-fee postal boxes.**

DESIRED OUTCOME

Implementing a city delivery route in coordination with USPS brings a much-needed mail delivery option to residents that until now has been unavailable. Granting free PO Box access to residents not on the delivery route ensures equal access to the voting rights given to all Washingtonians, as well as a no-cost option to access the postal service, a fundamental part of our nation.