

Friday Political Events Roundup

 **Friday Political Events Roundup Overview**

 **Friday Politics Roundup Step by step Guide**

Weekly Social Studies Lab - Friday Political Events Roundup

We will release a new Friday Political Events Roundup by Wednesday in our weekly email.

Our learning labs are archived in the [GoPoPro member section](#).

Previous Roundup Learning Labs

1. [Russia Invades Ukraine](#)
2. [Russia v Ukraine Scenarios](#)

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Learning Grid

<u>TOPIC</u> US Postal Service Fleet Replacement		
Big Question Should the U.S. government replace the aging USPS fleet with electric vehicles?	Your answer + supporting reason	Opposing answer + reason
What?	Why?	So?
Your questions What do you wonder about this?	News Connections Summarize 1 related news story	Actions Describe 1 related action to take

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- **Topline**

US Government Fleet

- Saying that the U.S. government owns vehicles is like saying Jeff Bezos has money. It's an understatement. The U.S. government owns a lot of trucks and cars and they buy new ones all the time. According to US General Services Administration figures quoted by *Reuters*, the US Government fleet was driven a combined 4.5 billion miles in 2019, consuming a combined 393 billion gallons of gas. Of the fleet, more than a third of the vehicles in need of replacement are US Postal Service vehicles, around half of which are boxy, white delivery vans approaching three decades old.
- The [Postal Service](#) owns more than 231,000 vehicles, one of the largest civilian fleets in the world. The distinctive white, red and blue trucks roam the country from congested cities to quiet rural towns. An all-electric fleet would not only deliver environmental benefits and help an emerging manufacturing sector, but serve as a powerful symbol of an administration that is determined to speed the transition away from fossil fuels.
- According to [Vox](#), the current fleet of US Postal Service vans lacks basic equipment such as airbags, anti-lock brakes, and air-conditioning, and get an average of around 10.22 miles/gallon. In fact, a new report from [Vice](#) found that the fleet of USPS trucks was so old that hundreds of them were reported to catch fire in the past few years. The trucks are Grumman Long Life Vehicles and have a 24-year life expectancy. The last deliveries happened in 1994.



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Biden Presidency

- Upon taking office on January 20, 2021, the **Biden Administration** committed to replacing the entire US Federal fleet with **American-made electric vehicles**. “The federal government also owns an enormous fleet of vehicles, which we’re going to replace with clean electric vehicles made right here in America made by American workers,” said US President Joe Biden.
- Biden’s move would see around 640,000 gas-powered cars, trucks, and SUVs replaced with battery electric vehicles. It’s not yet clear how long the fleet overhaul will take, but [Reuters](#) estimates it could cost US\$20 billion. Mr Biden described the fleet renewal as “the largest mobilization of public investment in procurement infrastructure and R&D since World War Two”.

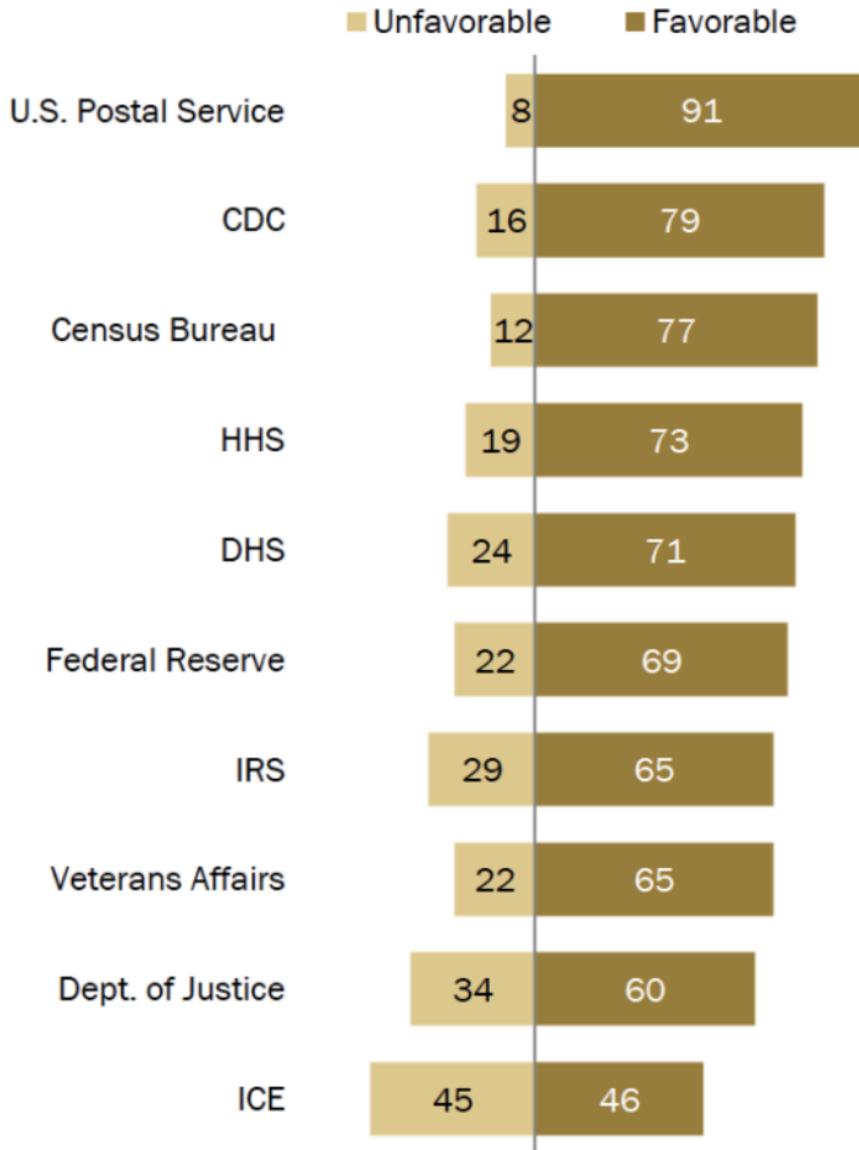
The United States Postal Service

- The [United States Postal Service](#) (USPS) is big. It employs over 600,000; only two private employers (Amazon and Walmart) employ more people. It serves 160 million homes, businesses, and other delivery points. It would have ranked number 44 on the 2019 Fortune 500 if it were included. USPS delivers a whopping 46 percent of the entire world’s mail!
- The Second Continental Congress appointed Benjamin Franklin as the first Postmaster General in 1775. The Post Office Department was created in 1792 and became a Cabinet department in 1872. In 1971, Congress replaced the Department with the United States Postal Service, an independent entity within the executive branch. USPS is operated by a 11-person Board of Governors (which resembles the board of directors of a public corporation)—the Postmaster General, his deputy, and nine governors appointed by the President and approved by the Senate for seven-year terms. The president cannot fire the Postmaster General but he can appoint new members to the Board of Governors who oversee and control the postmaster general.
- The USPS was created as a government agency under [Title 39, Section 101.1](#) of the [United States Code](#) which states, in part: (a) The United States Postal Service shall be operated as a basic and fundamental service provided to the people by the Government of the United States, authorized by the Constitution, created by Act of Congress, and supported by the people. The Postal Service shall have as its basic function the obligation to provide postal services to bind the Nation together through the personal, educational, literary, and business correspondence of the people. It shall provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas and shall render postal services to all communities. Postal rates shall be established to apportion the costs of all postal operations to all users of the mail on a fair and equitable basis.
- The Postal Service [receives no direct taxpayer funds](#). It relies on revenues from stamps and other service fees. The fundamental problem is that while the USPS generates enough revenue to cover its operating costs, its pension and retiree health care liabilities push its bottom line into the red. By law, the Postal Service has an obligation to provide universal service—that is, to deliver mail to “[as nearly as practicable the entire population of the United States](#).” This [forces USPS to deliver to more addresses](#) each year, even as fewer pieces of mail are being delivered. As First-Class Mail volumes have declined, the USPS has been reducing the number of blue mailboxes for years. It currently has 140,837 of them, down from 164,099 in 2013. The USPS is the most popular U.S. agency.

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A number of federal agencies viewed favorably by majorities of the public

% who have a ____ opinion of each



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 24-29, 2020.

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The Postal Service's Decision

- In February 2021, the United States Postal Service made a controversial decision to replace its fleet of aging and inefficient mail trucks with [a new fleet made up almost entirely of new, inefficient diesel mail trucks](#). Although the vast majority of USPS delivery routes are ideally suited for electric vehicles, the USPS decided that a mere 10 percent of the planned order would be battery electric.
- In early February 2022, that decision [resulted in severe criticism](#) from the US Environmental Protection Agency and the White House Council on Environmental Quality, who accused the Postal Service of failing to properly examine the environmental impact of its decision, as required by law. In the EPA's letter to the Postal Service, the agency told the USPS that it should open a new public comment period and requested a public hearing on the NGDV decision.
- In late February, 2022, the USPS released its [final record of decision and record of environmental consideration](#) for the Next Generation Delivery Vehicle purchase. The final decision from the Postal Service, [The New York Times](#) reports, means that USPS will ignore the EPA order and that with its new order, over 90 percent of the 50,000-165,000 NGDVs that are being ordered will use gasoline and will only average 8.6 mpg (28.86 L/100 km) when used with air conditioning.



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The Response

- A group of House Democrats called Monday for an investigation into a decision by Postmaster General Louis DeJoy [to purchase up to 165,000 gasoline-powered mail trucks](#) over the Biden administration's objections that the multibillion-dollar contract would undermine the nation's climate goals.
- Congress earlier this month approved a \$107 billion financial overhaul of the Postal Service, and it currently is awaiting Mr. Biden's signature. Neither the House nor Senate version, both of which passed with broad bipartisan support, included amendments that would force a change in the agency's truck contract.
- Environmental groups and other government agencies have called the Postal Service's decision flawed, saying it relies on unrealistic assumptions — like gasoline at \$2.19 a gallon. That's well below the \$4.33 average gas price Americans are paying in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but it is also far lower than the average pump price before the war.
- The president cannot fire the Postmaster General but he can appoint new members to the Board of Governors who oversee and control the postmaster general.

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Focusing Questions

- Should USPS buy Gas 15,000 guzzlers- largest fleet purchase?
- What kind of fleets are USPS rivals like FedEx, UPS, [Amazon](#), etc. building?
- Do you agree with Bidens' plan to replace the federal fleet with mostly electric vehicles?
- Why do we even have a postal service instead of just using FedEx and other private delivery businesses?
- What would happen if we didn't have USPS?
- What can President Biden do to control the USPS?
- How can the U.S. Congress control the USPS?
- Why do you think Postmaster General decided to take the anti-environmental approach to replacing the postal service fleet?
- How does the US Postal service illustrate the concept of checks and balances?
- In what way is the leadership of the US Postal service not democratic?
- In what way can you influence government decisions about things like fleet replacement?
- Did you know that once you see the arrow in the FedEx logo you can never unsee it!*
- How will this USPS purchase impact the climate?
- What kind of fleet should the federal government purchase?
- Who is the head of USPS?
- How did the son of the head of USPS get on the Duke University tennis team?
- Can the president fire the head of USPS?
- Why is the USPS the most popular federal agency?

Arguments Pros and Cons

- [Here is an argument for an electric USPS fleet](#)
- [Here is an argument for a gas powered fleet from USPS](#)

More News

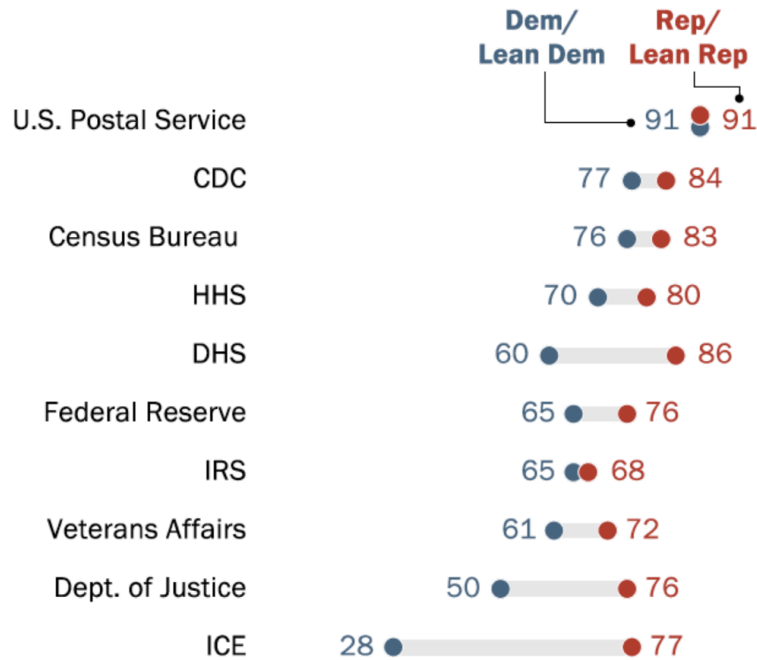
- [EPA presses USPS to halt purchase of up to 165K gas-powered vehicles | TheHill](#)
- [How is the US Postal Service governed and funded?](#)
- [Post Office Delivery Trucks Keep Catching on Fire](#)
- [The Post Office Is Buying Gas-Powered Trucks, Despite Biden Climate Order - The New York Times](#)
- [Democrats Want Investigation Into Postal Service's Gas Guzzlers Contract](#)
- [The US postmaster appointed under Trump is still raising alarm – but can he be stopped? | US Postal Service | The Guardian](#)
- [Can Anyone Satisfy Amazon's Craving for Electric Vans? - The New York Times](#)

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More Visuals

Positive views of many agencies cross party lines, but not ICE or DOJ

% who have a favorable opinion of each



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 24-29, 2020.

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More Visuals

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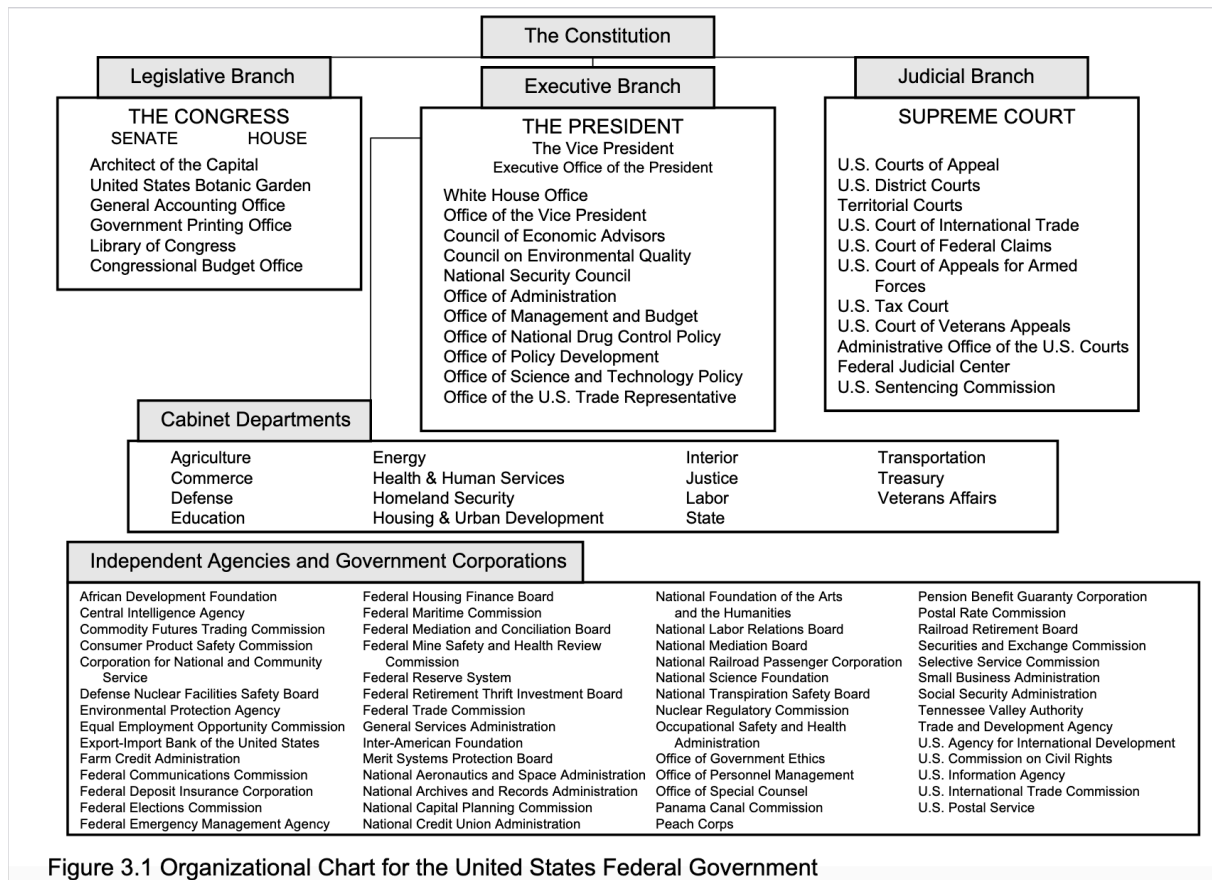


Figure 3.1 Organizational Chart for the United States Federal Government



See the arrow ⇨ in the FedEx logo? You can never unsee it!*

Discussion Scorecard

gopopro.com

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Discussion

 **Listening Tips** As you listen to today's discussion, make notes and keep score:

- Most Convincing fact:
- Most convincing argument:
- Best speaker statement:
- Best speaker question:
- Winning argument
- Winning participant:
- Your opinion now
- Where you shared your opinion:
- Your [action](#)
- Next topic?

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LEARNING GRID - TEACHER KEY

US Postal Service Fleet Replacement

Big Question	Your answer + reason Explain your opinion	Opposing answer + reason Explain the opinion of someone on the other side of this issue
Should the U.S. government replace the aging USPS fleet with electric vehicles?	<i>The U.S government must replace the aging USPS fleet with diesel vehicles, preferably Hummers which get under 5 miles/gallon. We should speed up the impact of climate change and global warming, and this will be an easy and efficient way to do that. The oil industry is too important to sacrifice for the future of all human life on the planet.</i>	<i>You know that global warming is about to have already having a calamitous impact on human civilization, right? We should be doing everything we possibly can to mitigate the effects of climate change. We have to buy new vehicles so we may as well get electric ones that will allow us to slightly less destroy our future. Seems like low-hanging fruit to me. Besides, gas prices keep going up so this is a better economic investment anyway.</i>
What?	Why?	So?
Your questions What do you wonder about this? <i>Response varies by student</i>	News Connections Summarize 1 related news story <i>Response varies by student</i>	Actions Describe 1 related action to take • Contact the USPS • Contact the President and share your opinion • Contact your representatives and Senators and share your opinion • Vote in the 2022 election • Lobby against or for the USPS purchase of a gas-guzzling fleet that will further drive us into climate oblivion!