

Congressman Brady Writes a Letter to Constituents Concerning Ricin Discovered in a Senate Mail Room (2/4/04)

February 4, 2004

Dear Neighbor,

As I'm sure you know, a letter containing the poisonous substance ricin was recently discovered in a U.S. Senate mail room. The building where that office is located is several blocks away from my office and there is no evidence that any Members of the House of Representatives have received mail containing this or any other harmful substance. I want you to know that my Washington, Philadelphia and Delaware County offices are open and that my staff and I remain available to assist you.

Unfortunately, the discovery of this substance has affected my ability to serve you in some ways. In an effort to ensure the safety of the thousands of employees and hundreds of thousands of visitors and tourists who work in or visit the Capitol complex each year, the House of Representatives and the Capitol Police have developed a protocol for the handling of incoming mail. Since the anthrax attack that left five people dead in October 2001, all mail destined for federal government offices each day is diverted through New Jersey to undergo irradiation to kill bacteria. That is why my Washington office often receives mail on a delayed basis. But this screening process, designed to destroy live spores, has no effect on ricin, a colorless, odorless and lethal substance.

Therefore, since Tuesday, February 3, and for the foreseeable future, mail to House offices, including mine, has been halted and will be screened specifically for this new threat. Unfortunately, that mail will be destroyed.

There is a possibility that any letters or packages you recently mailed to my office will never make it here. We won't receive an inventory of diverted and destroyed mail. So, we'll have no way of knowing whether any particular letter was among those destroyed.

I value every letter from my constituents and I deeply regret any inconvenience this incident may cause you. However, I am sure that you agree that we cannot chance a repeat of those deadly anthrax mailings.

I do have two pieces of good news to report, however. First, there is no indication of contamination from outgoing government mail. The letters you receive from Federal offices, including mine are safe. Also, there has been no sign of contamination of mail to any state or district offices of Members of Congress or of the Senate. So any letters you may have mailed to my district offices will not be destroyed. I am sure that you understand that, in order to guarantee the safety of my district office staff, we will not be opening that mail for the next few days.

The best way to reach me in writing is by fax or email. My email address is: Robert.A.Brady@mail.house.gov.
You may fax letters to me or my staff at the following numbers:

Washington: telephone (202)225-4731/ fax
(202)225-0088

South
Philadelphia telephone (215)389-4627/ fax (215)389-4636

Memphis Street, Philadelphia
telephone (215)426-7741/fax (215)426-7741

Chester City, Delaware
County telephone (610)874-7094/fax (610)874-7193

Sharon Hill, Delaware County
telephone (610)237-1666/fax (610)237-9257

I thank you for your patience as we work through
this latest assault on democracy.

Sincerely,