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Statement for the Markup of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act House Committee on Government Reform Rep. Henry A. Waxman

May 12, 2004

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to join with my colleagues in support of this bill. For months, Chairman Davis, Congressman McHugh, and Congressman Danny Davis and I have been working to develop bipartisan postal reform legislation, using last session's bill, H.R. 4970, as the basis for discussion.

We have also been working closely with many of the varied interests affected by this legislation. We have worked with mailer organizations, labor unions, the Postal Service, and many others. The process has been a good one and the contributions of these groups have made a real difference to our understanding of the issue and this legislation. I want to thank all of these organizations for the constructive role that they have played.

In particular, I want to commend Chairman Davis for his leadership. The breakthrough on this legislation came in a meeting last month where Chairman Davis and I reached an agreement with John McHugh and Danny Davis, who are the chair and ranking member of the postal panel. The four of us agreed that we would stick together on this legislation throughout the process, including floor consideration and the conference with the Senate. In other words, we agreed that none of us would support any changes to the legislation unless all four of us agreed to the changes.

Too often in recent years, the Congress has operated on a partisan basis. This leads to gridlock and harsh feelings. A different approach is needed to move complicated legislation through the process. It's the old-fashioned approach where the majority and minority work in good faith to reach an understanding and stand by their commitments to each other.

Committee chairs are integral to this approach. When I chaired the Commerce Subcommittee on Health, I worked with the minority to pass major environmental and health legislation. On many occasions I reached agreements through conference with my ranking member as an essential part of the process. And that is exactly how Chairman Davis has handled the postal measure before us today.

We have developed a strong bill that responds to the calls for postal reform. Our bill has the primary goal of allowing the Postal Service to continue to fulfill its universal service mission at a reasonable cost. To achieve this goal, the legislation establishes a modern system for regulating rates, gives needed flexibility to the Postal Service, and includes provisions to ensure a level playing field for the Postal Service and its competitors.

I am proud of the achievements we have made. We are committed to moving forward together.

I want to commend my colleagues and committee staff for the time and effort you have spent in refining this bill. I hope we can move quickly and enact postal reform into law.