

**STATEMENT OF  
POSTMASTER GENERAL/CEO  
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL SERVICE,  
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

**MAY 31, 2007**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Subcommittee. I am pleased to join you here this morning to discuss the Postal Service's comprehensive efforts to provide every household and business in Chicago with the best postal services possible.

Later today, you will also be hearing from Jo Ann Feindt, our Great Lakes Area Vice President, Gloria Tyson, the District Manager and Postmaster of Chicago, Todd Hawkins, Senior Plant Manager for Chicago, and Gordon Milbourn, Assistant Inspector General for Audit, from the independent Office of Inspector General.

This is the third time I have visited Chicago in the last two months. The reason is simple. Chicago is one of the world's great cities. It deserves world-class mail service. Unfortunately, local mail service has fallen far short of that goal. Mr. Chairman, I am here today to tell you, every member of this subcommittee, and every resident and business of Chicago that I am personally committed to restoring our service performance to the levels enjoyed by every other city in America.

Our plan is not to implement a short-term fix. It is to undertake a thorough and systematic look at every aspect of our activities. We have developed and we are managing a program designed to sustain high levels of service – and the customer satisfaction that will grow from that – year in and year out.

I fully recognize that our record here in Chicago has been marked by ups and downs, by periods of high performance offset by periods of low performance – some might say no performance – not by stability, predictability, or consistency.

I do not expect our local customers to accept that. I do not expect customers who mail to Chicago from other locations to accept that. I do not expect this Subcommittee to accept that. And, I can assure you, I do not accept that.

In conversations with our employees, I have been impressed by the pride they take in their work. They are no different than any other employees in this great state or in any city around the nation. They value their customers and they want to do their very best for them. They understand that our customers have choices like never before – and customer satisfaction, based on the experience of solid service, will drive their choice of delivery providers.

The Postal Service must compete for every customer and for every piece of mail. Yesterday's monopoly is meaningless in a world of digital communications, on-line bill payments, and a robust package delivery market in which the Postal Service is but one of four national service providers.

Mr. Chairman, you and other members of this Subcommittee were instrumental in drafting and passing the recently enacted Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act. It is an important piece of legislation that can provide the Postal Service with a much needed level of flexibility in a rapidly changing business environment.

But if we at the Postal Service are unable to provide the levels of service that allow our products to stand out – to be competitive in a robust marketplace – we will have squandered any advantage offered by the new postal law. I am not about to let that happen – there is simply too much at stake.

We value the business of our Chicago customers and we will work to keep it – not because we deserve it, but because we have earned it. It is my job to create an environment that makes that possible by providing our employees with the tools, the support, and the leadership they need to pursue their vision of excellence for those they serve.

We have taken a number of important actions to bring Chicago to the upper ranks of service performance. To begin with, we have initiated a top-to-bottom review of every element of postal operations in every facility throughout the Chicago Post Office. Our local staff is working with experienced operational managers from throughout the nation to do this. We are confident that a fresh set of eyes and diversity of experience can complement our deep pool of on-site knowledge, contributing to the development of innovative approaches that can bring us the results we are seeking.

Equally important to accurate, efficient, and timely mail delivery service is an address database that correctly mirrors the actual home and business addresses throughout the city. We need the best information possible to sort and deliver mail accurately and on time. This minimizes the possibility of missorting, delayed delivery, and the frustration of misdelivery.

Like any computerized system, our automated mail sorting equipment is only as good as the information that is fed into it. Our review has found significant data gaps between the actual addresses of Chicago's homes and businesses and the more than 1.2 million Chicago addresses contained in our address management files. We are in the midst of a major initiative to correct our address data and close this gap. This is a priority and we have already gathered current data from more than half of Chicago's 2,500 delivery routes. When we complete this process, by the end of August, it will contribute to significant delivery improvement throughout the city.

We are asking for the help of every mailer with this, as well. I cannot overemphasize the importance of using a correct address. Like a phone number, if you transpose two digits in an address, you're not likely to get to the person you're trying to reach. Individual mailers should be sure they are using a full address, including any street directionals, like North, East, South, or West, the correct apartment number, or the correct suite number. Bulk mailers should make sure their address lists are current and accurate. And, as soon as we've completed our Chicago update, they should re-run their address lists against our improved database.

With this solid address database, the next step is looking at our equipment. If it is not up to par, mail won't be sorted accurately. Therefore, we are assuring adherence to proper maintenance procedures for our state-of-the-art mail processing equipment so it is operating at maximum accuracy and efficiency.

This will allow us to process more mail, with more precision, and in a tighter operating window. Combined with improved mail flow procedures within our facilities, and better routing and transportation between our plants and delivery offices, we can get the mail to our carrier units earlier in the day. This will limit the mail preparation required at our delivery units, help us to better align carrier schedules with mail-arrival schedules, and get the mail on the streets earlier than before.

Speaking of letter carriers, one of the most important steps we have taken is a close examination of staffing needs. This has resulted in a determination that our complement of letter carriers in Chicago has fallen below the numbers needed for satisfactory mail delivery service. Unfortunately, as hard decisions were made in a challenging financial environment, they tipped the scales of the always sensitive balance between service and budget.

We are correcting that with the hiring and training of over 200 additional letter carriers. They have been assigned to 40 different stations throughout the city. This has advanced time-of-day mail delivery for many of our Chicago customers and is increasing consistency in daily delivery time as well.

With the cooperation of a number of Chicago's Aldermen, we have also begun to establish Customer Advisory Councils. This will provide our local managers with the opportunity to work closely with their customers and their city representatives to understand and address their concerns. And these important relationships can serve as an early warning system that will help us correct small problems before they become larger ones.

And, finally, at my request, and in response to Congressional inquiries into delayed mail and service complaints, the Office of Inspector General is conducting a review of mail service in the Chicago District. We expect to receive a draft report of that office's findings and recommendations within the next few weeks. Because the Office of Inspector General operates independent of Postal Service management, its findings will be marked by candor and impartiality. And, based on my experience with that office, I am confident that its findings will also be marked by fairness.

Overall, we are bringing a renewed focus on the basics throughout our operations in Chicago. We are making sure that our employees have the training and the knowledge necessary to succeed in their jobs. And, in those instances where we discover performance deficiencies on the part of employees – whatever their position – we will take the necessary corrective action.

Ultimately, this is an issue of accountability. Management is being held accountable – and properly so – for its decisions regarding our Chicago operations, whether they involve the local network, staffing, scheduling, training, data management, or maintenance practices. And we are reinforcing that accountability by increasing the weight of the service performance indicators of our National Performance Assessment scorecard in Chicago.

As we move forward, there must be accountability for every employee throughout the entire Chicago Post Office. Customers expect their mail to be on time. So we must expect our employees to be on time. Customers expect their business with the Postal Service to produce positive results and to be conducted with courtesy and professionalism. So we must expect our employees to perform their jobs and address their customers' needs – with courtesy and professionalism. Likewise, we must expect our managers to treat every employee with courtesy and respect. As I see it, good customer service is simply an example of the golden rule applied to a business environment – treat your customers the way you'd like to be treated as a customer.

Despite the work we have accomplished, we have a long way to go. But I am pleased to report that we have begun to see improvements in service as a result of the actions we have taken. I am confident that this will continue. Our new Chicago leadership team will provide the benefits of long-term stability in our work to build a strong foundation for the future. As I said, we are in this for the long haul. We will not be satisfied with short-term results.

I recognize that the trust of the people of Chicago in their Postal Service has eroded. I want to assure you that we will restore that trust by restoring service excellence for every family and business in this city. We will not let them down.

I am grateful for today's opportunity to explain our service improvement plans for Chicago. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

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