

**STATEMENT OF JO ANN FEINDT
GREAT LAKES AREA VICE PRESIDENT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL SERVICE,
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. I am pleased to join you here today to discuss what the Postal Service is doing to provide the people of Chicago with the best possible mail service.

I am the Area Vice President, responsible for most of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, and Wisconsin. I am responsible for all postal operations in these states, including mail processing and distribution, delivery, retail, and administrative operations.

As the Postmaster General stated this morning, we are bringing a renewed focus on the basics throughout our operations in Chicago. Ensuring customer service and satisfaction is our first priority. This is a comprehensive plan that includes changes to the network of postal facilities that feed mail into Chicago's processing plants, revising the movement of mail throughout all Chicago facilities – plants and Post Offices, increasing carrier staffing and ensuring they are properly trained, assessing the infrastructure in Chicago to make necessary facility improvements, gathering basic address information to ensure our automation can properly sort mail bound for Chicago, and performing much needed maintenance on our equipment.

The employees in Chicago are up to this task. They want to show the people of Chicago that they can be the best at their jobs and provide the service that our customers deserve. We have been working very closely with the union leadership at both the Area and local level. Their continuous support and true partnership have proven invaluable to moving our efforts forward.

This, however, is not an effort undertaken only by the postal employees in the city of Chicago. The Postmaster General, the Deputy Postmaster General, and I are making regular visits to the city. We have detailed some of the best employees we have throughout the nation to Chicago to help evaluate the changes that need to be made and to share their experience and provide training. Although we have just begun to implement these plans, we are seeing improvement in our service performance and in the time of day mail is being delivered to our customers.

I have formed a team to address mail flow for delivery units. To date, this team has reviewed four delivery offices identifying mail that should be handled in processing plants, not Post Offices. This will ensure timely and accurate processing of the mail. The team is also assessing whether our Chicago delivery offices have proper equipment and staffing.

We have analyzed the transportation that brings mail to Chicago for processing. We have added transportation and adjusted arrival times to ensure that the mail can be handled in the necessary operating window. We have revised our system to bypass centralized dispatching and receipt at the Chicago Metro Surface hub to reduce handling. In addition, we have instituted new procedures for employee accountability to ensure mail is placed in the proper truck.

We are also returning to a back-to-basics approach to improve quality control on the processing floor. We have worked closely with our unions to reinforce simple yet critical work floor habits, such as "jogging and edging" the mail properly on machines. By consistently improving mail processor operator habits, machine jams will be kept to a minimum. We have instituted new levels of accountability in this process as well -- audit sheets now are signed by individual machine operators and tour managers document that procedures were followed. These simple steps have reduced out-of-sequence mail by half, which will decrease the amount of mail returned from stations and improve the timeliness of delivery to our customers.

In addition to making changes to the way our machines are operated, we are making changes to the machines themselves. We have already begun the overhauling of our equipment, with 11 Delivery Barcode Sorters (DBCS) completed of the 45 within the facility. This will increase the quality and the efficiency of the machines. We have a very aggressive schedule for the completion of the remaining DBCSs. In June, we will begin overhauling our Flat Sorting Machines, the equipment used to process large, oversized envelopes.

To ensure this is not a one-time fix that will not be sustained, we created an Equipment Overhaul Team staffed with local and nation-wide experts, so their expertise could be shared with staff in Chicago. We have also emphasized training, so our maintenance technicians are being sent to the Postal Training Academy to refresh the skills of the equipment team. In addition, we are contacting trade schools in the Chicago area to inform them about maintenance job opportunities. Again, accountability has been incorporated into our processes by implementing new sign-off procedures to ensure that machine maintenance is performed when scheduled.

In addition, we have completed the evaluation of our facilities in Chicago – the plants and the Post Offices – and have determined what maintenance or improvements need to be done. Three of the facilities will have all necessary improvements completed by the end of September. In addition, we are beginning to address all issues related to the operations of the other facilities we have evaluated. Beginning in October, we will begin to make needed cosmetic improvements, like painting and landscaping.

As the Postmaster General mentioned, we are reinforcing the tie between manager compensation and our commitment to deliver service to residents of Chicago. Our new plant manager, Todd Hawkins, has already revised every plant managers' performance goals to reflect identifiable actions to improve service within the plant. We have increased coaching and mentoring for our supervisors to help them perform their current jobs and prepare them for

promotions. We are also partnering with the Office of the Inspector General to investigate specific employee work behavior issues more aggressively.

Mr. Chairman, I take my responsibility to our customers in Chicago very seriously. I regret that service in Chicago has been disappointing and I want you to know that I am firmly committed to fully implementing the plans that have been laid out today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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