

**STATEMENT OF GLORIA TYSON
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CHICAGO DISTRICT
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 today to discuss the District of Chicago's plans to improve service to the good citizens of Chicago.

My name is Gloria Tyson and I am the District Manager and Postmaster for the city of Chicago. My areas of responsibilities include overseeing all day-to-day postal operations for the city. The Chicago postal district serves more than 1.2 million homes, businesses and Post Office boxes. We add approximately 12,000 new addresses to our delivery network every day. Every day we serve more than 40,000 customers at some 48 delivery stations and 29 retail units. We deliver 2.1 billion pieces of mail a year and employ more than 8,800 postal career employees.

The Chicago District is one of our nation's most complex postal districts. I am experienced with big city operations – my former duties included overseeing operations in Detroit and I worked in New York City for many years.

I arrived in October 2006 to assume the acting duties of District Manager for Chicago. I can tell you that I am committed to improving service in Chicago and that I have dedicated the last several months of my life to fixing mail delivery processes and systems to do so.

We have a ways to go before service is at the level that I know our employees can achieve. However, after several months I can tell you about some of our success stories and strategies to

help Chicago deliver the level of service that our public deserves. Service has started to show some upward trends, which reflects the fact that in a span of the last few months, we have completely overhauled the way we move mail in Chicago so that we deliver on-time, accurate, consistent service to our customers. Customer service is my first priority and as I build a team it is one of the messages that I am stressing again and again.

I've taken a hands-on approach to improving service and would like to go into detail on some of our actions taken. One of the themes that I am actively working on communicating with employees is that of accountability. I strongly believe that our employees are a dedicated workforce and are committed to fulfilling their jobs to the best of their abilities. I also strongly believe in surrounding our employees with the best leadership team possible, so I have made changes to put the right people in the right jobs.

I have increased the number of Customer Service Operations positions from four to seven to provide greater management oversight for stations and branches; increased the number of mid-level managers and increased the grade-level of these new Customer Service management positions to reflect increased levels of responsibility.

Our work depends on having dedicated, competent employees. I have named a new Acting Human Resources Manager to help us get our employee hiring, screening and development programs revamped. My vision is to implement a whole new approach to mentoring, coaching and training programs for our nearly 9,000 District employees. It is my job to ensure they have the skills they need to succeed.

I am very pleased to be able to say that we have hired more than 200 letter carriers. We have thoroughly trained them and placed them at some of our stations and branches in the most need of help. Stations such as Jackson Park, Ravenswood and Wicker Park all have received letter

carriers to help improve service from these busy stations. The addition of these new hires will also reduce late night deliveries.

We have greatly improved getting our letter carriers out on the street earlier and having them return to their delivery offices earlier. In mid-May, we celebrated a huge success with this by having 90% of our carriers back by 6 p.m. By stressing this goal to our employees, we were able to get employees focused on the importance of returning on time. We have seen steady improvement in getting our carriers back by early evening.

I would like to take a minute to talk about the team work that we have been able to develop with our unions, our partners in this effort. Since my arrival, the local union presidents and presidents of our management associations have worked closely with me every step of the way to resolve the issues that we face in making improvements to Chicago service. I have taken the time to visit our city's stations and branches and to talk with employees and shop stewards. They, in turn, have taken the time to work with me on developing sound communication and workplace strategies. I want to thank them for their commitment and assistance.

One of the strategies that I am working on with the National Association of Letter Carriers is to dedicate a special group of letter carriers to retrieve mail from collection boxes. This will help our carriers on the street focus on delivering the mail, while it gets collection box mail into system earlier.

I would be remiss, if I didn't acknowledge the entire Chicago District's appreciation for the support that we have received from our postal colleagues from around the country. We have more than 140 experts temporarily stationed here to work with us on reviewing every mail delivery process, and to provide retraining and assistance. We certainly appreciate and acknowledge their important contributions.

Their assistance has allowed us to review 53% of the city's 2,500 delivery routes. We have about 75 postal address management experts walking these routes to update and validate our address database and we have completed about half of them to date. This thorough, comprehensive approach will insure the most accurate mail distribution and delivery. To date, we have entered more than 71,000 Address Management System corrections. In an era of mail automation, this is a critical step. If our machines cannot identify an address, the likelihood of delayed or misdelivered mail increases. We expect to complete this address updating by August 2007. It will then become a routine part of our day to day operations.

A close partner of mine in improving Chicago service is our new Senior Plant Manager, Todd Hawkins. From the moment that Todd arrived in Chicago – which has only been a few weeks – we have formed a team and have the common goal of finding ways that mail processing in the plant and mail delivery from the stations can be improved. We have a new mid-day Collection Validation Process. This monitors that all early collections are being performed and that collections are back at the station in time for early plant dispatches.

Together, we have instituted new procedures for implementing random station spot checks to ensure that stations are indeed loading all available collection mail onto transportation back to the processing plant. Simultaneous efforts are in place with all of the stations to improve mail preparation.

But I have a lot of partners in getting Chicago's mail service to national levels. Chicago's business and political community have reached out to me and together we are working on ways to solve problems. Some of the solutions are little things that will greatly help the bottom line. For example, in talking with our customers, they are looking to us to provide helpful information and tips on proper addressing techniques. To that end, we have developed a postcard to distribute to customers, we have developed channels of communicating this information to the public through

our Aldermen and congressional offices, and we have posted this information for building managers in charge of mail boxes.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Aldermen for pointing out some of critical issues standing in the way of providing excellent customer service. One of my priorities has been to meet with them. Since my arrival, I have had dozens of meetings with federal and local elected officials. These meetings have proven invaluable as a means of communication and customer feedback.

One of our joint accomplishments has been the formation of Customer Advisory Councils. We have had one meeting to date, and have another three established by June 12, 2007. Through these meetings, we have established a direct postal contact point for elected officials, which has helped us fine-tune our procedures for customer complaint resolutions.

I'd like to close my remarks by making one final point. And that is that I am not alone in being committed to fixing Chicago's mail problems. Behind me stands a dedicated, focused workforce of nearly 9,000 employees with the same goal. Their job is to process and deliver the mail and my job is to make sure that they have the information, tools and processes in place to do so. I have implemented a variety of new communication tools and have dedicated additional resources so that our employees have the information they need to get their job done.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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