

# Congress of the United States

October 3, 2011

Patrick R. Donahoe  
Postmaster General  
United States Postal Service  
475 L'Enfant Plaza S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Mr. Donahoe:

We understand that the Postal Service proposes to eliminate overnight First-Class Mail and Periodical services, to narrow the two-day delivery range, and to enlarge the three-day delivery range. As a result of this change, the Postal Service plans to consolidate processing and transportation networks nationwide and, in this vein, is currently examining the two Area Mail Processing Facilities in the State of Vermont located at Essex Junction and White River Junction for potential closure. We strongly oppose these changes and believe that they are counterproductive. In the long run, we believe any decrease in service quality will make the Postal Service less competitive and less financially sustainable.

As the Postal Service considers whether to loosen its standards, we urge you to remember that the Postal Service does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, it exists as an independent entity competing for market share in a \$1.1 trillion mailing industry. If the Postal Service decreases its delivery standards, this will force many loyal customers—from home delivery medication companies to newspaper publishers—to turn to private mailing options. Once those customers leave, they are most likely not to come back, and the Postal Service's financial woes will continue to worsen. For this reason, we strongly oppose any steps that would make the Postal Service less effective vis-à-vis its private sector competitors.

Additionally, we cannot ignore the reason that the Postal Service is proposing to decrease its service quality; these steps are designed to facilitate additional closings of area mail processing facilities, both in our home state of Vermont and across the country. The Postal Service has already reduced the number of mail processing facilities from 675 to 508 over the last six years, and it has made clear that it is making this regulatory change to further slash the number of facilities down to as few as 200.

As it cuts the number of mail processing facilities, the Postal Service will also eliminate the many associated good-paying jobs. We are now facing a 9.1 percent official unemployment rate, with other measures markedly higher, and the President is in the process of unveiling a major job creation initiative. The Postal Service is the second largest employer in the United States; any steps by the Postal Service to significantly

reduce its workforce would be at cross-purposes with other important job creation efforts and would exacerbate an already dire unemployment situation.

We are very much aware that the Postal Service must take steps to improve its financial situation, but we believe that other steps must come first. As we have noted in other correspondence, we strongly support rectifying the health benefits pre-funding requirement. We also support restoring the excess funds that the Postal Service overpaid into the Civil Service Retirement System. These steps alone would go a long way toward relieving the budget shortfall facing the Postal Service. We find it disappointing that the USPS seems only to look at ways to cut its workforce and scale back operations rather than to look for sensible reforms to its financial challenges and new markets where it can grow and continue to be relevant in the years to come.

  
BERNARD SANDERS  
United States Senator

  
PATRICK LEAHY  
United States Senator

  
PETER WELCH  
Member of Congress