

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 16, 2011

Mr. Patrick R. Donahoe  
Postmaster General  
United States Postal Service  
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW  
Washington, DC 20260-0010

Dear Postmaster General Donahoe:

We understand that the Postal Service is examining the two Area Mail Processing facilities in the State of Vermont, located at Essex Junction and White River Junction, for potential closure in anticipation of modification of the current overnight service standard for First-Class Mail. We write to express our grave concern over the potential closure of either of these facilities.

The Postal Service has already reduced its number of mail processing facilities from 675 to 508 over the last six years, and you have made clear that any additional reductions would result in a decline in the expedient delivery of mail that Americans have come to rely upon. While the Postal Service may face a budget shortfall, it could be alleviated to a large degree by ending the requirement to pre-fund retiree health benefits. Furthermore, relaxing delivery standards has the potential to harm the Postal Service's competitiveness in the future and lead to larger deficits, creating a downward spiral.

That decline in service quality and competitiveness would be reason enough to keep the White River Junction and Essex Junction facilities open; however, we also urge you to consider the disastrous impact that the closing of these and other facilities across the country will have on local and national unemployment. The Postal Service is a major employer in Vermont and around the country. To us, it seems inopportune that the Postal Service is proposing to worsen America's joblessness situation at the same time as the President is in the process of unveiling a major job creation initiative. Even if consolidation of mail processing facilities were the right approach for the future of the Postal Service, this proposal is very poorly timed.

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 note above, 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 to only look at ways to cut its workforce and operations rather than working to find new markets where it can grow and continue to be relevant in the years to come.

September 16, 2011  
Postmaster General Donahoe  
Page 2

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to working with you to keep the Postal Service the great institution that Americans expect and deserve it to be.

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY  
United States Senator



BERNIE SANDERS  
United States Senator



PETER WELCH  
Member of Congress