

SENATORS ANNOUNCE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE AGREEMENT TO DELAY POSTAL FACILITY CLOSURES FOR FIVE-MONTHS

Moratorium would protect good-paying jobs while Congress works to enact comprehensive postal reform legislation

[WASHINGTON, D.C.] – Fifteen Senators from around the country today announced that, at their request, the U.S. Postal Service has voluntarily agreed to put in place a five-month moratorium on closing postal facilities, which would give Congress more time to enact postal reform legislation. During the moratorium, scheduled to end on May 15, 2012, the Postal Service will continue to study the impact of proposed closures on service and costs and to solicit community input.

Today's announcement follows a meeting yesterday between several Senators and the U.S. Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe and the U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors Chairman Thurgood Marshall, Jr., in which Senators expressed concern over the impact of reduced service and the loss of thousands of jobs.

On September 15, 2011, the U.S. Postal Service announced plans to review its mail processing network in the hopes of reducing costs. The Postal Service is currently considering the elimination of overnight delivery and studying the possibility of closing 3,700 mostly rural post offices and 252 mail processing facilities.

U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL): **“Over the last few months, I have heard concerns from local officials, residents and postal service employees about the original proposal from the Postal Service. Illinois would pay a heavy price under that proposal which impacts dozens of rural post offices in our state and nine mail processing centers that employ roughly 1,800 Illinoisans. There is no doubt that the Postal Service as we know it today has to adapt, but I think a better solution exists. The Postal Service has given Congress five months to act. It’s now up to us to move forward with comprehensive legislation that does not jeopardize the best postal service in the world.”**

U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders (D-VT): **“I am pleased that the Postal Service has announced that it will impose a moratorium on closing or consolidating post offices and mail processing facilities. This moratorium will give Congress the breathing room it needs to enact comprehensive postal reform to protect universal service while ensuring the postal service will succeed in the 21st century.”**

U.S. Senator Jon Tester (D-MT): **“Today’s announcement is a win for Montana, and credit belongs to the thousands of Montanans who raised their concerns about the importance of postal service in rural America. But we have more work to do. I look forward to working on a long-term solution that keeps the Postal Service open for business and serving rural America.”**

U.S. Senator Mark Begich (D-AK): **“I’ve spent months sending a strong message to the Postmaster General that Alaska post offices are the center of our rural communities and a necessary source of groceries, medicine and equipment. Closing post offices can permanently damage Alaska communities and I’m glad the Postmaster General has recognized that Congress needs to be given an opportunity to do our job before closing the doors on our post offices. In the past year I’ve made several proposals for reforming the post office, including setting clear retail standards for USPS services in every community, and look forward to working with my colleagues on legislation before the end of this moratorium. I am committed to protecting universal service to Alaska communities and ensuring the success of the USPS in the 21st century.”**

U.S. Senator Clair McCaskill (D-MO): **“Folks in communities across Missouri rely on the Postal Service for everything from life-saving prescriptions to veterans’ benefits. I’m glad that we have convinced the Postal Service to put the brakes on closing any post offices for six months so that we have time to enact**

reforms for the long-term health of the postal service and protect communities. I'll remain devoted to ensuring the Postal Service acts with full transparency and fairness as they make decisions that impact services in Missouri.”

U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH): “This moratorium is a win for Ohio consumers, Ohio business, and Ohio workers. Though the Postal Service faces serious challenges, this will provide time to reach a solution that will strengthen the USPS, instead of crippling it. It is vital that all Ohio residents and businesses receive the same level of service and access to their mail.”

U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR): “Post offices and the services they provide are vital to the economic health of rural communities. They add tremendous value to Oregon's commerce and are often a center of civic life in rural parts of the state. As a vote-by-mail state, a fully operating Postal Service is at the core of Oregon's democratic process. This decision from the Postal Service is a welcome victory for folks living in rural as well as urban areas while Congress looks to tackle postal reform in the coming year.”

U.S. Senator Ben Nelson (D-NE): “Closing post offices before we try to fix the system is putting the cart before the horse, so today's announcement is good news. With 90 rural post offices targeted for closure in Nebraska, we have to remember that the USPS was created to provide a public service. Our local post offices play a special role in our communities, keeping us connected to our friends and families, and keeping businesses connected to their customers. They are an important part of our economy and our social fabric, serving every city, suburb and small town in Nebraska.”

U.S. Senator Mark Udall (D-CO): "I'm glad the Postal Service is giving Congress some time to reach a viable long-term solution to deal with the USPS's budget shortfall in a way that softens the impact on rural communities in Colorado and across the country. Post offices anchor the daily activities and local economies in so many of America's small towns. Now that we have a five-month reprieve, we owe it to our constituents to find creative ways to maintain quality access to post office services for our small towns and small businesses."

U.S. Senator Tom Udall (D-NM): “Throughout this year, I've stressed to the Postmaster General the real impact that post office closures will have on New Mexico communities. We need comprehensive reform that ensures the long-term stability of the Postal Service, while providing essential, quality service to every corner of New Mexico. I commend the Postmaster General for putting a moratorium on any further closures for the next few months to give Congress the opportunity to find a long-term solution. We owe it to rural communities especially, that depend on the postal system for commerce, jobs and to stay connected, to find a sustainable solution that doesn't compromise service.”

U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY): “The U.S. Postal Service plays a vital role in every community. Small businesses, families, and seniors depend on these facilities daily. While this is not a permanent solution, I am pleased that the Postmaster General is putting a six-month moratorium on the closures of postal facilities. In New York , more than 1000 jobs, 100 post offices and 7 Area Mail Processing centers will continue serving their communities while Congress works on reforming the postal service to ensure its survival.”

U.S. Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD): “I welcome the Postal Service's decision to put in place a five-month moratorium. Congress now needs to work on reforms that can restore fiscal solvency to USPS. I will continue to fight to ensure the Postal Service provides quality service to rural America because it is incredibly important to South Dakota's way of life and our state's economy.”

U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN): “As the U.S. Postal Service takes steps to turn its financial situation around, it is important that it take into consideration the needs of rural communities. I believe we need to enact reforms to help the Postal Service adjust to a digital world and recognize the concerns of rural communities.”

U.S. Senator Al Franken (D-MN): “This moratorium will protect jobs and post offices all over Minnesota by giving Congress time to get the U.S. Postal Service’s financial house in order and make needed, reasonable reforms. The Postal Service provides a vital service to people all over the country, and it's important that we make sure that Minnesotans – particularly in rural areas – can continue to depend on their local post offices.”

U.S. Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV): “The proposed post office closings and mail processing consolidations could seriously harm communities throughout West Virginia – slashing critical jobs in our local communities, and slowing or even halting mail service in dozens of communities. I’m glad that the USPS is now delaying these actions. There is no question that USPS is facing serious financial problems, but rather than slashing jobs and services in rural areas, I believe that Congress can and should take steps to resolve some of these issues, and hopefully save some of the jobs that might otherwise get cut. Particularly as so many families are just trying to make ends meet, we owe it to our postal workers to try to keep as many of them in their jobs as possible.”