



NALC Fact Sheet

Department of Government and Political Affairs — National Association of Letter Carriers

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Postal Service innovation and growth

For now, the Postal Service is limited in the types of products and services it can offer, which prevents it from taking full advantage of its unique retail and delivery networks. With its unmatched infrastructure and reach to every residential and commercial address at least six days a week, there is unique opportunity for USPS to explore new ways of responding to its customers' continually evolving needs.

With the growing demands of e-commerce markets, the technological innovations that drive improved goods and swift services, and customer trends, the Postal Service is ready to meet all of these challenges and to exceed customer expectations, just as it has for more than 240 years. However, the Postal Service must be freed at least to stay in step with the needs of its customers, if not to move a step or two ahead of them.

The Postal Service's inspector general has noted that "with the potential for significant growth, package delivery is critical to the future of the U.S. Postal Service." This growth must be built on a strong network that has in place equally strong service standards. Fortunately, the investment required for USPS to offer such new products and services is aided by the fact that the agency already has a robust delivery infrastructure in place. And the Postal Service is most effective and efficient when a combination of products (letters, periodicals, mailers and packages) is delivered via the same underlying network.

The inspector general also identified nearly two dozen new opportunities for USPS both to capitalize on its network and to increase the value of its delivery operation. NALC supports the exploration of these and other innovative ideas that take advantage of the Postal Service's robust networks, increase postal revenues, expand the role of postal workers and provide USPS with countless additional growth opportunities.

Congress can and should authorize the Postal Service to investigate ways that it can serve unmet needs using its existing networks. The following "outside the box" ideas are among those promoted by bills introduced in previous sessions of Congress:

- **Vote-by-mail:** Mail-in balloting initiatives improve constituent access to government services and boost

participation in the electoral process by making it more convenient for registered voters to cast their ballots. Oregon and Washington State successfully conduct elections entirely through the mail, and several other states offer no-excuses absentee balloting as a popular voting option.

Mail-in initiatives encourage partnerships between the Postal Service and federal, state and local government agencies to better serve the voting public's needs.

- **3-D printing:** While the technology is still rather new, a report from USPS' inspector general envisions some scenarios through which three-dimensional (3-D) printing could help boost postal revenues. For example, partnering with local businesses to centralize 3-D printing within postal facilities could help generate products printed on demand and shipped right from the same post office.

Meanwhile, in-home 3-D printed products will also require a shipping agency such as USPS to pick up and deliver those items, something that would create additional business opportunities for the Postal Service. The inspector general estimated that investing in 3-D printing could result in \$11 billion in new revenue for USPS over the next 10 years.[†]

- **Shipping of beer, wine and spirits:** Allowing the Postal Service to expand its delivery efforts to the delivery of beer, wine and spirits—in accordance with individual states' laws—is a simple and easily implemented way to help USPS potentially bring in hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenue.
- **E-mail services:** Several postal agencies around the world perform a variety of services related to e-mail. Swiss Post, for example, provides customers the option to have their physical mail received at the post office, then scanned and delivered electronically to a registered e-mail address. In Sweden, post offices can receive e-mails for customers who are not online and then print and physically deliver those print-outs. In France, La Poste offers e-mail services to its customers. USPS should be allowed to explore such services, especially since the Federal Communications Commission has reported that 19 million Americans still lack access to basic fixed broadband service.

[†] *If It Prints, It Ships; 3D Printing and the Postal Service* <http://goo.gl/ZejoME>