



Protecting the postal mission

We've heard it all. Do away with Saturday delivery; close post offices and plants around the country. Everyone uses e-mail and other means to communicate today. Don't bail the Postal Service out.

The Postal Service is an institution established for the people of the United States of America. Keeping that in mind, let's look at why this was done and the purpose for which it was created. The following are excerpts from the 1970 Postal Reorganization Act:

The United States Postal Service shall be operated as a basic and fundamental service provided to the people by the Government of the United States, authorized by the Constitution, created by, Act of Congress, and supported by the people. The Postal Service shall have as its basic function the obligation to provide postal services to bind the Nation together through the personal, educational, literary, and business correspondence of the people. It shall provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas and shall render postal services to all communities. The costs of establishing and maintaining the Postal Service shall not be apportioned to impair the overall value of such service to the people.

The Postal Service shall provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, communities, and small towns where post offices are not self-sustaining. No small post office shall be closed solely for operating at a deficit, it being the specific intent of the Congress that effective postal services be insured to residents of both urban and rural communities.

After reading the purpose of the Postal Service, I think you can agree that the proposed changes would erode the basic functions for which the Postal Service was created. It was not created for politicians, nor was it created to eliminate or block the American people from being able to communicate with each other across America. It was created so all classes of Americans, rich or poor, would have a way to communicate with each other at a reasonable price.

What has happened? In 2006, before the breakdown of the economy in 2008, Congress enacted a bill that required the Postal Service to make payments for pre-funding of future retiree health benefits. At that time, the Postal Service averaged about \$2.3 billion a year in profit from 2003 to 2006 and could afford to make those payments.

However, based on the changes in the economy in 2008 and the subsequent years that followed, no company—not even the Postal Service—could continue to make the payments at the rate the congressional bill called for.

So what is the solution? Congress should do the right thing. Eliminate the requirement to pre-fund, as the Postal Service already has contributed more than 45 percent of the money, while no other company or federal agency is required to do so. Permit the Postal Service to advance its product line to include electronic mail and/or other solutions to bring in new products for the future. In addition, it should return the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) overpayments.

The fact is that the postal reform legislation from 2006 resulted in the predicament the Postal Service is now in. It is not the postal employees, nor is it e-mail or other electronic changes, that have caused the problem. We recognize that some changes have taken place as a result of that; however, it is not what has caused the biggest change. The foremost problem we have today is the 2006 legislation dealing with the pre-funding coupled with the economy. This caused a perfect storm to lead us to where we are today.

It can be fixed, and together we can make the changes necessary to restore the mission of the Postal Service to serving the people of this great nation. Write to your representatives and senators today in support of eliminating the pre-funding provisions, returning the FERS and CSRS overpayments, and providing the Postal Service with the freedom to expand the services it offers to bring in more products for the future. ✉