

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 7, 2011

The Honorable Ruth Goldway
Chairwoman
Postal Regulatory Commission
901 New York Avenue NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20268

Dear Chairwoman Goldway,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the U.S. Postal Service's (hereinafter, "Postal Service") proposal to update its post office closing procedures. Thank you also for including this letter in the informal comments for docket N2011-1. The Postal Service has proposed closing up to 3,560 post offices nationwide. While we appreciate the difficult situation in which the Postal Service finds itself, many of these proposed closures would affect rural communities throughout the country including Colorado and should not be made without careful consideration of all factors and the potential effects of a closure.

The Postal Service is conducting important work to address financial hardship, and move the agency forward. As total mail volume decreased beginning in late 2007, the Postal Service has made several structural changes in order to maintain services while making operations more efficient and keeping prices low including:

- Reducing workforce hours in order to maintain productivity even as volume declines.
- Consolidating 21 National Distribution Centers into 11 in order to better utilize facility space.
- Decreasing the number of processing facilities by 100 in order to cut spending while streamlining mail processing.
- Optimizing equipment by removing redundant and end of life machines while introducing and enhancing existing technology.

Unfortunately these efforts have not been enough to prevent the Postal Service from reaching its financial limits. To remedy this, the Postal Service plans to close post offices as a next step for savings. However, closure is not always the most direct way to achieve savings targets. The law requires that "the Postal Service shall provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, communities, and small towns." (39 U.S.C. 101(b)). As you know, small and remote communities, especially in rural and mountain regions like Colorado, often depend on the local post office as an accessible representation of the federal government and for their mail service. These Colorado residents and business owners are understandably worried that retail discontinuance of some of the post offices could negatively affect their businesses, the vitality of their respective communities and constrain their choices, causing them to embark upon

costly and time-consuming commutes to distant postal facilities that are often difficult and dangerous to reach in the winter months.

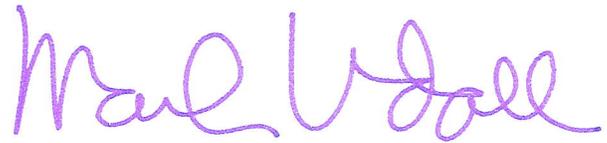
The Postal Service has included criteria based on which post offices will be considered for closure. The three criteria are (1) the potential for decreased office workload, (2) insufficient customer demand, and (3) proximity to other post offices. We would encourage the Postal Regulatory Commission (hereinafter, the "Commission") to recommend that any post office currently being considered for closure which fares particularly well when these three criteria are applied to it, be removed from consideration for closure. The Commission should also recommend that any new information that comes to light in this review be considered by the Postal Service before a final decision is made on closures.

As the Commission examines the Postal Service's request and renders its advisory opinion, we hope the Commission will carefully consider the effects this request will have on rural areas and small communities in Colorado and the rest of the country, especially during this difficult economic time. We appreciate the Commission's efforts to conduct an open review process in order to ensure the Postal Service continues to operate responsibly and transparently. Once again, thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Mark E. Udall
United States Senator