

The 60 Plus Association

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Postal Regulatory Commission
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Kill the Death Tax. Protect Social Security. Energy Security.

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President

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Honorary Chairman

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National Spokesman

Testimony of James L. Martin
President, 60 Plus Association
Universal Postal Service and Postal Monopoly
Thursday, July 10, 2008
10am, PRC Hearing Room
901 New York Ave., NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20001

Good morning, I'm Jim Martin, President of the 15-year-old national senior citizen organization, the 60 Plus Association. I very much appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Commission on behalf of the report you will prepare for the President and the Congress on universal postal service and the postal monopoly in the United States.

Preparing a few thoughts for this morning's testimony, I spoke with one "gray hair" as I like to call them --- who recounted a joke he gathered about what postal service would look like in the year 2029 --- he said the headline would read: POSTAL SERVICE RAISES PRICE OF FIRST CLASS STAMP TO \$17.89 AND REDUCES MAIL DELIVERY TO WEDNESDAYS ONLY.

Well, that's a cute story as far as it goes...but I know we can all agree we hope it doesn't go very far!

The 60 Plus Association represents seniors in the United States who depend on the U.S. Postal Service; on that there can be no question --- seniors, as one might expect, have migrated to the Internet and things like email very slowly. We're getting there, but we're not there yet.

The quality of timely and reliable service that the U.S. Postal Service provides, particularly for first-class letter mail and other market-dominant products and services, is extremely important to seniors. It is our hope and expectation that as the Postal Service moves forward with service standards for these products, that they will continue to ensure that the services they receive do not lose out to the competing interests, such as those of big, corporate mailers.

We have followed recent discussions about possibly moving to 5-day-a-week mail delivery with some concern. We remember when twice-a-day delivery was a regular occurrence, as

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you might as well. We have seen a trend toward mail delivery to cluster boxes, instead of to the front door, in many newer communities. And it seems that there are always fewer collection boxes, and fewer pickup times. We recognize that declining mail volumes and other factors create a climate where cost-cutting is an important priority for the Postal Service. We hope that the Postal Regulatory Commission will continue to do everything it can to ensure that such cost-cutting not come at the expense of the prompt and reliable mail service that seniors depend on.

While many seniors have been slow to join the online revolution, many do actually rely on online and catalog purchases for better prices and wider selections. Many others depend on timely and reliable delivery of checks and other important documents. For these seniors, the Postal Service's monopoly on the use of the mailbox is increasingly inefficient and inconvenient. The higher cost of using private delivery companies as an alternative is a problem for seniors on fixed incomes. Seniors must purchase and maintain their mailboxes – why can't they choose who has access to them?

It is a significant concern to seniors that first class letter mail continues to contribute more to the Postal Service's institutional overhead than other products and services, including parcel post, priority mail and periodicals.

I'll conclude my comments this morning this way: the U.S. Postal Service enjoys two monopolies we all know about: the first is letter delivery, the other is the use of mailboxes. Since it's my opinion that my seniors at 60 Plus refer to the latter more frequently in comments to me, I'll end this way: why cannot this prohibition on the use of mailboxes be lifted? It would be a great help to senior citizens all across America if simple acts of community communication could be conducted via the mailboxes they purchased in the first place! Invitations to birthday parties, circular coupons from local businesses, notices about community activities, street cleanings or special trash pickups, etc. are real choices denied seniors, many less mobile or infirmed who would really appreciate the lifting of this mailbox monopoly. As a matter of fact, it is my understanding that the United States is the only country in the world that operates with this mailbox monopoly restriction.

I would respectfully ask this Commission to give that serious thought.

Thank you.

The 60 Plus Association is a 15-year-old nonpartisan organization working for death tax repeal, saving Social Security, affordable prescription drugs, lowering energy costs and other issues featuring a less government, less taxes approach. 60 Plus calls on support from nearly 4.5 million citizen activists. 60 Plus publishes a magazine, SENIOR VOICE, and a Scorecard, bestowing awards on lawmakers of both parties who vote “pro-senior.” 60 Plus has been called “an increasingly influential senior citizen’s group.”