

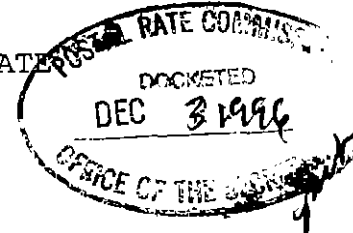
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BEFORE THE  
POSTAL RATE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20268-0001

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POSTAL RATE COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Special Services Fees and Classifications) Docket No. MC96-3

COMMENTS OF THE OFFICE OF THE CONSUMER ADVOCATE  
IN RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF INQUIRY NO. 1  
(December 3, 1996)



The Office of the Consumer Advocate (OCA) hereby responds to the Commission's November 14, 1995, Notice of Inquiry No. 1 (NOI-1). NOI-1 asks for comments as to whether the Postal Service's proposed substantive changes (as well as several unrelated minor editorial changes) to the Domestic Mail Classification Schedule (DMCS) for the selected special services in this docket "can serve as a starting point for broader improvements in the organization, format, and editorial presentation of the underlying DMCS . . . ." NOI-1 at 1.

The OCA is certainly in favor of improvements to the DMCS. However, the OCA believes that the Commission should proceed with caution in global revision of the special services portion or ad hoc revision of other provisions of the Domestic Mail Classification Schedule for the following reasons:

(1) Docket No. MC96-3 is not an omnibus special services reclassification case. This case addresses only certain specific special services. It is only a partial reclassification case and has strong revenue (i.e., fee increase) aspects to it. Parties affected by editorial revisions or changes may not be intervenors in this docket.<sup>1</sup>

(2) The OCA objects to some of the Postal Service's substantive DMCS proposals (e.g., stamped cards and the non-resident surcharge for post office box rental). Thus, the OCA prefers that the status quo remain in certain circumstances (e.g., regarding the language for postal cards). In other instances, the OCA has not made specific decisions regarding the exact DMCS language (e.g., Express Mail document reconstruction indemnity limits).

(3) It is possible for even minor editorial changes in the DMCS to complicate disagreements between the Postal Service and

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<sup>1</sup> If the Commission's reference to "publishing proposed revisions for comment," NOI-1 at 1, means a Federal Register notice, then legal problems of adequate notice will probably be avoided. On the other hand, it might be administratively more efficient to have a single notice-and-comment rulemaking rather than begin proceedings in MC96-3 and then switch to a different "RM" docket later.

the Commission on the merits of the proposed changes to be included in the Commission's decision. This might also interject delay into the proceeding.

(4) It appears that other substantive changes may be submitted to the Commission in the near future. In particular, parcel reclassification proposals are likely to include ancillary services including present or new special services. See, e.g., *Business Mailers Review*, November 18, 1996, page 3.

With these comments in mind, the OCA responds to each of the requested points below.

1. A. and B. The suggestion to adopt a numbering system for special services which more closely adheres to the system used for the classes of mail appears to have merit, as does use of the standard notation "[Reserved]" to refer to gaps in the numbered series. The OCA does not believe that adoption of either or both of these refinements to the DMCS would cause substantive harm.

C. The OCA suggests an alternative to the proposal in section C. Instead of replacing the heading "Classification

Schedules" with "Special Services", the following might more closely conform to the format of the classes of mail.

**"Classification Schedule 700 - SPECIAL SERVICES"**

and then follow with the numeration as shown in Attachment A.

2. A. and B. Establishing standard internal headings and a consistent practice on the content and level of detail appearing under such headings appear beneficial to the extent that they are consistent with the comments in (1)-(4) above.

C. Post office box fees are at issue in this proceeding. It seems appropriate that the rate schedule for facilities serving academic institutions should appear with the regular rate schedules, with an appropriate cross-reference, not in the main text.

D. The expression of the prorated fees for renting post office boxes at facilities serving academic institutions seems clear to the OCA. We will await actual language before commenting further on this point.

E. The OCA believes that its comments in (1)-(4) above are applicable to the editorial changes noted in Attachment B.

3. The OCA believes that option B (which envisions adoption of revisions in only those portions of the DMCS which are substantively affected by the Service's proposals) is the most appropriate guideline for implementing the various editorial and organizational improvements discussed in NOI-1 and these comments. As discussed at note 1, above, notice problems could arise if adoption of editorial revisions or changes were interpreted as having substantive impact by a party who has not intervened in this docket.

Respectfully submitted,



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Assistant Director  
Office of the Consumer Advocate

#### CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have this date served the foregoing document upon all participants of record in this proceeding in accordance with section 3.B(3) of the special rules of practice.



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Washington, D.C. 20268-0001  
December 3, 1996