

United States of America
Postal Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20268-0001

Before Commissioners: Dan G. Blair, Chairman;
Mark Acton, Vice Chairman;
Ruth Y. Goldway;
Tony L. Hammond; and
Nancy Langley

Report on Universal Postal
Service and the Postal Monopoly Docket No. PI2008-3

Comments of the Hoosier State Press Association in Reply to Other Parties

The consideration of any changes to Universal Postal Service must take into account the needs of newspapers, many of which are dependent upon the U.S. Postal Service to deliver time-sensitive information to readers.

The Hoosier State Press Association (HSPA) is a trade association that represents Indiana's paid-circulation newspapers. Our membership ranges from The Indianapolis Star with a circulation of more than 260,000 to the Kokomo Herald with a weekly circulation of about 300.

Based on a recent trend exhibited in Indiana, HSPA believes newspapers' needs for fairly priced and reliable postal service is increasing, not diminishing.

In the last year at least four Indiana dailies, all under 10,000-circulation, have switched delivery systems from independent carriers to the United States Postal Service. In some cases, this has required a change from the normal delivery time cycle, but those publishers felt the internal upheaval was worthwhile when compared to the benefits gained by changing to postal delivery.

This trend, which brings much-needed volume to the postal system, could be reversed if the postal service abandons its commitment to universal service.

Newspapers rely on the postal service because of the promise of same-day delivery from the local post office and delivery offered on a Monday through Saturday basis.

If the postal service decides to eliminate six-day delivery or force newspapers into flats sequencing system locations that erase the same-day guarantee, then newspapers will be forced to explore delivery alternatives.

News must be immediate or it becomes irrelevant. It spoils faster than bananas left out in the heat of a summer's day.

Readers want to know what the city council is contemplating at its next meeting before it's too late to plan on attending that council meeting or contacting their local council member.

Readers want to read how the high school basketball team fared in its rivalry game the next day so they can discuss the game with co-workers that day.

Readers need to know that there's a one-day sale on generators at the hardware store because they've wanted one since the power went off last month during an ice storm, which led to no electricity for the sump pump needed to keep the basement dry. If the paper's delivered a day late, they miss the sale.

Newspaper advertisers, such as the hardware store, need that same assurance that the paper will be delivered, so that potential customers won't miss the sale designed to clear old inventory to make way for new.

Newspapers and the postal service have been intertwined since before our country was formed. Postal distribution of news and political tracts helped formulate the colonists' desire for independence from Great Britain.

The closing of a post office, driver's license branch, or local newspapers are among the biggest hits that can occur to a community's sense of identity. Having that local postmaster available to help with mailing questions at Christmas or local newspaper to keep up with community events is an essential element of a community's vitality.

It would be more than tragically ironic if changes instituted by one of these institutions at the national level inadvertently led to the demise of the other institution at the local level through the loss of same-day delivery and Monday through Saturday delivery.

The Postal Regulatory Commission can use this docket to address service issues that concern newspapers. The PRC can reaffirm the view that timely newspaper delivery must remain as a component of the Postal Service's universal service obligation.

The PRC can ensure that measurement system for delivery time must include a valid metric for identifying the speed of newspaper delivery by the Postal Service.

Respectfully submitted,

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