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# POLICY MATTERS OHIO

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## Memorandum

To: Ann Fisher, Director of Public Affairs and Government Relations  
From: Amy Hanauer, Executive Director, Policy Matters Ohio  
Re: Ohio Post Office closures

As the United States Postal Service faces deep financial losses in 2009 and beyond, decision-makers are considering closing hundreds of retail post offices and branches across the United States. In Ohio, 44 post offices are under review as possible sites for closure.

Closure of post office branches will result in reduced accessibility to postal services, reduced employment, and possible reductions in economic activity in neighborhoods where the post office is one of the anchors of a commercial center.

We conducted an initial analysis of demographic characteristics of neighborhoods that might face loss of their post offices. We encourage deeper analysis of these and other issues. Our initial findings are that the offices being considered for closure are disproportionately located in low-income neighborhoods in Ohio. As the table at the end of this document shows, 75 percent of the neighborhoods in danger of losing their local post office have median household incomes below the state median household income (this excludes four neighborhoods for which income data were not immediately available). Fifteen of the post offices are in zip codes with median household incomes below \$30,000 and seven are in zip codes with median household incomes below \$20,000.

When accounting for the populations of these areas the numbers are less lopsided, but the possible cuts still disproportionately affect low-income areas. Certain offices in extremely low-income areas have relatively low populations, which could skew our data and make it seem as though more low-income residents are being affected than really are. Most notable of these is the Akron Downtown Station Office, where the zip code surrounding the office only has 904 residents. However, this is the exception to the rule. The vast majority of the thirty low-income areas with an office under review have populations over 10,000. Of the 790,972 people living in zip codes with a post office under review, 542,221 of them – 68.5 percent – live in areas with median incomes below Ohio's median income.

There are many reasons these numbers concern us. First and foremost is their implication for low-income neighborhood residents' access to postal services. These residents have less access to personal transportation and less expendable income for fuel and public transportation. They also have less access to private mailing options that are more prevalent in high-income areas. Removing a branch from their communities may constrain their ability to use the U.S. Postal Service.

Our second concern relates to eliminating a source of decent civil service employment in some of Ohio’s poorest communities. While current employees are expected to be transferred instead of eliminated, a move we applaud, long-term it will mean fewer jobs in proximity to these already financially-challenged communities.

Third, in financially-strained communities, the presence of the post office as a neighborhood anchor is more vital than in wealthier areas. Businesses and residents who rely on these services will have one less reason to stay in these communities and blighted areas that can least afford it will be burdened with one more empty storefront.

An additional issue which we were unable to examine in the limited time available is the degree to which these closures may be contributing to sprawl and detracting from urban vitality and density. We encourage others to do further research to determine whether the closures are disproportionately in densely populated areas.

We understand that financial constraints may force some post office closures and we recognize that no community likes to lose its public services and institutions. Nonetheless, the disproportionate effect on low-income neighborhoods is troubling. The United States Postal Service is a public service with an admirable history of making mail delivery affordable and available to citizens across the economic spectrum. Cost cutting measures that disproportionately affect low-income citizens should be reexamined and other options should be pursued. The table below provides details on the median household income in affected neighborhoods.

Our research is only a brief examination of the plans to close post offices throughout Ohio. We have found that low-income neighborhoods will suffer the majority of these closures and we encourage the USPS to conduct additional research and review this more closely to avoid an unreasonable burden on Ohio’s poorest residents. We understand that USPS has chosen these branches for a variety of reasons that we have not had time to inspect, but we hope that greater effort will be put forth towards continuing accessible postal service to low income residents.

<b>Ohio post offices being considered for closure September 2009</b>		
<b>City</b>	<b>Post Office</b>	<b>Median Household Income</b>
Akron	Akron Chapel Hill	\$30,817.00
	Akron Downtown Station	\$8,676.00
	Akron East Akron	\$35,432.00
	Akron Maple Valley	\$31,336.00
Brook Park	Cleveland Brook Park	\$46,280.00
Canton	Canton Dueber	\$34,976.00
	Canton East Canton	\$40,283.00
	Canton North Industry	\$22,654.00

	<b>Post Office</b>	<b>Median Household Income</b>
Cincinnati	Cumminsville	\$27,563.00
	East End	\$46,694.00
	Madisonville Station	\$36,440.00
	Newton Branch	\$62,149.00
	Reed Hartman Finance	\$66,848.00
	Saylor Park	\$60,470.00
	Stock Yards	\$12,219.00
Cleveland	AMC Finance Unit	NA
	Beachland	\$37,307.00
	Cranwood	\$35,378.00
	Edgewater	\$40,537.00
	Erievew Finance	NA
	Euclid	\$28,634.00
	Huntington Finance	\$7,236.00
	Independence	\$54,818.00
	Jesse Owens Finance	\$15,206.00
	Kamms	\$37,540.00
	Maple Heights	\$40,407.00
	North Royalton	\$57,449.00
	Shaker Finance	\$30,299.00
	Shore Finance	\$36,157.00
Willow	\$21,668.00	
Columbus	Busch Finance Station	NA
	Linden finance	\$25,972.00
	Olde Town Finance	\$20,893.00
Dayton	Centerville Finance	\$60,170.00
	Mid City Finance	\$30,661.00
	Station B	\$13,607.00
	Vet Adm Finance	NA
Hamilton	Lindenwald	\$36,230.00
Mansfield	Mansfield Lexington	\$48,831.00
	Mansfield Lincoln Retail	\$35,352.00
Toledo	Midtown Sta. Toledo	\$25,161.00
Youngstown	Youngstown Eastside Station	\$17,637.00
	Youngstown Southside Station	\$19,677.00
	Youngstown Westside Station	\$28,274.00
<b>Ohio median household income</b>		<b>\$40,956.00</b>

Source: Data is from the U.S. Census Bureau's search engine, American Fact Finder. All income data comes from the 2000 Census . This information can be found at <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Income data for four zip codes marked NA were not immediately available.