

**TESTIMONY OF DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER SENATOR JEFF KLEIN, NEW
YORK STATE SENATE
September 23rd, 2009**

First I would like to thank the Postal Regulatory Commission for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts and concerns with the panel as they consider the closure of eight post offices in the borough of the Bronx. I am privileged to serve the Bronx and as an elected official one of my responsibilities is to give a voice to constituents in the communities that I represent. Therefore, I would like to take this time to discuss how these post office closures would affect the whole borough of the Bronx and then specifically the areas that I represent as a State Senator.

Although I represent the 34th Senate District in the Bronx, I would be remiss if I did not speak of how these post office closures would affect the borough as a whole. Having represented the Bronx for over 15 years, first as an Assemblyman and now as the Deputy Majority Leader of the New York State Senate, I have come to know what makes the Bronx one of the most unique parts of the State of New York. The Borough of the Bronx has roots. For me this means that generations of families have made the Bronx their home and have continued to grow old here. That is why it is so essential that services such as the United States Postal Service make every effort to remain in my district and neighborhoods around the Bronx. These neighborhoods are made up of senior citizens who rely on going to their post office to mail a letter, postmark their tax returns and buy stamps. While admittedly the advent of the Internet and e-mail has lessened the need for some services that the United States Postal Service has provided, decisions for closures should not be made on revenue drops but on the make-up of the community that these post offices set to close serve. The United States Postal Service has been a fabric of communities throughout the United States for over two centuries. It should come as no surprise that the elderly in our communities have come to regard its presence as a way of life and to take this service away from them would be unfair to them as taxpayers of the United States of America.

When we discuss today how each post office closure affects the community that surrounds it, I ask you to look at the Van Nest community. This is the community that I have had the pleasure of serving in both houses of the New York State Government and it is this community that I ask you to consider before closing their post office. The Van Nest community lies within the confines of Community Board 11. As of the last United States Census, Community Board 11 is comprised of over 11,000 households with one or more persons 65 years and older. This equates to almost 17,200 seniors living in or around the Van Nest area. As a resident of this area as well as the State Senator, I can personally attest that many of these seniors walk around in their community taking care of their daily chores, which include a visit to the post office. Closing the Van Nest Post Office won't force the elderly to learn the Internet and communicate via e-mail, it is too late for that. In fact many elderly, on fixed incomes with most of their funds going to prescription medication, can't even afford a computer if they want to

learn. All the closing of this Post office will do is disenfranchise an already disenfranchised segment of the population and I can't sit there idly and say nothing.

I must also mention before I close this testimony that protecting the seniors of Van Nest is not my only motivation for fighting so hard to keep this post office open. I am also fighting for the economic revitalization of a community that has fell on hard times. I am currently working with the Bronx Business Alliance and the New York State Banking Department to site a bank in this area. It is my hopes that by anchoring a bank in the community the Van Nest merchant strip would be eligible for a BID which has strengthened other merchant corridors in my Senate District. By closing the Post Office, you are closing the door on the hard work those in the community have been doing to make this community a destination for all who work and reside in the Bronx.

In conclusion, I realize that whether Federal, State or City the economic realities of today are forcing many agencies to make tough decisions. However, sometimes the numbers aren't enough to support the cuts that some of these agencies are trying to make and this is one instance where we must look deeper than the 4.5% drop in mail pieces sited by the United State Post Services. We must look at what we expect as taxpayers and citizens of the United States. Asking our seniors to walk roughly 20 minutes to the nearest post office isn't a step forward and isn't progress, it is a step backwards and is unfair. Asking our communities to do without when they are doing without so much already isn't a burden I am willing to ask them to bear. Therefore, I respectfully ask the United States Post Office to reconsider their closing of the Van Nest Post Office as well as the 7 other Bronx Post Offices scheduled for closure.