

Statement for the Record by Congressman José E. Serrano for the Postal Regulatory Commission Field Hearing on September 23, 2009

I deeply appreciate that the Postal Regulatory Commission has chosen to hold one of its field hearings here in the Bronx. The choice of location clearly reflects the high number of post offices slated for closure in our borough and the importance of postal services to many thousands of immigrants, senior citizens, and working families who make their home in Bronx County.

I have been a longtime supporter of the Postal Service and am well aware of the current financial difficulties that it is facing. However, I do not think that in the long run it is productive to close post offices in dense urban areas where many people still rely heavily on the postal service.

Although the geographic distances between post offices in the Bronx are shorter than they are in more rural areas, when people rely on their feet and public transit to get them from place to place, the loss of the nearest post office can still have a large impact. If the Postal Service shuts post offices in my district it will remove itself from people's daily routine, and it will encourage my constituents to look for other alternatives. Decreasing service to the community in this manner, does not seem to me to be a good long-term model for the Postal Service and could result in significant loss of market share for the USPS in communities like mine.

In addition to the diminished retail footprint that will result from these proposed closures, I am concerned that the quality of mail delivery will also suffer. Among its other plans to save money, the Postal Service is proposing a move to five day a week delivery. I think that this stated desire of the USPS, along with fewer post offices in my district, will result in a lower level of service for my constituents. Although as a nation we are moving more and more to mainly electronic forms of communication, the people of my district rely heavily on the Postal Service. As a city of immigrants, New York particularly needs the Postal Service to help new arrivals send resources to communities overseas and to communicate with their family members abroad. These simple acts provide them with a vital connection to their home countries, and they need that connection to be reliable and timely.

More generally, I am concerned about the criteria that have produced the current list of possible closures. A cursory examination of the list reveals that large urban areas are hit the hardest. I am not sure if this is because of the distance between post offices, or for another reason, but it does seem to me unwise for the Postal Service to target its densest consumer base with such draconian cuts. Even within the five boroughs of New York City, the locations chosen for closures seem out of balance. While the Bronx and Manhattan both have seven sites on the list, Brooklyn and Queens have none. It is my hope that the Postal Regulatory Commission is afforded the opportunity to closely consider the process under which these particular locations were selected. In addition, the larger question about the efficacy of widespread post office closures in alleviating the USPS' fiscal crisis should also be considered by the PRC.

Finally, I think that as the Postal Service moves forward it needs to identify ways to better serve its consumers. If the Postal Service just strives to do less and less, it will become even more marginalized and people will inevitably adopt other ways to meet their needs. One of the great

features of the postal service is that it is everywhere. It is my constituents' first choice because they know where their local post office is and they know that it will be open when they need it. I would urge the Postal Service to consider how it can become more useful to its customers, not less so.