



Postal Regulatory Commission
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**New York Metro Area Postal Union,
American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO**

Testimony

Before The Postal Regulatory
Commission Field Hearing

**U.S. Postal Service
“Station and Branch Optimizations Initiative” –
Possible Station and Branch Closings**

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BRONX, NY
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Madame Chairman and members of the Commission: Thank you for convening this hearing and inviting me to testify on behalf of the hardworking postal workers that the New York Metro Area Postal Union represents.

This union represents the clerk, motor vehicle, and maintenance crafts in Manhattan and the Bronx, along with two large facilities in New Jersey. This means that on the list of New York Stations and Branches under review for possible closures our local represents postal workers at 14 of them. We have already seen what hardships the existing cutbacks in service have meant to our members. There are clerks from our union that now have to commute 125 miles each way to work because they have been exsessed from New York City to the far reaches of Suffolk County. Yes, they spend between six and seven hours a day commuting to and from work. With the proposed station closings before us, we will most assuredly see more of this or worse.

It is very tempting to use this opportunity to describe only how devastating these proposed station and branch closings will be to our members. But we understand that we have our jobs because we are employed to serve the public. We have to look at how these proposed station and branch closings will impact upon the people we serve.

The people who are most dependent upon the Postal Service are the elderly, the poor, the disabled, and small business owners. They do not have readily available alternatives. For these people, a trip to the post office that is located a block or two or three from where they are can be a difficulty. Closing their neighborhood post office because there is another one located just a mile away is not only shortsighted, it is cruel. For some, getting to the post office will now be an impossibility.

I can't tell you how many times I have mentioned this situation to postal managers and I get the same canned response. "Oh, they can go online or there will be an Automated Postal Center (APC) where their old station used to be." I know it is incomprehensible for postal managers to understand, but there are people who do not have computer access. There are people who find it very confusing to use an Automated Postal Center without assistance. And even it they could

figure it out, they don't have a credit or debit card to access it. Are these people not entitled to postal service?

In certain areas of this city, there are not bank branches on every corner. In many areas where poor people live, they rely on the neighborhood post office as their bank. They go there to buy money orders to pay their bills. Rather than closing the station or branch, why doesn't the USPS come up with some kind of plan to expand its service to these communities? If banks won't open branches in poor communities, how about the USPS developing something along the line of a credit union model for these customers. Rather than shutting down stations and branches, find ways to do more business there.

The members of the public who are most dependent upon the Postal Service have already had to put up with fewer collection boxes, shorter hours of operation, the elimination of vending machines and mobile units, and now are faced with the closing of their neighborhood post office and possible cutbacks in mail delivery from six days to five. To these people the USPS is the branch of the government that they know and rely on. They don't need cutbacks and closings. They need better service.

It is time to decide whether the USPS is here to serve all members of the public or here to be a money-making business that views retail operations as a costly expense that it would rather do away with as quickly as possible. If the answer is that the USPS is here to serve the public, then better answers have to be found than closing needed stations and branches.

A short time ago, the union got a call from a local television station because of ongoing complaints that they were getting from people who were using the Fordham station here in the Bronx. Shorter hours, longer lines, the service at the station had fallen drastically. The union's Director of Industrial Relations, Frankie Sanchez, went to the station. He was interviewed in front of Fordham Station by the reporter and explained that the post office had reduced the number of employees assigned to the station resulting in longer lines and poorer service. He was factual. Bronx postal management was upset with the report and angry with Mr. Sanchez *for making them look bad*. The reason I relate this story at this time is that with the proposed closings in the Bronx, Fordham station will have more people going there, longer lines, and continued poor

service. The intent is not to make Postal Service management look bad, it is to provide what is necessary for the public we are mandated to serve.

The Postal Service has faced a severe drop in mail volume because of the drastic economic downturn in business. But its financial crisis is more a result of mandates and restraints imposed upon it by Congress with the passage of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006, which this union opposed. It is time to correct shortcomings of that legislation without placing the entire burden on the people who most depend upon the Postal Service.

This is a time for everyone to come together to find solutions to the problems that the Postal Service is facing, but without losing sight of the mission that it has been entrusted with, to serve the needs of the American people. Postal closings are not the solution. They are part of the problem.

I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.

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