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**AN APPEAL TO USPS TO RECONSIDER RECEIVED
CLOSING THE OAK HILL, AL 36766 POST OFFICE**

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From Its Patrons, in regard to the proposed closing of the Oak Hill, AL, Post office, as per "Final Determination to Close" letter dated Aug 23, 2011.

REGISTRATORY
COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

We, the patrons of this proud 117-year-old institution that stands at the crossroads of two state highways (10 & 21) in Wilcox County, declare our unalterable opposition to the destruction of this post office and quite probably our town for the purpose of saving the USPS \$37,805 per annum, according to the report in the Aug. 23 notice of closure. We sadly join the patrons of several thousand additional local post offices in lamenting an act of destruction unprecedented in American history.

The owners of the building — currently leased by the USPS for \$4,000 per annum — have agreed to decrease that amount to \$1,000 per year through the five years of the lease. The new lease for five years, which is non-revocable, is set to begin Jan. 1, 2012.

Patrons of the Oak Hill Post Office are also willing to reduce the number of hours of service from six hours a day, six days a week, to 3 hours a day, five days a week. We prefer that the day of closing would be Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.

In addition, the USPS has fairly recently invested in a satellite for the office's computer and has the necessary equipment to keep the Post Office "up and running." (In this area, we have only dial-up access, thus the need for the satellite.)

To give the USPS its due, it has carefully followed USPS procedures regarding proper closing, has taken all required steps in our case — deliberately, not precipitously — and reported same in a clear and concise report of actions and findings in our case.

The fundamental problem lies not with the USPS, which is only doing Congress' bidding in the afore-described destruction. The culprit is the U.S. Congress, which cut the then-United States Post Office off from the government and created an independent, self-financing body.

The Post Office is not a business, but a service. Like many other critical services provided by government, the Post Office should be supported as such and not be required to break even, or to make a profit. There is a highly significant business dimension to providing postal services, but making a profit or not is not the bottom line. The bottom line is enabling any citizen to write a written communication to any other citizen in most parts of the world and expect it to be delivered in a timely manner.

Granted the world has changed and a growing percentage of the population and businesses use all the forms of electronic delivery of information available instead of traditional forms.

Granted also that the management of the USPS has devoted its energies to mechanizing the traditional means of sending letters and objects through the U.S. Mail rather than reimagining the USPS and its purposes in light of the vastly changed world in which it operates.

Granted that unionized employees and their leaders have exploited their right to organize to protect their vital interests, thereby creating unsustainable pension and healthcare liabilities.

Granted, the principle of “privatizing” as much of government as possible has driven political decisions for the past 50 years, even in cases where privatization might not offer the best model.

Granted all these realities, we believe that USPS should not be considered a business but rather as a nationwide network of vital institutions linking all Americans. The significance of a U.S. Post Office in smaller towns and villages, and in rural areas generally, cannot be overstated.

In our situation, the Oak Hill Post Office is one of only two businesses, and therefore critical to the survival of our town. As one nearby recently retired postmaster declared upon hearing of our proposed closure: you lose your post office, and the town dies. That is true.

Every possible reason for closing (or keeping open) the Oak Hill Post Office has been addressed in letters and at a public meeting and committed to writing in the comprehensive report sent to us representing the record of

our condemnation process. Nothing can be added to the debate at this point — for any particular post office or the situation in general.

However, given this opportunity, we note briefly the reasons why we still believe strongly that the Oak Hill Post Office should not be closed in early November.

1. It is a vital institution for dispensing the full range of postal services not only to residents but also to a number of others who live closer to us than to alternative post offices which provide mail service through rural carrier. (Our route was taken away from us and given to a neighboring post office, which now will absorb our patrons, a major negative in our evaluation. Also, we lost a postmaster who left and was not replaced, which counts against us. In the last six months, we have had three OICs).
2. Our post office, unlike others in our part of the county being closed, is strategically located. Because of its unique position at a crossroads of major state highways, it serves a larger constituency, including a number of truckers who drive through our town daily. Many patronize the post office.
3. A major function is sale of money orders for low-income people who do not have bank accounts and no transportation to get to other post offices in the area unless they pay for that transportation. They walk in and often receive help in filling out forms and mailing their bill payments.
4. The patrons have strongly supported their local post office in a number of ways, such as securing stamp purchases in quantity from friends and family members around the country to keep our sales numbers higher than they would otherwise be.
5. At the meeting called by USPS officials, we had at least 100 people who came to stand and testify against closing — the most people gathered together in one place in our town in memory.
6. There is a genuine fear regarding the security of roadside post boxes in this area, in which there are growing incidents of theft linked to guns and drugs. The idea that a slot in a roadside mailbox would be a satisfactory way to eliminate this concern is incorrect. Only letters fit through a slot. Patrons on a rural route would still have to go to the assigned Post Office to retrieve mail that is too large to go through a slot, seemingly obviating the need for a roadside mailbox.

7. The USPS has signed a non-revocable five-year lease at \$4,000 per annum to owners of the building occupied by the Post Office. Little, if any of that rental income will be realized, a further blow to our local economy. In addition, with the USPS still leasing the building, only the salary and fringe benefits would be saved by the USPS, according to the August 23 notice of closing.
8. In a *USA Today* article, dated July 27, 2011, U.S. Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, a member of the subcommittee that oversees the Postal Service, said, "The fact is, maintaining our nation's rural post offices costs the Postal Service less than 1 percent of its total budget and is not the cause of its financial crisis. While there are some areas where postal services could be consolidated or moved into a nearby retail store to ensure continued access, this simply is not an option in many rural and remote areas." We agree with Sen. Collins. We are rural, remote, and want to do all we can to keep this vital service available to our elderly, our low-income, our under-educated populace.

In summary, the benefits to the whole country and to this particular community of maintaining these small outposts are far greater than the \$37,805 current operating cost saved in our case. At the same time, government at all levels is attempting to establish programs to help rural areas, the most important one, the local U.S. post office — which operates at a fraction of a cost of anything that would replace it, and far more effectively — is being destroyed by the same government as a deficit-cutting measure that won't amount to a hill of beans.

Of course, there can and should be some consolidation, some closings where activity is so low such as to make a particular post office no longer viable. We believe, however, our post office definitely is not in that category. We ask that you reconsider and keep the Oak Hill, AL 36766 Post Office open. Thank you.



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