# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 17, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate, S-230 Capitol Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate, S-221 Capitol Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman
U.S. Senate Homeland Security &
Governmental Affairs Committee
U.S. Senate, SH-328
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Homeland Security &
Governmental Affairs Committee
U.S. Senate, SH-513
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Reid, Chairman Johnson, and Ranking Member Carper:

The United States Postal Service is a critical lifeline throughout our country, connecting loved ones and families, delivering prescription drugs and other critical items, and allowing our businesses to ship products all over the world. It is an institution that has been relied upon by the American postal customer for more than two hundred years. While the importance of reliable mail delivery for customers, especially those living in rural areas, has not changed, the Postal Service's ability to perform that service has substantially declined, and it is critical that Congress take action on this topic when we consider comprehensive postal reform.

From mail processing plant consolidations, to reductions in post office hours, to the complete elimination of the overnight service standard, rural America has been hit especially hard in recent years by degradations in mail service. While the current service standard for First-Class Mail is 2-3 days, the actual delivery of mail can take far longer than this standard. This is unacceptable for postal customers in rural America and across the country, and it simply does not meet the requirement for universal quality of service by which the Postal Service is bound.

While we are encouraged by the postal reform legislation Chairman Chaffetz and Ranking Member Cummings reported out of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to improve the Postal Service's financial condition, we are deeply concerned by the lack of service improvements and protection provisions in the bill. For any comprehensive postal reform bill to have a chance of passing this Congress, it needs to truly address the key problem facing customers across the country, which is the need for better service performance.

The Postal Service's elimination of the overnight delivery standard in early 2015 had a sweeping impact on mail delivery and Postal employees' lives and jobs. This included further mail processing facility consolidations, equipment changes, added transportation costs, job relocations, and renegotiated contracts. The costs of going back to the July 2012 service

standard would be significant and should be carefully and accurately examined. In the meantime, it is critical for us to focus our attention on improving service performance.

Service performance is a different issue than simply looking at the service standard. Service performance is what the postal customer experiences every day and represents the ability of the Postal Service to actually deliver mail between two points within the current 2-3 day standard. In order to ensure that the Postal Service is able to perform within this current standard, there must be an accurate understanding of how long it takes for mail to be delivered in rural and urban communities throughout the country. Such information allows Congress and the Postal Service to tackle the most pressing postal service problem at hand: the lack of adequate delivery performance under the current 2-3 day First-Class Mail service standard.

Any comprehensive postal legislation should include the following service protections and improvements in order to meet that challenge:

- **Reliability** – The Postal Service needs a performance target system to ensure the accurate measurement of mail delivery across the country in urban and rural communities through an in-depth classification system.
- **Accountability & Transparency** – Performance information must be published online and operational plans developed when targets are not met.
- **Enforcement** – The Postal Service must take action to meet their operational plans and not be able to lower service standards to come into compliance with performance targets.
- **Continual Review** – Development and regular updates of a long-term solvency plan that would analyze the Postal Service's finances and make recommendations regarding affordable service options.

These concepts are included in bipartisan postal legislation introduced in the Senate. Furthermore, those concepts strike a healthy balance between a complete return to July 2012 standards and addressing the service performance issues we face today.

The Postal Service and its employees play a vital role in our nation. It is essential that we preserve the Postal Service's commitment to the American public. For this reason, improving service needs to be a critical piece of any comprehensive postal reform bill, along with the needed reforms to return the Postal Service to fiscal sustainability. Continued poor mail service hurts rural America, businesses, and our economy. Congress should take action to preserve and protect the vibrant institution that is our Postal Service so it, in turn, can help our communities and families truly thrive.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Heidi Heitkamp

Senator Heidi Heitkamp

Jerry Moran

Senator Jerry Moran

RE: Protecting Mail Service Letter

Senator Claire McCaskill

Senator Susan M. Collins

Senator Jon Tester

Senator Roy Blunt

Senator Tammy Baldwin

Senator Shelley Moore Capito

Senator Mark R. Warner

Senator Pat Roberts

Senator Gary C. Peters

Senator Steve Daines

Senator Joe Manchin III

Senator Angus S. King, Jr.

Senator Al Franken

Senator Tom Udall

RE: Protecting Mail Service Letter

Senator Debbie Stabenow

Senator Sherrod Brown

Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley

Senator Patrick Leahy

Senator Barbara A. Mikulski

Senator Jeanne Shaheen

Senator Tim Kaine

Senator Ron Wyden

Senator Benjamin L. Cardin

Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Senator Christopher A. Coons

cc: The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House of Representatives
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The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
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The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
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The Honorable Jason Chaffetz
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