

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 11, 2016

Hon. Megan J. Brennan
Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260-1137

Dear Postmaster General Brennan:

I recently became aware of a number of post offices in Missouri that were closed via "emergency suspension" and never reopened. I am concerned that these closures are circumventing the United States Postal Service's (USPS) standard discontinuance process, and communities are being adversely affected without the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the decision-making process.

According to USPS' Annual Compliance Review for fiscal year 2015, no post offices, stations or branches were closed in fiscal 2015. Yet, the same report lists 469 post offices and 107 stations and branches that were under active suspensions, and communities have been told that some of these post offices will not reopen.¹ In Zanoni, Missouri, for example, according to published accounts, the USPS initiated an emergency suspension because it did not want to pay \$3,000 to repair, improve and continue to maintain the building.² As a result, the landowner where the post office is located decided not to renew the lease. There is no indication that the post office will be reopened at a different location, effectively amounting to a back door closure with no input from the community nor notification to Members of Congress.

USPS' official discontinuance guide gives several circumstances under which a postal facility may be suspended, including natural disaster, termination of a lease, lack of qualified personnel and irreparable building damage.³ The guide states, "In situations where the circumstances prompting an emergency suspension are not known in advance of the emergency

¹ Annual Compliance Review 2015, *United States Postal Service FY 2015 Annual Compliance Report*, Postal Regulatory Commission, Docket No. ACR2015 (Dec. 29, 2015).

² Buckner, Scott. "A piece of America dies, nobody notices." *West Plains Daily Quill* March 2, 2016. http://www.westplainsdailyquill.net/news/local/article_bb522ba4-dffb-11e5-91cb-fbaba69defba.html

³ USPS Handbook PO-101, *Postal Service-Operated Retail Facilities Transmittal Letter Discontinuance Guide* (October 2012).

suspension, a decision should be made within 90 days of an emergency suspension to secure alternate quarters, take necessary corrective action or initiate a feasibility study.”⁴

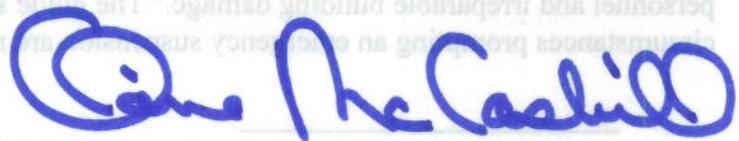
I am concerned that these suspension rules are not being followed and that rural post offices are either being left in suspension for prolonged periods of time or closed without the requisite feasibility study and corresponding public and Congressional notifications. All permanent postal closures should be subject to USPS’ defined discontinuance process, which includes a formal feasibility study, community input and the right to an appeal. Emergency suspensions should not be used as de facto closures.

As such, I write to request the following information:

- 1) A list of all postal facility suspensions in the past five years, including the name and location of each facility, the facility type, the date each facility was suspended, the reason each facility was suspended, the current status of each facility, and, if there is a plan to reopen the facility, the expected date of reopening;
- 2) An explanation of any and all factors that went into decisions not to reopen facilities that were initially closed pursuant to an emergency suspension;
- 3) A list of all steps taken, if any, to inform the community and mitigate the impact of the suspensions; and
- 4) An explanation of whether members of Congress were notified about any of the suspensions.

I request you provide this information as soon as possible, but no later than April 22, 2016. If you determine that you are unable to make a complete production by this date or if you have questions about this request, please contact Charlie Moskowitz in my personal office at 202-224-6154 or Charlie_Moskowitz@mccaskill.senate.gov. I appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill
U.S. Senator

⁴ *Id.*