

**TESTIMONY OF**

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**BEFORE THE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL SERVICE, AND  
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**OF THE**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM**

**“Making Sense of it All: An Examination of USPS’s  
Station and Branch Optimization Initiative and  
Delivery Route Adjustments”**

**July 30, 2009**

Good morning, and thank you Chairman Lynch and members of the Subcommittee for inviting me to testify. My name is John Hegarty, and I am National President of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, which serves as the exclusive bargaining representative for nearly 55,000 mail handlers employed by the U.S. Postal Service.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you and all members of the Subcommittee for your diligent efforts on H.R. 22. We look forward to working with you as that legislation, and the recently introduced Senate bill (S. 1507), work their way through the legislative process.

As requested, my testimony today will focus on the current realignment efforts of the Postal Service, dealing with the closing and consolidating of facilities, and the realigning of Stations and Branches. I will also discuss the impact of such decisions on the flow of current and future mail, and the resulting impact on mail handlers, postal customers, and communities.

As you know, mail handlers work primarily at the large processing facilities. At the same time, however, we represent approximately 1,000 mail handlers who are situated at the larger stations and branches. While they may be employed at smaller facilities, some of these mail handlers actually are assigned to a larger facility as a part of their postal installation.

As we have previously discussed, the Postal Service is proceeding to realign its network of mail-processing plants by conducting Area Mail Processing studies. I will not repeat prior testimony here, but I should note that, as I have said in prior testimony, our concern is (a) that the process is

accomplished uniformly and within the established guidelines, and (b) that the future postal network is not cut too severely such that the Postal Service will not be prepared to provide universal and low-cost service when mail volumes recover. Our solution to a rational closing and consolidation approach is to review such changes on a case-by-case basis, following a careful analysis of the facts presented in each situation. Where the proposal makes economic and logistical sense, where service standards will not be negatively affected, where major mailers in the area will not be inconvenienced, and where all negotiated requirements with unions have been complied with, then the Mail Handlers Union will not simply oppose a closing or consolidation for the sake of opposition. Conversely, the Postal Service should not be closing and consolidating facilities just so that the agency can say that it is closing and consolidating.

The impact on mail handlers is varied, depending on the circumstances, but some of the affected employees have had their hours of work or work location drastically altered, thereby severely disrupting their family life. Employees have had to scramble to make alternate child care arrangements, to get their kids to school, or their spouses have had to adjust their work schedules to juggle the various responsibilities. Many employees have been faced with the almost impossible task of either moving their families hundreds of miles away to remain employed by the Postal Service, or to give up their Postal Service careers altogether.

The impact on the customers will also vary, depending on the circumstances. Our concern is that we may end up losing business, because

a major customer decides that it is just as easy to use a competitor, and they abandon the Postal Service altogether. We also need to factor in the individual customers who need, and deserve, access to the many services offered by the Postal Service.

The impact on communities should also be factored into any final decisions on consolidation. What will be the impact if a large plant is closed, and the employees then are moved to another plant, to work in some other community? How about local businesses, like restaurants and other retail establishments, who used to cater to this large "factory" that employed so many people?

Many of the other topics on which the Subcommittee is seeking input really need to be answered by the Postal Service before we can weigh in on them, but as always I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you for this opportunity.