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May 24, 2011

The Honorable Patrick Donahoe
Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Room 10804
Washington, DC 20265

Dear Mr. Donahoe:

As you know, I am very aware of the deficit that currently burdens the United State Postal Service. I, too, am concerned that the decrease in mail volume and revenue, with other factors, has placed the Postal Service in a very difficult position. I recognize that you are obliged to seek efficiencies in the management of the Postal Service. I also applaud your recognition that Alaska presents unique challenges to the Postal Service and thank you again for not consolidating the Area Field Office to Seattle.

Nevertheless, I am compelled to contact you today about two concerns—the Postal Service's decision to close the Western Area Distribution Networks (DN) office in Anchorage and move that office's responsibilities to the Western Area DN in Denver, and the lack of continuing, appropriate transition of knowledge and experience regarding the unique mail challenges facing Alaska.

As you may know, the Alaska delegation and impacted industries in Alaska have, in the past, successfully made the case that this critical office must be maintain due to Alaska's unique regulated mail transportation environment, statutorily mandated mail tender requirements and Postal equitable tender systems, and the impact that mail transportation has on the residents of rural Alaska. While I understand the difficult financial circumstances that the Postal Service is currently encountering, I urge you to reconsider the closing of this office and the plan to try and manage Alaska's unique environment long distance from Colorado.

Over the past twenty-five years, only one Postal Service employee in Alaska has been involved in the development of the regulated mail transportation environment, the design and development of the unique SAMS-AK mail equitable tender systems, the development of the bypass mail processes, and the development of the language in the Rural Service Improvement Act of 2002 that structured the Alaska aviation industry for mail transport. He has provided briefings

and valuable information to the Congressional delegation on Postal operations. This one employee has also been solely responsible for representing the Postal Service in various workgroups involving the aviation industry, the bypass mail shippers, the State of Alaska, and the Department of Transportation.

This individual has also been the key resource that Postal Service headquarters has relied upon while developing Postal Service policy and cost saving measures involving mail transportation in Alaska through the utilization of his historical knowledge of the regulated environment, his past work with the federal Department of Transportation rate setting process, the Alaskan companies that involve mail transportation and his understanding of the impact and importance of the mail flow to the state and its residents.

I am extremely concerned to learn that the employee who has occupied this position in Anchorage for the last twenty-five years will be retiring and there does not appear to be any transition/training plan for transferring this knowledge and experience to whoever his replacement may be. The knowledge that this job requires is not contained in handbooks or training manuals. The knowledge and experience earned through more than two decades of service to the Postal Service and its customers must be transitioned to those who will be responsible for intra-Alaska and bypass mail in Alaska in the future—whether they are located in Anchorage or Denver. The only way that this transition can be successfully achieved is through an intensive 60-90 day on-the-job training process where selected new personnel can learn the basic unique differences in Alaska policy, statutory law requirements, and postal operations from the only individual that has done these functions for the last 25 years.

I strongly encourage you to consider taking action to ensure that the Postal Service is successful in its transition without the loss of valuable information that this unique subject matter expert provides. Please be advised that his scheduled retirement date is May 31, 2011; your timely attention to this matter is crucial.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator