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September 22, 2011

The Honorable Patrick R. Donahoe
Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Room 10804
Washington, D.C. 20265-3500

Dear Mr. Donahoe:

The United States Postal Service (USPS) is vital to the commerce of our nation and the health of our communities. I greatly appreciate the dedication the USPS and your employees bring to providing crucial services to Alaskans and, indeed, to all Americans.

As you know, I have been paying close attention to the financial situation facing the USPS and the various options you and others have proposed to address that situation. I look forward to working with you and my colleagues here in the Senate on solutions that will restore financial health to the USPS system while maintaining the level of service Americans have come to expect from their postal service.

As you know, delivering mail in Alaska comes with many challenges, especially in very rural communities. Given our lack of surface transportation options, accessing both large and small communities can be both difficult and expensive. However, the Postal Service's responsibility to provide universal service to Americans, no matter where they live or how difficult it may be to reach them, is immutable, and I appreciate your dedication to that. One vital aspect of maintaining universal service in Alaska is the bypass mail program, which was developed to assist both the USPS and the residents of rural communities with their need to send and receive mail, supplies, and other goods in a timely, efficient, and cost-effective manner. I am told you see the bypass mail program as a key component in meeting the USPS responsibility to provide universal service, but I would appreciate your confirmation of that.

To that extent, please let me know your thoughts on the importance of bypass mail and how you plan to preserve the program while the USPS works to restore its financial health. Knowing the USPS plan to preserve bypass mail would ease the minds of many anxious rural Alaskans, rural air carriers, and others across our Last Frontier. I would appreciate receiving your written reply before the end of September.

Thank you for your assistance in this important matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator