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November 3, 2011

Mr. Patrick 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:

I am writing today to follow up on the concerns expressed by the entire Alaska Congressional Delegation in our letter of October 27, 2011 regarding the proposed closure of the post offices located on Eielson Air Force Base and Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks and Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage. I have spoken to both military leaders and service members' families about these proposed closures. The information they have provided to me has caused me to have serious concerns about both the process on which the closure recommendations were based and about the process going forward.

I understand that the initial decision to evaluate these post offices, which was made in July, was based on data for revenue and volume that was available at that time. I do not understand, however, why either Eielson or Fort Wainwright are still being considered for closure given the current revenue and profit figures. According to the figures available as of August, 2011, revenue for the Fort Wainwright post office increased by \$160,334 over the prior year. While the expenses incurred at Fort Wainwright Post Office have not yet been made available to me, the 33.3 percent increase in revenue is significant. And, despite a 6.6 percent decrease in the revenue generated by the post office on Eielson Air Force Base as of August, the post office still generated a net profit of \$54,536. While I do not have verified financial data for the post office on Elmendorf, the discrepancies noted for the Fairbanks bases causes me to question whether a similar discrepancy exists there as well.

There is also cause to question the decision to move these post offices to the next step in the closure process based on the fact that the USPS has cited a lower than accurate number of people who rely on these post offices. First, the USPS information concerning the units assigned to Fort Wainwright is approximately 17 years old. Basing the important decision of whether or not to close a post office on data from the Clinton Administration is unthinkable, and does not account for the nearly doubling of active duty soldiers in Alaska since 2003. Over 5,000 people were uncounted in the USPS data for this base. In addition, I understand that the USPS report stated that there are 5,000 active duty service members stationed at Eielson Air Force Base when 7,197 active duty service members, family members, and employed civilians live and work on Eielson and rely on the base post office—in addition to the 1,988 retirees who also use base facilities. Again, these inaccuracies only call into question the data that was used to evaluate Elmendorf Air Force Base.

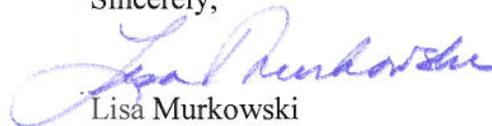
I am also deeply concerned about the degree to which the equally important human element—the impact on our service members, their families, and on the military mission—has been taken into consideration. On September 12, 2011, I sent a letter to Alaska District Manager Dianne Horbochuk in which I noted the unique challenges our service members and their families face as they serve our nation. I copied you and Mr. Granholm on that letter. As you may recall, I stated, “The USPS must work closely with base leaders and military families as it reviews Alaska post offices.” I appreciate that community meetings were arranged to allow those with an interest in these post offices to share their comments prior to the Alaska District’s initial recommendation. I urge, however, that additional meetings be arranged—on each of the three bases rather than at locations off base that may not be accessible to all concerned—before the relevant comment periods end. Given the nature of the sacrifices these men and women make on our nation’s behalf, I believe that additional opportunity to have face-to-face discussions about the proposed closings is warranted.

Having met with military spouses on Fort Wainwright last week, I can tell you that the potential closing of their post office is of prime concern to them. The ability to mail care packages to loved ones who are defending our Nation overseas with the convenience and safety of being on post is absolutely critical to morale. Many spouses told me that the hazardous driving conditions in Fairbanks prevent them from driving off post on many days. One mother told me that each of her children assembles a care package to send to their father each week. If the Fort Wainwright post office were closed, she could be faced with having to drive off post on slick roads with three toddlers in the car to mail those packages, and she would feel terrible telling her children that they could not mail their father’s care packages that week. Many mothers were in tears as they shared their concerns with me. These concerns need to be fully considered as the USPS considers closing these postal facilities.

I ask for your personal assurance that USPS personnel in Alaska and Washington, D.C. will thoroughly review current and accurate facts and figures associated with these three military base post offices and consult with the military base leadership and the families via meetings on base to understand the full context of this data. I ask that you respond to this letter within the next 30 days with an update on how USPS is working with our military on these proposed closures.

Thank you, as always, for your consideration as you work through difficult problems in order to find appropriate solutions.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

cc: Dianne Horbochuk, Director, Alaska District Office
Dean Granholm, Vice President of Delivery and Post Office Operations

