

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 27, 2011

Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 10804
Washington, D.C. 20260-0004

Dear Postmaster General Donahoe:

We are disappointed to learn the post offices at Fort Wainwright and Eielson Air Force Base have been recommended for discontinuance. Two issues in particular—the impact on the soldiers, airmen, their families, their mission and the data on which these recommendations are based—have caused us concern and we request that you give each of these issues your fullest attention.

Thousands of soldiers, airmen and their families in the Fairbanks region rely on these post offices to communicate with loved ones in the Lower 48 states and send care packages to spouses and friends who are serving their country while deployed around the world. A vast number of service members and their families have no means to access a post office off base to fulfill their postal needs. For example, we are aware that the young airmen stationed at Eielson Air Force Base, many of whom cannot get into town easily, feel very isolated. Making it more difficult for them to send mail to their loved ones will only make their feelings of isolation worse.

In addition, the nearest post office is 11 miles away along a relatively rural stretch of the Richardson Highway prone to icing in the winter. This arguably presents an undue safety hazard to airmen, their spouses, and children residing on the base. In short, closure of the Eielson post office is likely to have a significant adverse effect on base morale, potentially undermining the military mission. We strongly suggest that you work closely with the military leaders and military families on both bases before making a final decision.

After reviewing your proposal to close these post offices, we are also concerned discontinuance may be based on inaccurate information. For example, the Fort Wainwright proposal states the affected Post population is comprised of the 6th Light Infantry Division, which has not been stationed there since 1998. The Army population at Fort Wainwright has grown significantly since then. Likewise, the Eielson proposal fails to include the men and women of the 168th Air Refueling Wing stationed as a full-time unit on Eielson Air Force Base.

Postmaster General Donahoe

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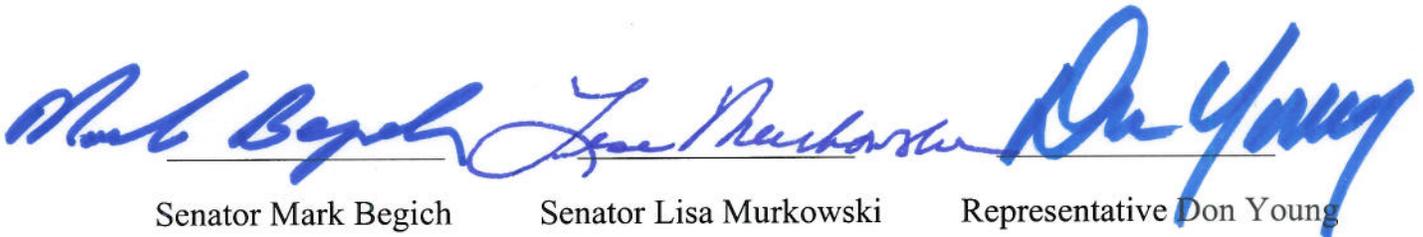
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As has been previously noted to you, the men and women who comprise many of the units at both Fort Wainwright and Eielson Air Force Base have been deployed almost continuously in support of overseas operations. Therefore, your current calculations may not accurately reflect the needs of the soldiers and airmen who will return to Alaska as we draw down in Iraq and Afghanistan. We also draw your attention to the fact that the revenue figures cited for Fort Wainwright proposal do not include Fiscal Year 2011 increases. But of greater concern, the proposals do not address profits, which we understand both post offices made.

Please provide us, within 30 days, with details of the decision for discontinuance, specifically the metrics used to calculate utilization rates at Fort Wainwright and Eielson Air Force Base. Further, please provide us with a plan of how comprehensive postal services will continue to be rendered at the two installations, should the post offices ultimately be closed.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to your response. Providing easily accessible postal services to our nation's heroes and their families is an obligation we must meet.

Sincerely,



Senator Mark Begich Senator Lisa Murkowski Representative Don Young

CC: Dean Granholm, Vice President of Delivery and Post Office Operations

CC: Diane Horbochuck, Director, Alaska District Office