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September 22, 2011

Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, Chairman
Senator Susan M. Collins, Ranking Member
Senator Thomas R. Carper, Member
Senator Scott P. Brown, Member
Homeland Security and Government Oversight Committee
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Lieberman, Collins, Carper, and Brown:

As you may be aware, the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, the U.S. Postal Service, and Labor Policy has reported out H.R. 2309, the Postal Reform Act of 2011. Section 408 of this legislation would require the State of Alaska to reimburse the United States Postal Service for the cost of bypass mail. I am writing to express my serious concerns about this provision.

Delivering the mail in Alaska comes with many challenges, especially to my state's very rural communities. Given our lack of surface transportation options, accessing both large and small communities can be both difficult and expensive. One vital tool for the United States Postal Service in complying with the Congressional mandate to provide universal service to all Americans, no matter where they live or how difficult it may be to reach them, is the bypass mail system. Bypass mail was developed to assist both the Postal Service and the residents of rural communities with their need to send and receive mail, food, medicine, and supplies in a timely, efficient, and cost-effective manner. Alaskan businesses also rely on bypass mail to facilitate commerce throughout the state.

Congress should not treat the citizens of one state differently from those in another state. The Founding Fathers included post offices in the Constitution, and Congress has mandated that "the Postal Service shall provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas". These provisions must been heeded as Congress considers postal reform, and the postal service must continue to provide universal service to the entire Alaskan public.

I ask, therefore, that you oppose this provision as you work to develop a

bipartisan, bicameral solution to the Postal Service's financial difficulties. Thank you for your consideration of this crucial issue for Alaskans.

Sincerely,

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator