



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Sen. Duane and Local Elected Officials Call for Halt to Post Office Closures in NYC

THOMAS K. DUANE August 20, 2009

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*Officials call on USPS to halt unnecessary closures, increase community input, and provide advance warning and justification for planned consolidations*

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NEW YORK, N.Y. – Today, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, State Senators Tom Duane and Daniel Squadron, Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal, and Clarence Wall, APWU New York Metro Area Postal Union Executive Vice President, called on the United States Postal Service (USPS) to stop the unnecessary closure of neighborhood post offices, and to alert and obtain feedback from community members and elected officials well in advance of facility closures. According to recent USPS reports, 14 New York City post offices are potentially in danger of closure, while others have already closed. It is unclear if such cuts are truly helpful for solving the USPS's financial problems.

The elected officials also called for the passage of two important bills in Congress: H.R. 22, the *United States Postal Service Financial Relief Act*, which would save the USPS approximately \$3.5 billion per year in operating expenses by allowing it to access the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund to pay health insurance for postal retirees; and H.R. 658, the *Access to Postal Services Act*, which would improve the USPS's procedures for closing or consolidating its postal facilities. This bill would require the USPS to fully justify consolidations ahead of time, to hold public hearings, and to provide ample notification to the public by mail and in local newspapers. Finally, this legislation would require a public assessment of the actual need for facility closure or consolidation.

Congressman Nadler is a co-sponsor of both bills and will continue to work toward their passage.

"I am far from convinced that these USPS cuts and closures are actually creating real relief from the Postal Service's massive budget woes," said Rep. Jerrold Nadler. "As far as I can tell, these cuts and closures are akin to moving around furniture on the deck of the Titanic. There is no excuse for the Postal Service to give short shrift to customers and cut services that every person and business depends on. I am calling on the USPS to work harder to make sure that the needs of community members and businesses are met."

“The economic collapse is forcing everyone to do more with less. But when any government entity looks to make cuts to their budget, they need to use a scalpel, not a machete,” said Speaker Christine Quinn. “The USPS needs to seek input from local residents before they make decisions about closing post offices.”

“Even in this Internet age, post offices provide vital services for residential and business customers,” said State Senator Tom Duane. “While I certainly appreciate the fiscal challenges being faced by USPS, I believe that through creative consultation with consumers as well as postal workers, USPS will find it can maintain services in a way that is beneficial for all stakeholders.”

“New York is a city of neighborhoods, and the local post office is a vital element of any neighborhood,” said State Senator Daniel Squadron. “There is still no service quite like it. As New Yorkers strive to preserve their distinct neighborhoods in a difficult economic climate, I hope the USPS will work to find cost-cutting options that leave neighborhoods, and communities, intact.”

“Neighborhood post offices provide a crucial service to our communities, particularly seniors and local businesses,” said Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal. “Not everyone communicates via email, and I am very concerned that the USPS’s myopic approach will overlook the considerable need for quality postal service in neighborhoods across New York City. The USPS should not use a weak economy as an excuse to shortchange our residents by closing post offices and cutting services without the valuable input of communities affected by these changes.”

“USPS, like many government entities, faces tremendous budget challenges and will have to make some tough decisions,” said Assembly Member Deborah Glick. “However, instead of engaging in creative problem-solving to do so, USPS seems determined to make the most painful cuts, including closing neighborhood post offices that meet the needs of local residents and small businesses.”

“The postal system is one of our most important public services,” said Assembly Member Richard Gottfried. “For the USPS to close two local post offices which serve large populations in growing residential and business communities ignores the needs and input of the neighborhood.”

“Postal service is still a vital link for many of our citizens, especially seniors, who may not be comfortable or even familiar with the internet,” said Council Member Alan Gerson. “The consolidation of services proposed by the USPS will present an undue hardship for those seniors, forcing them to travel greater distances for services that should, by right, be readily available to them.”

“Staffed post offices provide central services to all New Yorkers, particularly seniors and small business owners,” said Council Member Gale Brewer. “They are a gateway to a variety of important financial and governmental resources. Automated postal centers cannot replace the personal attention and level of

service that millions of New Yorkers receive from the extraordinary and professional United States postal workers.”

“In truth, there is no necessity to close post office branches or stations,” said APWU New York Local President Clarice Torrence. “The USPS needs temporary relief from financial burdens placed on it. No other government agency or private corporation has to pre-fund future retirees’ health benefits. Because of this, the USPS has been cutting back on service for some time. Now it is planning to close stations in communities. The sudden drop in mail volume is because of the current economic crisis, not because of the Internet. The three biggest years in the 234-year history of the Post Office were 2005, 2006 and 2007, well into the Internet era. When the economy comes back so will mail volume. Solutions can be found for both the current crisis and the long-term viability of the USPS that do not include the elimination of post offices.”

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*SOURCE: Office of U.S. Representative Jerrold Nadler*