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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0910

June 19, 2006

COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS
CHAIRMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
MILITARY QUALITY OF LIFE AND
VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. John E. Potter
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Postmaster Potter:

This is to share with you my concerns, and those of my constituents from St. Petersburg and Pinellas County, Florida, about the proposed merger of the St. Petersburg and Tampa Area Mail Processing facilities.

Because the House was in session last Wednesday, I was unable to attend a town hall meeting in St. Petersburg with your District Manager Michael Jordan, where he discussed the proposed merger. However I was represented there by my District Assistant, who has briefed me on Mr. Jordan's presentation and on some of the questions and concerns that were raised by those in attendance.

The purpose of my letter is to raise with you several specific questions I have about this matter and to ask for more detailed information about these questions than seemed to be available at the town hall meeting.

First is a national perspective on how the Postal Service is evaluating sites for merger. Is there an overarching plan for the merger of these operations throughout the country or are you selecting areas of the country randomly based on recommendations from district offices? It would be helpful to understand how many mergers you are considering, over what time frame, and the criteria you are using to prioritize those changeovers.

Second, what has your experience been with the few mergers that have taken place? Are you realizing the savings and efficiencies you projected and what has the impact been on customer service and mail delivery schedules and operations. As you know, the U.S. Government Accountability Office in April 2005 issued a report on your plan to realign services and recommended that the Postal Service "establish a set of criteria for evaluating realignment decisions" and "develop a process for implementing these decisions that includes evaluating and measuring the results, as well as the actual costs and savings resulting from the decisions."

Having discussed this matter with the Chairman of the House Government Reform Committee which has jurisdiction over the Postal Service, I know the Committee has asked for more information about your compliance with these GAO recommendations. Before contemplating any changes of the magnitude you propose in our area, it would be helpful to know what your experience has been in the past and if you have the mechanisms in place to measure these outcomes.

Third, more information would be helpful to document your cost savings projections. The one-page fact sheet that was distributed at the meeting only provided five scant bullet points under the heading Business Case. It is hard to determine where your estimates come from without more details.

Fourth, the evaluation process that was used by your District Manager to determine if a merger is practical and if any alternatives were considered such as a Tampa to St. Petersburg merger. Information provided to me by the American Postal Workers' Union indicates that the St. Petersburg mail processing facility scores better than Tampa in terms of efficiency and productivity.

Fifth, more information about the impact any change would have on service to St. Petersburg and Pinellas County. Will the process of trucking mail back and forth across Tampa Bay result in longer delivery times?

Sixth, it has been suggested that having redundancy in mail processing facilities in our area is critical in times of natural disasters such as hurricanes. As you know, Florida was hit by eight major named storms in just the past two years. Any one of those storms could have damaged or knocked out one or the other of these mail processing facilities. Having a redundancy of operations would allow postal operations to continue without interruption. A merger of these facilities, however, would eliminate that possibility.

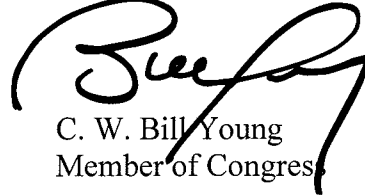
Finally, I want to ensure that you understand the strong community feeling about losing the city's identifying postmark. While the District Manager made comments that the postmark would be retained when requested, it seems that details are not available on how that would work. Again, the one page fact sheet on the proposed merger devoted only three bullet points to customer service and a general comment that, "The same services that are currently available at the Saint Petersburg facility will not be affected by the consolidation." That is hardly reassuring.

In closing, let me say that I understand the pressure the Postal Service is under from increasing competition from other delivery services and the need to rein in costs. However, the proposed merger of these facilities is a major decision that once made is probably irreversible. That is why it is imperative that our local elected officials and the members of our community have all the available information about your cost-benefit analysis and your assumptions about future customer service. Until we have the benefit of that information, I would respectfully request that you make no further decisions about this merger so that we may have the time to study the data you provide. Thank you for your attention to this matter of great interest to our community.

Mr. John E. Potter
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With best wishes and personal regards, I am

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Young", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name and title.

C. W. Bill Young
Member of Congress

CWY:hg