

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0308

July 17, 2012

The Honorable Patrick R. Donahoe
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260-0010

Dear Postmaster General Donahoe,

On May 17, the United States Postal Service announced its plans to close the processing and distribution center in Tucson, AZ, forcing mail in Southern Arizona to be funneled through an already busy center in Phoenix.

Other members of the Arizona congressional delegation have objected to this move. I join with them in asking you to reverse this decision, which will cause significant harm to my constituents in Tucson and elsewhere in Southern Arizona.

I do not take lightly the major financial challenges facing the United States Postal Service. I know that USPS is facing a projected deficit of approximately \$8.5 billion. Efforts to erase that deficit, however, would be disproportionately borne by those of us who live here in Tucson and Southern Arizona – even as other less populous and slower growth states are not so adversely affected.

Let me make clear the detrimental impacts this closure will have on my constituents:

- **Higher costs for business and local government**

Businesses receive discounts for sending bulk and presorted mail – but the mail must be delivered to a processing center. Unless Southern Arizona businesses are able to afford the staff and transportation to drive mail to Phoenix, they will be forced to pay significantly higher postage costs. If these businesses decide to print their material in Phoenix to avoid the cost of transporting mail, there will be a clear loss of revenue for local printing companies.

Small, local printing companies that send out advertisements for businesses, as well as for nonprofit groups that mail fundraising materials, will be deeply affected. The closure will lead to higher postage costs because Tucson mail will be shipped to Phoenix for processing before coming back to Tucson for distribution.

Pima County Recorder F. Ann Rodriguez also is very concerned about the proposed closure. Her office is one of the largest postal customers in Southern Arizona, and this year she will send out more than 1 million pieces of mail – most of it ballots and other election material. If the Tucson facility closes, her office's annual postal bill will increase.

These higher costs – which business and government agencies will pass along to customers and taxpayers – are an unfair geographic penalty. These new burdens could lead business and industry, which often require fast and certain postage and package service, to reconsider Southern Arizona as an attractive location.

- **Longer delivery times**

Without the Tucson processing facility, one-day delivery of first-class mail between two Southern Arizona addresses will be a thing of the past. That is a minor inconvenience for birthday cards, but it is far more of a burden for businesses waiting for customer payments and patients waiting for life-saving medications.

Some 50 percent of Medicare patients and 20 percent of other patients fill their prescriptions by mail order. Deliveries will take longer and the medications may be exposed to the high heat common in Southern Arizona which can quickly erode the effectiveness of prescription drugs.

Longer delivery times will also impact the election process. With some cities, including Tucson, conducting all-mail elections and an increasing number of citizens opting to cast their vote by mail, ballots will need to be mailed and returned earlier.

- **Jobs will be lost**

The Postal Service has said that closing the Tucson center will mean a loss of 147 jobs. But the impact will be far greater as an estimated 141 additional jobs will be lost in related businesses, for a total loss of 288 jobs. This could not come at a worse time for our economy.

In addition, the closure could lead to the relocation of local businesses, causing further job losses. Potential businesses may decide not to locate at all in a city without a mail processing or distribution center.

There is another consideration that may be parochial, but which is important to those of us in Southern Arizona. There would be no more postmarks from Southern Arizona. To some tourists, a postmark from an historic town (Douglas, Bisbee and Tombstone) is an important documentation of their visit to these communities.

On a personal note, as someone who has lived in Tucson for more than 50 years, I find the Postal Service's decision to close our mail processing center deeply troubling. Tucson is growing. Our metropolitan area now includes more than a million people and is one of the fastest-growing regions in the country. The people of Southern Arizona deserve the continued service from the Tucson facility that they long have depended on.

As for the rest of Southern Arizona, the idea that a piece of mail going from Bisbee to Sierra Vista needs to travel the 200 miles to Phoenix and back defies common sense. This decision will slow down timely delivery of mail for the residents of Southern Arizona. Raising costs and decreasing service to Southern Arizonans, while eliminating hundreds of jobs, is patently unfair and unduly harms our region's economic competitiveness.

This proposed closure is opposed by virtually every elected and appointed official in Southern Arizona, as well as numerous business organizations and other groups. I have heard from these businesses and individuals and I know that you have, too. I had hoped that USPS would reverse this decision and work to find solutions that make sense for our community. However, the announcement in May that the closure will proceed shows that the Postal Service is disregarding the voices of the many who have spoken against this closure.

I urge you to keep the Tucson mail processing center open and fully functioning.

Sincerely,



Ron Barber
Member of Congress