



MISGUIDED EFFORTS TO OUTSOURCE POSTAL SERVICE WORK MUST BE STOPPED

Across all modes of transportation, workers have witnessed a dangerous trend to outsource and privatize key government functions at the expense of good jobs, safety and security, and the efficient and reliable delivery of basic services. Unfortunately, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) is not immune from this ideological effort. Too often, it has attempted to outsource the processing, delivery, and collection of mail to low-wage, no-benefit companies and, at times, in violation of existing collective bargaining agreements. The USPS must stop this destructive and counterproductive practice and, when necessary, sit down with its workers and unions to negotiate how best to deliver mail and serve its customers.

As existing communities in the United States grow, new postal delivery points arise in new housing and business developments. According to what USPS has termed "growth management," future new deliveries are to be considered for outsourcing through contract delivery service (CDS). Professional letter carriers are the public face of the Postal Service and the public's trust in letter carriers is an essential business asset of the Postal Service. Outsourcing the last mile of delivery would undermine the basic trust mailers and patrons have in the postal service and backfire: volume and revenue would fall, offsetting any short-term cost savings.

Through the use of contract delivery workers, USPS is bypassing the normal recruitment and hiring processes that ensure only qualified individuals are entrusted to handle Americans' mail. Neither customers nor the Postal Service can know who is responsible for service problems or delivery concerns. In addition, granting access to the mail stream to an unaccountable work force risks the security of the mail system and weakens the ability to prevent, investigate and prosecute mail theft, fraud and other illegal uses of the mail.

Additionally, the CDS contracting process lacks transparency. Wage levels are reportedly less than 50 percent of those enjoyed by career letter carriers, but other payments and fees paid to contractors for "vehicle expenses" and "overhead costs" eat up whatever labor cost savings might exist. The details of CDS contracts are subject to little or no scrutiny.

We are also concerned with attempts by the Postal Service to outsource mail processing work currently performed by career mail handlers. For example, the Postal Service has sought to subcontract the processing of military mail that is headed to Iraq and Afghanistan as well as mail coming into the States from U.S. service members. It is ironic that the Postal Service would seek to subcontract this sensitive work after the armed services issued a formal Letter of Appreciation to the career postal employees, stating that their "professional work ethic and personal contributions ... significantly contributed to the morale and welfare of all our Service Members."

The CDS program and other attempts to outsource core mail handling functions also violate the spirit of the policy established by the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006, which reinforced collective bargaining obligations. The Postal Service is seeking to override the will of Congress by excluding contract workers from collective bargaining coverage. This end-around the basic collective bargaining obligations is unacceptable and a form of union busting that is unworthy of the U.S. Postal Service.

The delivery and handling of mail are core functions of the U.S. Postal Service that should not be needlessly outsourced at the expense of the most efficient mail delivery system in the world. The reality is that too often the Postal Service seeks to privatize operations without regard for whether such a move will improve service and without adequate consultation or negotiation with its workers. Transportation unions call on the Postal Service to end this misguided practice and to instead work with career letter carriers and mail handlers to provide the first-class service that Americans expect and deserve.

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