

THE POST OFFICE



OCCUCARD #25

EMPOWERING MAIN STREET, NOT WALL STREET



The United States Postal Service (“The Post Office”) was officially established in 1775 during the Second Continental Congress, with Benjamin Franklin appointed as the first postmaster general. A symbol of early American democratic and universalist ideals, it is the only government agency explicitly mentioned in the U.S. Constitution, and even today it retains its legal mandate to serve all residents equally, at a uniform price and quality, regardless of geographical location. Unlike private mail carriers that only operate in areas where they can turn a profit, the Postal Service serves everyone, and it is often the sole institution connecting rural and low-income communities to government services and to the rest of the world.

Despite public misconceptions, the Post Office is a self-sustaining business. It receives no tax dollars and does not contribute in any way to the federal deficit. Through its own income it is able to pay its more than half-a-million employees livable wages, as well as provide benefits and pensions to its full-time workers. As the second largest employer in the nation after Walmart, the Post Office is a bastion of the American middle-class, generating billions of dollars in consumer spending power and helping uplift the economy.

The Post Office is Under Attack!

Since the 1980s, corporate interests have sought various ways to undermine public sector unions and privatize government services, and the Post Office has been a prime target. In 2006 Congress passed a law requiring the Post Office to pre-fund 75 years worth of retiree health care benefits within a ten-year period, while at the same time restricting the rates it could charge for stamps and other services. This is unprecedented for any business or government agency and has put the Post Office in an impossible situation. By imposing a staggering \$5.5 billion annual liability,

the pre-funding mandate has created a fiscal crisis within the agency that is now being used to call for lay-offs, cut-backs in services and the liquidation of Post Office assets—including its historic buildings—to private corporations. If it weren't for this dubious requirement, the Post Office would be financially solvent and would be able to expand its services, create more good-paying jobs and invest in modernization.

Unfortunately, the current Postmaster General, Patrick Donahue, is not advocating for the long-term interests of the Post Office and the American people, but is complicit in calling for an end to Saturday mail delivery, the closing of thousands of post offices around the country and reductions in employee benefits and collective bargaining rights. President Obama has also backed these cuts, and the corporate media, for its part, is assisting the effort to dismantle the Post Office by refusing to report on the pre-funding mandate and by portraying the agency as an inefficient, dying institution.

Despite these attacks, the Post Office remains highly popular, and a broad-based, grassroots movement is forming in cities and towns across the country to support it. Bills currently exist in Congress that would repeal the pre-funding mandate, preserve Saturday delivery and even authorize the expansion of postal services. *The National Association of Letter Carriers* has launched a campaign to build public support for these bills, and the coalition, *Community and Postal Workers United*, is also organizing to save this vital, public institution. The future of the Post Office will depend on how many people join these efforts.

GET INVOLVED!

deliveringforamerica.com • cpwunited.com

**References / more info /
other cards: www.occucards.com**

