

# POSTAL NEWS

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## **1. 45,000 workers in the US are now on strike to end Corporate Greed.**

Despite record profits, US telecom giant Verizon is demanding that its workers add to those profits from their own pockets.

In the last four years alone, Verizon made more than US\$19 billion in profits and compensated their top five executives more than a quarter of a billion dollars. But apparently that's not enough.

Now they're refusing to bargain. Starting on June 22 Verizon pushed proposals that would let them outsource more jobs, slash sick days, eliminate benefits for workers who get hurt on the job and cut the healthcare benefits they promised retirees. And they haven't budged.

That's why 45,000 CWA and IBEW members walked out on Sunday 07 August to force Verizon to abandon its hostile Wisconsin-style tactics and come to the bargaining table and negotiate.

The world has had enough of corporate greed. Now is the time for Verizon to do the right thing and come to the bargaining table in good faith.

Sign the Petition to tell Verizon CEO Lowell McAdam to stop Verizon's attack on workers and share his company's success with those who made it possible: [www.cwa-union.org/univz](http://www.cwa-union.org/univz)

Campaign Website:  
[www.cwa-union.org/verizon](http://www.cwa-union.org/verizon)

## **2. U.S. Postal Service should keep in mind its mission to serve**

By:

Published: August 07, 2011

More than a dozen rural U.S. Post Offices in the Mountain Empire are under review and could be closed. They are among 3,700 offices nationwide that the U.S. Postal Service is studying, mostly because of diminishing demand for services.

The study is part of the agency's attempt to streamline and reorganize in the wake of several years of multimillion operating losses (\$8 billion in 2010). The Postal Service calls the study (and other initiatives) a process to "right-size" the service, which receives no tax dollars for operating expenses but has seen a steady decline in usage mostly attributed to technological advances.

Among the changes prompted by technology: About half of all bill payments now are made online instead of through the mail; a decade ago, that number was 5 percent.

We support the study, but want to encourage the U.S. Postal Service to keep foremost in its mind its mission to serve.

The Postal Service must watch its bottom line – but that doesn't mean it should operate exactly like a business. That's because the mission is not profit. As a government entity, the mission is service.

Still, times are changing. We don't use the mail services the way we once did, evidenced by the changes in how we pay bills. And we now have options, competitors to the federal agency that also deliver mail and packages.

The Postal Service has no choice; it must also change.

We won't like everything that change brings – particularly the need to drive greater distances to a post office when an in-person visit is necessary. We also will disdain the physical loss of what for many small towns has been a traditional community gathering place. But we can ill afford nostalgia on this one.

As the Postal Service considers the closures, particularly those in our region, we encourage the priority consideration of several factors – the least of which is profit.

The most important is service: The reviewers must consider the hardship they might create on rural folks and those with lesser incomes when they are forced to travel farther for a stamp or to mail a package. This is chiefly important in our region because we are not quite as wired as other areas; that means we will see a number of customers who are unable to use the new electronic services offered (from buying stamps online to printing mailing labels for packages).

While a business might choose to risk the loss of some such customers, in the name of greater profits, the Postal Service should not. As a government agency the Postal Service must serve all of the populace, as equally, efficiently and effectively as possible. That includes serving the nonwired and those on the lower end of the income spectrum. For those residents, driving a dozen or as many as 20 miles to the post office could be considered a financial hardship.

The gathering place argument, well, that one must succumb to the change; there are other places for a community to gather. There also are other ways to develop a sense of community in the wake of a post office closure.

Like a business, the post office must be smart with its money, and government agencies particularly have a fiduciary duty to avoid waste – such as staffing a post office eight hours a day when it is busy serving customers for only a quarter of that time.

These are key issues in deciding which offices to close. And the central question in finding a balance of those issues is deciding just how far is too far?

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### **3. OTHER VOICES: Rural post office closings are necessary**

Posted: Saturday, August 6, 2011.

While the United States Postal Service is looking at making some tough decisions, Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad is calling for a moratorium on post office closings.

As many as 178 post offices could close in Iowa according to the most recent list released by the Postal Service. Meanwhile, Branstad is calling for the moratorium until the Postal Service can better explain the criteria it will use to shut down nearly 3,700 offices nationwide.

While closings may have a harsh effect on rural areas, we don't see any way around a significant downsizing. Branstad should see the logic in that.

Claiming more than once that "there's a new sheriff in town," Branstad has acted aggressively in attempts to decrease state spending. That's not a bad thing. We have supported many of his proposals.

The USPS has to do the same.

While criteria may be sketchy in Branstad's eyes, the troubles faced by the USPS are readily apparent.

Mail volume is down significantly.

The Postal Service lost \$8 billion last year and is on track to lose at least as much this year. That's despite cutting 200,000 jobs over the past decade and cutting costs by \$12 billion over the past four years.

It should be noted that Branstad and his wife, Chris, own a dozen buildings in the state that have the U.S. Postal Service as a tenant, although none of those were on the list of those proposed to be closed.

Branstad has made it clear, in his campaigning and in his policy proposals, that spending cuts need to be implemented in order to enjoy a healthier economy.

Obviously, while losing billions, USPS officials have to act aggressively to change the system in ways that can keep service but save money. So far, proposals by the USPS have seemed quite responsible. Chief among them is a plan to implement "village post offices," featuring smaller, full service operations at libraries, grocery stores or other businesses.

Yes, Iowa is a rural state, and rural areas will feel the effects of such measures more than urban areas. However, it is a foregone conclusion that the USPS cannot continue losing billions every year. Closing some buildings and implementing the village post office model shows this institution is simply adapting to the 21st century.

Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier

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#### **4. Area residents want to keep post offices open**

Brett Ellis/Fremont Tribune | Posted: Saturday, August 6, 2011

Lila Heitshusen has some practical concerns if the post office in Uehling would close.

"Where would we get our stamps?" the Uehling woman asked. "Where would we send our packages?"

But Heitshusen also has other reasons for wanting the town's post office to stay open.

"It's a friendly place to visit with people," she said. "Not just the postmaster, but other people that you see in there."

Uehling is one of 90 facilities in the state being studied by the U.S. Postal Service for possible closings. There are nearly 3,700 around the nation.

Brian Sperry, regional spokesperson for the USPS, said the locations were chosen based on low foot traffic, retail sales and scheduled employee work hours.

Betty Strand of Uehling said what those numbers don't take into consideration, though, is how those closings would affect people in those small towns and villages.

"It's handy," Strand said. "It's right down the street. What would we do if we lost it?"

Uehling has no rural route and Strand said she likely would have to go to Hooper or Oakland to get her mail.

Sperry, though, said people in affected towns and cities would still get their mail either from a rural carrier or what he described as a village post office, which would be located in a business or town hall and would offer things like a collection box, stamps and pre-paid priority mail boxes and envelopes.

People in those towns also would be able to retain their current zip code.

Uehling's post office was one of several from the area on the list.

Others include: Craig, Malmo, Morse Bluff, Prague, Snyder and Winslow. Colon and Ithaca already are being studied for possible closure, Sperry said.

Christina Kotik owns Shear Salon & Tanning in Winslow and said she gets her mail at the post office.

While Kotik said she could get by if the post office closes, she is concerned about other people in the town.

"The townspeople that are so used to it because it's been here for years and years, it's going to be a hard adjustment for them," Kotik said. "But for people who are on the run all the time, it's not a big deal."

Sperry said residents of the towns and cities on the list will be receiving letters in the next few weeks explaining the process of the study. Those letters also will include a survey.

Public meetings also will be held in each location to get feedback, he said.

Just because a location is on the list does not mean that it will be closed, Sperry said.

"We're going to make a decision on an individual basis for each post office based on the information, data and feedback that we receive," he said.

Sperry said the USPS has seen a 20 percent decline in the volume of mail over the past five years - roughly 43 billion pieces of mail.

He said the postal service lost \$8.5 billion last year and is projected to lose more than \$8 billion this year.

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## **5. U.S. Postal Service warns it could default after \$3.1bn losses**

By Daily Mail Reporter

Last updated at 5:29 AM on 6th August 2011

The Postal Service lost \$3.1 billion in the April through June period and could be forced to default on payments due to the federal government when the fiscal year ends in September.

Losses for the year come to \$5.7 billion.

Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe said: 'We continue to take aggressive actions to reduce costs and bring the size of our infrastructure into alignment with reduced customer demand.'

Tough times: The Postal Service lost \$3.1 billion in the April through June period

But losses have been mounting over the last few years as more private mail and bill payments were switched to the Internet, and the recession caused a decrease in business mail.

He said the agency planned for a decline in first-class mail but it occurred more rapidly than expected.

The post office has asked Congress to change or drop the requirement that it make a \$5.5 billion annual payment into a fund to cover future retirement disability benefits.

No other government agency is required to make such a payment.

If Congress doesn't act and current losses continue, the post office will be unable to make that payment at the end of September because it will have reached its borrowing limit and simply won't have the cash to do so.

In that event, Donahoe said, 'Our intent is to continue to deliver the mail, pay our employees and pay our suppliers.'

Changes: The post office has asked Congress to change or drop the requirement that it make a \$5.5 billion annual payment into a fund to cover future retirement disability benefits

The post office wants permission to reduce mail delivery from six days a week to five as part of a series of cost-cutting measures.

And it would like a refund of overpayments it says it made to employee retirement accounts.

The Postal Service, which does not receive tax revenues for its operations, is in the process of reducing its administrative staff by 7,500 people and is reviewing about 3,600 underused post offices across the country for closing. Over the last four years the Postal Service has cut its staff by 110,000 and reduced costs by \$12 billion.

In the three months from April through June, the post office handled 39.8 billion pieces of mail.

That's 1.1 billion fewer items than in the same period a year ago.

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