

USPS PLANS MAJOR CLOSURES AND CUTS



For the past couple of decades, being employed by the government meant that your job was secure, you earned good pay, and you had a clear path into the middle class of the country. This was especially true for African Americans and other minorities in the country. The recession has not kept its problems away from government agencies, meaning budget cuts have happened in those areas too. This past Monday, the United States Postal Service announced that it would close 252 mail processing centers across the country while cutting 28,000 jobs in an effort to fight off a possible bankruptcy. A large portion of the Postal Service's job force is composed of African-Americans. "People have raised their kids with these jobs and bought homes in the black community," said Adrian Peeple, 42, of South Holland, who is a member of the Postal Service. "It'll be a huge impact if they started laying off or cutting back on people who've been working here for quite a bit of their lives," according to the [Chicago Tribune](#). The plan proposed by the Postal Service will not go into effect until spring of 2012 and will feature a more relaxed first class mail system. This means that overnight mail will pretty much be obsolete. The reason for the delay, which could be around two to three days, is due to the closure of almost half of the mail processing centers across the country. Mark Reynolds, a Postal Service spokesman based in Chicago, had the following to say, "We hope and anticipate there will be minimal customer impact," Reynolds said. "All the work at those facilities will be absorbed by other plants in the area." The plan submitted by the Postal Service could help the agency save close to \$2.1 billion per year as it remains to stay relevant in the growing digital age. Government employment has shrunk by 400,000 jobs since the recession began back in January of 2008. Local government has been the biggest section suffering from the recession as teachers to waste haulers receiving pink slips since the recession started. The hardest hit federal agency since the recession began was the Postal Service, as its workforce dropped to 612,000 from 756,000. This is a loss of 144,000 jobs, which equates to 19 percent. The private sector has added almost 1.6 million jobs this year, while payrolls in government have lost 237,000 employees through the end of November, as the Postal Service accounted for 11 percent of those jobs cut in the public sector. "The postal service ... has been a very important employer of African-Americans," said Robert Zieger, an emeritus professor of history at the University of Florida. "As early as the World War I era, about 10 percent of all postal workers were African-American at a time when the vast majority of African-Americans lived in the South and worked in agriculture and domestic service."

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