

## U.S. POSTAL SERVICE ON CONSOLIDATION SPREE, UNION FEARS LOSS OF JOBS



U.S. Postal Service Postmaster General Patrick R. Donahoe made an announcement on May 9, that Post Offices in the rural areas would remain open with limited working hours. However, Postal Workers Unions are not in favor of this decision, with its spokesperson saying that, this would not solve the postal service's financial crisis. The post service's budgetary concerns had led to the decisions that their Apple Springs, Etoile, Pollok and Wells post offices work for six hours a day, instead of eight, but Kennard, Ratcliff and Camden post offices could work for only four hours a day. The new plan was to stay effective for a period of two years. In September the Postal Service officials had proposed the consolidation, relocation or closure of over half of its mail processing network. Consolidating activities include lessening the size of the workforce by around 13,000 employees, which will help them save around \$1.2 billion annually. "The Postal Service has reduced the size of its workforce by 244,000 career employees since 2000 without resorting to layoffs," said Megan Brennan, Chief Operating Officer of the Postal Service. "We are a responsible employer and we will work with our employees to ensure a smooth transition to a much leaner organization." A mail processing feasibility study conducted by the postal service had recommended mail distribution processing operations be relocated from Lufkin to Beaumont. Mattox said the postal service is moving ahead with a modified plan to strengthen the mail processing facility network. This, officials state would reduce the postal deficit by \$20 billion by 2015, in phases. "APWU contends that this 'modified' plan is essentially the same plan and strategy as the old plan proposed last fall, which will impose drastic cuts to service and the mail processing network and eliminate tens of thousands of jobs," Mattox said. "APWU asserts that if the USPS degrades service standards and dismantles its mail processing network, service will be destroyed and customers will be driven away. Irreparable harm will be done to the nation's mail system; the U.S. Postal Service, as a whole, will be weakened." The first phase of activities would commence in July and continue till February of the next year. It would result in around 140 consolidations. Phase 2 would begin in February 2014 with further 89 consolidations; bring the total number of consolidations to 229 across the country. "We revised our network consolidation time line to provide a longer planning schedule for our customers, employees and other stakeholders and to enable a more methodical and measured implementation," Donahoe said in a statement. Mattox said that there was still some time for affected mail customers to contact their federal representatives and ask to put postal reform on a priority. Mattox said, "The House must act and pass its own version of postal reform legislation. APWU contends that the postmaster general has remained consistent in his strategy, and his goal is to cut jobs, close post offices and mail processing facilities and dismantle the postal network. Therefore, the fight must continue, and it is imperative that postal workers and postal customers contact their U.S. representatives and urge them to begin the debate on the Senate bill immediately, as this situation is urgent." "The Postal Service will be communicating with our customers and employees about these changes in great detail," said Megan Brennan, "We will work closely with our customers to ensure there are no surprises as we move forward."

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