



Press Packet Table of Contents

This packet aims to help you deal with the media and get our message out, both about the Sept. 27 rally and the issues facing the Postal Service.

We have a two-pronged strategy: Getting coverage for the rally, and getting reports written/aired before then to explain the issues and to boost attendance at the rally.

We've left a space on the press release and information sheet for you to write in your local information.

Media Contacts

National:

Philip Dine
National Association
of Letter Carriers
202-662-2850

National:

Sally Davidow
American Postal
Workers Union
202-842-4250

Local:

Media Tips

This is an informal guide to reaching out to local media outlets and getting reporters to cover the issues and the rally. Use whatever tips you find helpful.

Press Release

This is the announcement of the rally. It should be distributed to reporters/media outlets as soon as possible. The best approach is also to call them. This should be distributed as well to reporters at the rally. Please add local media contact information and the location of the rally.

Information Sheet

This details the issues facing the Postal Service. You can use some of it as talking points when you call the media to get them interested in the story/rally. You should distribute it to reporters/media outlets as soon as possible along with the press release. And it should be given to reporters at the rally. Please add local media contact information.



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WHAT: A rally to Save America's Postal Service

WHERE: _____

(Site lead to fill in
the exact location)

WHEN: Tuesday Sept. 27, 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Sept. 27 has been designated by postal employees as a Day of Action to Save America's Postal Service. We are rallying in every congressional district in the country, with two aims:

—To inform the public about the actual financial situation at the U.S. Postal Service and what's at stake for residents and businesses throughout your district.

—To explain how the problems can be resolved, including by supporting House Bill 1351.

Beyond the rally, there are good opportunities for you to do enterprise or advance stories. The Postal Service affects every resident and business in your community, and so what happens to it is of great local as well as national importance.

We are including an information sheet as a resource. You'll note how different the actual situation facing the U.S. Postal Service is from what's been portrayed to the public. Your reporting can spark a discussion—and make a difference.

We would be glad to work with you as you report on these issues, including helping you localize or regionalize the story.



Information Sheet about the U.S. Postal Service

What follows are facts and context about the situation at the U.S. Postal Service, aimed at putting the flurry of recent headlines in context and clarifying what's at issue—and what's at stake.

The fate of the U.S. Postal Service is a major national issue affecting every American, every community, every business—and yet what typically is reported is misleading and incomplete. As a result, few of your readers/viewers/listeners know the real story—or what can be done going forward.

Despite what you may have heard, the Postal Service isn't broke. Nor is it losing billions of dollars a year delivering the mail. And a taxpayer bailout isn't imminent. Reduced services are being presented as a foregone conclusion, but they're not.

The massive cuts in service to residents and businesses being proposed—allegedly to address these problems—are not inevitable, necessary or constructive. That's because the financial problems facing the Postal Service aren't caused by the cost of delivering mail; they're caused largely by Congress, and Congress can solve them.

Your reporting can shatter the conventional wisdom while informing people. Moreover, this is an issue that greatly affects the communities you cover. Your stories can spark a public discussion, and influence public policy. Toward that end, we will provide information that typically isn't reported. These facts can readily be verified; the conclusions flow directly from those facts. Visit www.SaveAmericasPostalService.org for documentation, or call the media contacts on the press release.

—The Postal Service isn't funded by taxpayers. All its revenue is earned from the sale of its products and services, meaning that the dire warnings of a taxpayer bailout are completely unfounded. The Postal Service hasn't used a dime of taxpayer money in 30 years.

—The Postal Service made a net profit of more than \$600 million sorting and delivering the mail the past four fiscal years. You read that correctly. Despite the worst recession in 80 years, despite competition from the Internet, despite everything you've heard, postal operating revenues exceeded costs by \$611 million in the four fiscal years since 2007.

—Customer satisfaction and on-time deliveries are at record levels, labor costs are declining, worker productivity has doubled, and for six years running the American people have named postal employees the most-trusted federal workers. U.S. citizens and businesses benefit from the most inexpensive and most efficient mail system in the industrialized world.

—So why the headlines about multibillion losses and a Postal Service in financial free fall? There is indeed a financial problem, but it's not what you've been told. It doesn't result from mail delivery. The \$20 billion in postal losses you've heard about stems from a 2006 congressional mandate that the Postal Service pre-fund future retiree health benefits for the next 75 years and do so within a decade—a burden no other public agency or private firm faces. The Postal Service is actually paying, out of its operating budget, for the future retiree benefits of people who haven't been born yet. That cost—\$21 billion since 2007—accounts for 100 percent of the agency's red ink over

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Information Sheet about the U.S. Postal Service (continued)

that period. House Bill 1351, which has bipartisan support and nearly 200 co-sponsors, would address the pre-funding issue.

—The other big financial problem, which also has nothing to do with the mail, is that the Postal Service doesn't have access to tens of billions of dollars of earned revenue that are sitting in surplus funds. As a quasi-public agency, it needs Congress to give it access to its own money.

—Because a dysfunctional Congress (remember the debt ceiling fiasco?) has yet to take these steps, postal officials are desperate as they face the \$5.5 billion pre-funding payments due every fall. So they're proposing a series of drastic cuts: One day it's to end Saturday delivery, another day to close 3,700 post offices, or fire 120,000 employees, or close 300 processing centers. Each has serious downsides for residents and communities and local businesses, for the U.S. economy, for the future of the Postal Service. They would exacerbate rather than solve the agency's problems, by sacrificing its competitive edge and driving away customers.

—Even if the current financial snafus are fixed, why would the Postal Service have a future, given the Internet? This isn't the first time the Postal Service has had to adapt to an evolving society or to technological change. It did so with the telephone, the telegraph, the fax machine and more, each time emerging stronger, offering new and improved services to meet society's changing needs. Today, the Internet offers both challenges and opportunities. More people are paying bills online, but they're also ordering goods online that need to be delivered. One of the fastest growing profit centers within the Postal Service is doing "last-mile" residential deliveries for UPS and FedEx, which it can do inexpensively because of its universal network—helping reduce costs for the private carriers and for their customers.

—The point isn't that congressional action would erase all challenges, but rather that once lawmakers address the elephant(s) in the room—the pre-funding and the lack of Postal Service access to its own surplus funds—then thoughtful solutions can be devised to meet those challenges. The entire postal community—management, labor, Postal Regulatory Commission, legislators, the mailing industry—can come together

and determine how to adapt the business model and what new services would help customers. This cannot be done in the current panic mode, with congressional inaction forcing management to throw every possible cut against the wall to see what sticks, while anti-government ideologues exploit the situation.

—Why is it important to save the Postal Service? Because it's the centerpiece of a \$1.3 trillion mailing industry that supports 8 million jobs. Because it is indispensable in the overall economy. Because its role is included in the Constitution. Because it binds together this vast land nation, offering inexpensive service to every resident no matter how remote, and it also unifies individual communities.

—And, because this unique universal network has value we often don't even consider, including in the area of public safety. Under President George W. Bush, when homeland security officials needed a way to distribute medicines to residents in the event of a biological incident, they turned to the Postal Service and letter carrier volunteers. That program is now set up in Minneapolis, a second pilot program was recently completed in Louisville, and a few weeks ago the plan was expanded to San Diego, Philadelphia and Boston. Moreover, because they know their neighborhoods and their customers, every week letter carriers save the lives of elderly residents who've taken ill or fallen down, find lost children or missing pets, and put out fires. Each year on the second Saturday in May, letter carriers conduct the nation's largest single-day food drive, replenishing food pantries across the country.

In a time of rapid societal and technological change, we need to strengthen our universal communications and delivery network, not weaken it. It would be a national travesty to begin to dismantle this unique network, jettison its numerous capabilities and jeopardize all its contributions, when the financial challenges—properly understood—can be addressed in ways that are more effective and cause no damage.

If your reporting brings some of these facts and broader context to the frenetic coverage of alleged losses and proposed cuts in services, you will be adding to your audience's understanding, elevating the public dialogue, influencing the policy debate, and providing a service to your communities and to your country.



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Media Tips

Here are some tips for dealing with the media before, during and after the rally. Look them over, and use only what makes sense for you.

1) Contact the media as soon as possible. Call (do not e-mail, fax or send a letter) the newspaper(s) in your area, including any weeklies, ask for the City Desk, and tell them you'd like to talk to a reporter or an editor about a story with broad impact in the community.

Do the same with the radio stations (ask for the news editor) and TV stations (assignment desk).

Tell them in just three or four sentences that you work for the post office, what you do (don't focus on the union) and that they've surely heard that the Postal Service is facing a crisis and decisions are going to be made soon that will affect every resident and every business in the community. But there's a ton of misinformation out there, and you'd like to provide some facts and some context so their readers (or listeners, or viewers) will have the real story.

It's best if you can eventually get transferred to a reporter who might actually cover the story. If not, urge the editor or whomever you speak with to have whichever reporter is assigned to the story give you a call as soon as possible, so you can discuss the story.

Leave a couple of phone numbers, and perhaps an e-mail address, for a reporter to reach you. Many reporters work odd hours, and they won't necessarily try during normal work hours.

2) Our goal in contacting the media is only partly to alert them to the rally, but at least as important to get them to write about the issue beforehand. If they do that, it's more likely it'll be a longer, enterprise-type story that gets at the real issues, as opposed to a simple news story about an event. (Ideally, they'll do that and then also cover the rally.) An advance story, including one that runs the day of the rally, also will boost public and media attendance at the rally itself.

Newspapers are the most likely to do an in-depth job prior to the rally. TV is more likely to wait until the rally to show up, but those visuals can still be valuable, especially if you're invested time beforehand explaining to the producer/reporter what's actually going on at the Postal Service. Radio's somewhere in between; depending on the station's news resources it might do a report before, or just show up.

3) The way to spark media interest is not to jump right into a set of facts or figures, or talk about legislation or politics, or about how someone is trying to destroy the Postal Service, or any other specific angle. Nor is it to focus overly on the rally, the union role, the petition, etc. Rather, it's to provide some broad journalistic reasons why the reporter or media outlet should pursue this story, rather than a dozen others they could do instead. In other words, what's in it for the reporter/news outlet if they devote time and resources to this story? Why should they care?

Here is a sample of a way to approach it:

"I'm calling with a story about the U.S. Postal Service, which as you've surely heard is facing a crisis about its future. But that crisis isn't what you

Media Tips (continued)

and your readers (viewers, listeners) may think it is. You've heard that the Postal Service is losing billions of dollars a year sorting and delivering the mail, that this is the result of the Internet and fewer people sending letters these days, about a possible taxpayer bailout being imminent, and thus about the necessity of severe cuts in services to residents and businesses, including post offices being closed and Saturday delivery being eliminated.

"Well, as someone who works at the post office, I'm here to tell you that this is almost entirely wrong. The Postal Service isn't broke. It's actually made more than \$600 million in profit the last four fiscal years sorting and delivering the mail. It also has tens of billions of dollars in surplus funds that Congress could give it access to. And, looking forward, the Internet presents competition but also offers a lot of opportunities for the Postal Service to provide new services to businesses and residents.

"We can discuss this in more detail if you'd like. But first let me tell you briefly why this is a great story for your newspaper (or station) to pursue, even ahead of the rally.

"Because the conventional wisdom is so wrong, you could really startle your readers (listeners, viewers) by providing the actual facts and putting the situation in context. People are going to wonder, why didn't I know this stuff before? You would kick off a lively public discussion, once people had the real story and understood the big picture.

"This is a matter of major local importance, to every resident and every business in our area, especially small businesses on Main Street that are open Saturday and need to send and receive financial documents, or the many elderly in our area or folks who need medicines on the weekend, or our rural areas that would be particularly hard hit by reductions in services (whichever of these most applies in your area).

"It's a story that could have a practical impact, because despite the efforts by some to depict service cuts as inevitable, in fact everything is up in the air. Congress will soon be considering these issues, and the actions (or inactions) it undertakes could either save or destroy our Postal Service. Giving people accurate information and context is critical in those decisions. So you'd be performing a real public service.

"This is not a difficult story that's going to take a lot of heavy listing. It's not a 'he-said, she-said' story where everyone has conflicting information and you—and your audience—won't know what's accurate. I'm going to tell you the part of the story that's been neglected, and everything I'll tell you, you can verify on your own. So you're not going to go on a wild goose chase. This is, in fact, a rather simple story."

You tell an editor or reporter those types of things, and any journalist worth his or her salt is going to be in-

trigued. If they're not, you don't want to waste time talking to them.

4) Once there's some interest, ask how you can provide detailed information about the Postal Service in the most convenient way for them. Would they like to meet, should you call back when they have some time, do they want you to fax them the information sheet you have?

If you do meet, or talk further on the phone, summarize the various points on the information sheet in any way you feel comfortable, or just tell them the story as you know it. They'll ask questions and you'll get a conversation going. The information sheet is for your use as you see fit, including to simply give to the reporter.

When you get into the substance, make sure to mention not only mail-related topics but others that indicate the value of the universal network in ways many people aren't aware of—such as the Cities Readiness Initiative and homeland security (especially if you're in one of the areas where that program is underway: Minnesota, Kentucky, Massachusetts, California, Pennsylvania).

5) A couple of reporters who really take an interest and will pursue this aggressively are more valuable than a lot of lukewarm ones. So don't spin your wheels. If you find one or two reporters who seem smart and committed to the story, focus on them.

One dynamite story will be far more helpful than 20 perfunctory reports. Even one good report—especially if it's before the rally—will prompt every assignment editor or producer in town to ask his or her staff why they missed it and order them to get on the damn story. TV and radio often take their lead from the morning newspaper.

6) Feel free to use the national media contacts in any way that's helpful to you, or to offer to have your regional officers or national president call the reporter if he/she needs more information or wants to expand the story beyond the local level.

7) Remember, no matter how well the rally goes, **the vast majority of people in your area are going to know only what they read or hear about from the media.** In addition, any media interest you spark may well endure beyond the rally, and an informed and engaged public is our best weapon. Public opinion is critical in itself, and the actions that can result—such as phone calls and letters to legislators—can also lead to political movement.

8) Don't stop your efforts after the rally is over. If you've built relationships with any reporter, those are valuable so keep the dialogue going. The rally wasn't why they worked on the situation at the Post Service—the issues were—and those continue.

So, all your efforts dealing with the media are extremely important to our future.

Good luck!