

Five protesters arrested at Salem mail processing facility

SALEM — Five people were arrested for trespassing at the Salem mail processing plant April 17. The “occupiers” were protesting the scheduled June closure of the facility, which will eliminate approximately 100 union jobs and delay mid-Willamette Valley mail delivery.

About 40 protesters held a noon-time rally at the front entrance to Salem’s main post office at 1050 25th Street, SE. They carried signs and chanted “Save Salem’s mail, or go to jail.” Among the protesters were State Reps. Brian Clem of Salem and Val Hoyle of Eugene. Clem’s father was a letter carrier in Coos Bay for more than 40 years.

“Postal management needs to stop and reverse these closures and cuts which are sending our beloved postal service into a death spiral,” said Rev.



Retired letter carrier Jamie Partridge was among five people arrested April 17 for refusing to leave a mail processing plant in Salem that is slated for closure in June. The five were taken to the Marion County jail and cited for trespassing. (Photo courtesy of Greg Zurbrugg)

John Schwiebert, one of five protesters who went inside the sorting plant and unfurled banners reading: “No closures! No cuts!” and “Save Salem’s Mail!”

The five protesters demanded that acting-manager Rick DeWolfe suspend the closure and allow Congress to fix postal finances. DeWolfe said the closure was not his decision. When they refused to leave, DeWolfe had them arrested for trespassing.

In addition to Schwiebert, those arrested were retired letter carrier Jamie Partridge, Rosalie Pedrosa of the Service Employees International Union, AF-SCME retiree Jack Herbert, and Fernando Gapsin, an organizer for the

Oregon School Employees Association.

Since July, the USPS has closed 114 mail sortation facilities, one third of the nation’s mail processing capacity. The agency announced in March that it was accelerating plans to close even more mail processing facilities. The USPS said it will consolidate 71 plants this year that were originally scheduled for possible closure in 2014. Salem, Bend and Pendleton plants are on that list.

(Editor’s Note: State Reps. Hoyle and Clem introduced House Joint Memorial 15, with 30 co-sponsors, urging Congress to pass the Postal Service Protection Act of 2013.)

DeFazio files bill to save USPS; starts ‘We The People’ petition

Oregon Congressman Peter DeFazio has filed a bill (H.R. 630) to end the requirement that the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) pre-fund 75 years of retiree health care benefits. The mandate, passed by Congress in 2006, is unprecedented, as no other private or public entity has to meet such a standard. It is the key factor driving Postal Service deficits and defaults and has led to proposals to end Saturday service, close rural post offices, and lay off postal workers.

DeFazio met with supporters at a rally April 30 at the State Capitol in Salem, where he asked the crowd to sign a “We the People” petition to the White House.

The petition: “Save the Postal Service — Save American Jobs,” must obtain 100,000 signatures in order to be reviewed by officials in the Obama Administration and have an official response issued. (Obama favors ending

Saturday mail delivery.)

The petition reads: *“About 80% of USPS financial losses since 2007 are due to a Congressional mandate to pre-fund 75 years of future retiree health benefits over 10 years. In 2012 USPS lost a record \$15.9 billion, but \$11.1 billion of that loss went to pre-fund healthcare. This must change.*

“USPS shouldn’t move to 5-day delivery. This would only save 3%, risk further revenue losses, and slow mail delivery.

“USPS needs to re-establish overnight delivery standards to ensure the timely delivery of mail and prevent the closure of mail plants.

“USPS needs to generate more revenue by ending a 2006 ban prohibiting USPS from offering new products and services.

“Does the Administration support HR 630 and S 316 to make these

changes, save American jobs, and allow USPS to remain competitive?”

The petition was created on April 24. As of press time it had 13,333 signatures. It must reach 100,000 signatures by May 24 to qualify for a response.

Go to <http://wh.gov/t95i> and follow the instructions to sign the petition.

Letter Carriers Food Drive May 11

Letter carriers in the Portland metropolitan area and in Clark County, Washington will help “Stamp Out Hunger” on Saturday, May 11, part of the 21st annual National Association of Letter Carriers and U.S. Postal Service Food Drive.

Prior to May 11, plastic bags will be delivered to every household, along with a postcard reminder. All you have to do is fill the bag with nonperishable food items such as canned meat, fish and soup, cereals, pasta and rice, and leave it at your mailbox on the morn-

ing of Saturday, May 11. (Please do not include glass items, homemade items or previously opened containers.)

Letter Carriers will collect the bags and deliver them to drop points, where volunteers will sort the donations and forward them to the Oregon Food Bank. Food collected in Clark County will benefit Clark County hunger-relief agencies.

The Food Drive is the largest one-day food collection of the year in Oregon — and across the nation.



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