

To Oregon's Working Men & Women: THANK YOU!

Because of your dedication and commitment I am able to fight for affordable education, social justice and good paying jobs.

Together we'll continue our fight to preserve the American Dream and to keep America's middle class strong.

Jeff



www.JeffMerkley.com

Paid for by Jeff Merkley for Oregon

New USPS reform bill in Senate met with dismay

A new "bipartisan" proposal to reform the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) is being denounced by postal worker unions.

Introduced Aug. 1 by high-ranking Senators Tom Carper (D-Del.) and Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), S.1486 paves the way to end Saturday and door-to-door mail delivery, close over half of the mail processing plants in the country, and cut workers' compensation benefits for injured postal workers.

"Utter dismay" was the reaction of four national postal unions in a letter to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.).

National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) President Fredric Rolando, Postal Workers President Cliff Guffey, Mail Handlers-Laborers President John Hegarty, and Rural Letter Carriers President Jeanette Dwyer said the bill — S. 1486 — was unveiled just before the congressional recess, without consultation with unions, and without an adequate solution for the real source of USPS' cash flow problems — that of requiring USPS to pre-fund 75 years of future retirees' health care benefits over a 10-year period (by 2016) — something no other public or private agency is required to do.

The union officials told Reid the bill would eliminate at least 80,000 jobs, mostly within its first year, shred all workers' health care plans, cut delivery, and send USPS on a "death spiral."

"Ending door-to-door delivery for tens of millions of Americans would particularly harm small businesses as well as the elderly and people who live in areas with extreme weather," NALC's Rolando said. "And it's counterproductive financially, because — as is the case with the proposal to eliminate Saturday delivery — degrading service would drive mail out of the system and reduce revenue. ... Lawmakers

should fix the problems they created, not make counterproductive reductions in service."

For their part, both Carper and Coburn said the bill was a work in progress. "This bill isn't perfect and will certainly change as Dr. Coburn and I hear from colleagues and stakeholders, including postal employees and customers," Carper said in a statement. "But the time to act is now."

The bill is more onerous than a postal reform bill that passed the Senate last year with 62 votes. According to The Hill newspaper, Carper played a lead role in shepherding S. 1789, written with Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and then-Sens. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn) and Scott Brown (R-Mass.) through the chamber last year.

Most of the postal unions didn't support S. 1789.

Union officials acknowledge that changes need to be made to stem the flow of red ink at the Postal Service, which gets no tax dollars to operate. The USPS lost a record \$15.9 billion in fiscal 2012, driven largely by defaults on \$11.1 billion in prepayments for future retiree health care benefits.

According to NALC, USPS' operating revenue was actually up 3.6 percent last quarter, compared to the same period last year.

"Although it reported a loss of \$740 million, the agency would have reported a profit of \$660 million absent the \$1.4 billion payment it was charged for pre-funding future retiree health benefits," Rolando said.

Postal unions continue campaigning to modernize service, get USPS into new lines of business, and to abolish health insurance pre-funding scheme.

Union officials believe lawmakers are creating a "phony financial crisis" in order to lay the groundwork to pri-

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THE FIRST LABOR DAY

Two men have been credited with suggesting a holiday to honor working people in the United States — Matthew Maguire, a machinist from Paterson, N.J., and Peter J. McGuire, a New York City carpenter who founded the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners. Both men played an important part in staging the first Labor Day parade in New York City on Sept. 5, 1882. In 1887, in accordance with the plans of the Central Labor Council, Oregon became the first state to make Labor Day a legal holiday.

In 1884 the first Monday in September was selected to be the holiday, as originally proposed, and the Central Labor Council urged similar organizations in other cities to follow the example of New York and celebrate a "workingmen's holiday" on that date. The idea spread with the growth of labor organizations, and in 1885 Labor Day was celebrated in many individual centers of the country.

As the years went by the nation gave increasing emphasis to Labor Day. The first governmental recognition came through municipal ordinances passed during 1885 and 1886. From them developed the movement to secure state legislation. The first state bill was introduced into the New York Legislature, but the first to become law was passed by Oregon on Feb. 21, 1887. During the year

four more states — Colorado, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York — created the Labor Day holiday by legislative enactment. By the end of the decade Connecticut, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania had followed suit.

By 1894, 23 other states had adopted the holiday in honor of workers, and on June 28 of that year Congress passed an act making the first Monday in September of each year a legal holiday in the District of Columbia and the territories. President Grover Cleveland signed it into law making Labor Day a national holiday.



Have a safe and happy Labor Day
from
the Members, Executive Board
and Staff of IBEW Local 125

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