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# Bend, Eugene mail processing centers to remain open

The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) has taken the postal processing centers in Bend and Eugene off of the closure list. The processing centers will remain open for the foreseeable future.

For more than a year, postal unions, retiree associations, rural organizations, and small business interests have protested the plant closures and mail delay. May 14 was a national day of action held in more than 50 cities to protest mail plant closures and layoffs. On May 15, hundreds of postal supporters rallied at the Eugene/Springfield plant.

Prior to that, on May 13, Oregon's entire Congressional delegation met with Deputy Postmaster General Ronald Stroman in Washington, D.C., where they called on USPS to keep Oregon's remaining mail processing facilities open in light of the delayed mail delivery times. The mail processing plant in Salem closed in May 2013, and a mail processing plant in Pendleton went down in April of this year. The Bend facility closed its parcel and large letter/magazine sorting operation in April, but retained regular letter sorting.



Postal supporters rally at the Eugene/Springfield processing plant on May 15.

Photo courtesy of Jamie Partridge

"Keeping the mail processing centers in Bend and Eugene open is the only decision that makes any sense," said U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley in a press release. "(This) decision is a step in the right direction, but this isn't a final victory, and I'm committed to working with my colleagues to make sure that these centers permanently come off of the closure list. Mail sent from Bend to Bend should obviously not be shipped to Portland to be processed. We have to make sure that we don't continue to degrade our mail delivery stan-

dard and put people out of work."

Nearly half the nation's USPS mail processing and distribution centers (141) were closed in 2012-13, and another 30 closed in April of this year. Approximately 50 more plants were set to close in July, including Eugene/Springfield. Those closures are now on hold.

As of Jan. 5, the delivery of overnight, in-town first class mail was eliminated nationwide. Two-to-three day service has become three-to-five day service. According to the USPS' own

data, the new standards are only being met approximately 85 percent of the time (prior standards were being met 98 percent of the time).

"Our pressure on the Postmaster General is working," said Jamie Partridge, a retired Portland letter carrier and a leader of Portland Communities and Postal Workers United, a group dedicated to the preservation and expansion of the public postal service. "Growing resistance to the dismantling of the people's postal service is bearing fruit."

Postal management says the cuts and closures are necessary because the USPS is losing money. But critics say that a 2006 Congressional mandate, which forces the U.S. Postal Service to prefund retiree health benefits 75 years in advance, has created a phony financial crisis. Although the USPS has claimed a "loss" every year since 2006, due primarily to the pre-fund mandate, the postal service has not made an actual payment toward prefunding since 2011. The USPS has generated an operating profit for the last six quarters, union officials said.

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