

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2602

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<http://baucus.senate.gov>

July 26, 2011

Mr. Patrick Donahoe
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 10022
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Postmaster General Donahoe,

I am writing you to express my strong concerns about the proposal the United States Postal Service announced today which could lead to the closing of 85 rural post offices in Montana. These closures would be devastating for many of the communities on this list.

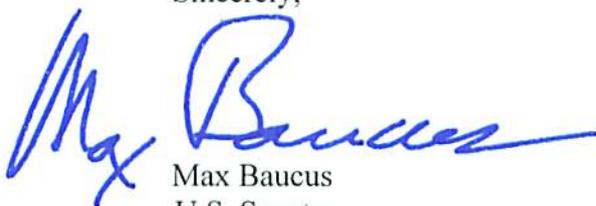
The Montana post offices that are being studied for closure are anchor institutions for rural communities. They give families in those towns opportunities to stay in touch with loved ones, receive time-sensitive prescription medication, and operate family businesses. And many Montanans go to work every day in those post offices. Closing those post offices will make it more difficult for Montanans to access services they rely on and cut jobs our communities cannot afford to lose.

The current proposal would force folks across Montana to travel many miles to use the Postal Service, unless the Postal Service follows through on opening a contract or village postal service. I had hoped that our visit in May, when we had a chance to talk about the distances and rural character of Montana, would impress upon you the hardship of traveling those roads in unpredictable Montana weather. Closing a post office in Alzada or Rapelje is not like closing a post office in Washington, D.C. or suburban Virginia and Maryland. Folks simply cannot drive a few blocks to reach another one.

For example, under the current proposal, the post offices in Wisdom, Jackson (12 miles south of Wisdom), Wise River (34 miles northeast of Wisdom), and Divide (11 miles past Wise River) are all subject to potential closure. If these post offices all close their doors then the nearest retail postal service for folks in Wisdom will be in Sula, 40 miles away across two 7000-foot mountain passes. And the Postal Service announced in June that the Sula post office was being studied for possible closure.

Montanans are proud of the endless vistas and broad open spaces in our state but they should not have to take hours out of their days crossing those open spaces just to use the Postal Service. While I understand that the current financial outlook of the Postal Service is dire, it is imperative that the changes which must be made to sustain the service do not disproportionately impact rural communities. I strongly urge the Postal Service to consider this impact and keep Montana's rural post offices open.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Max Baucus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Max Baucus
U.S. Senator