

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2602

INTERNET:
<http://baucus.senate.gov>

September 7, 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 follow up on my serious concerns about the studies being conducted by the United States Postal Service which could lead to the closing of up to 85 rural Montana post offices. I share the belief with many Montanans that these proposed closures would be devastating blows to many rural communities, and want to be sure that public comment on these closures is taken into account at every level of the Postal Service's decision making process.

Of the 85 Montana communities with post offices being studied for closure, my understanding is that the Postal Service has so far held about ten public meetings, and has scheduled an additional seven in the next three weeks. I strongly encourage the Postal Service to schedule the remaining meetings as soon as possible, so that Montanans have adequate notice of meetings in their communities and the Postal Service has adequate time to consider the feedback at length before any decisions are made. Additionally, I would ask that you come to Montana to attend at least one of these public meetings. This is a chance for you and the Postal Service to hear directly from Montanans and to better understand how dramatically the proposed changes in postal operations will affect the quality of life in rural communities.

When we met in May, I emphasized to you that Montana is a rural state. We have great distances between our towns and between our neighbors. The Postal Service estimates that approximately 90 percent of the post offices they are studying for closure nationwide are within 10 miles of another post office, which would generally allow post office customers to use another nearby post office if their local post office is closed. However, I want to be sure that you recognize that 75 of the 85 post offices in Montana being studied for closure, nearly 90 percent, are 10 miles or more from the nearest post office. And in some areas, the next-closest post offices are also being studied for closure.

You mentioned in May that Montana was one of the few states that you had never been to, and that you would like to visit sometime soon. Fall is a great time to visit Big Sky country. Driving our roads firsthand and seeing our rural communities would help you put the impacts of the proposed Montana closures in perspective as you set about making many difficult decisions. I heard it loud and clear from folks back home who are passionate about this issue that they oppose these changes, and I think it is important that they be heard all the way at the top before any decision are made.

I look forward to working with you to find long-term solutions to put the Postal Service on sustainable financial footing without taking away critically important jobs or disproportionately affecting mail service in rural communities. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Max Baucus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Max" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Baucus".

Max Baucus
U.S. Senator