

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2602

October 3, 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 to express my severe disappointment with the recent decision by the United States Postal Service to move forward with closing the post offices in Galata, Dupuyer, and Melrose, Montana. Neither Dupuyer nor Galata were given even a full week from the time of their public meetings to the time of receiving their closure notices. It is clear that the Postal Service decided to close these post offices without sufficiently considering community input, and I oppose moving forward with the closings until Montanans have more time to voice their support for their local post office.

As you will remember from my July 26th letter, post offices are anchor institutions for rural Montana communities. Montanans depend on those post offices for staying in touch, receiving time-sensitive medications, and operating family businesses. Closing rural post offices would force seniors, disabled veterans, and other folks in these communities to travel many miles to the next available office. Last Wednesday, folks in Galata had a chance to hear firsthand from the Postal Service why their post office was being studied for closure. People living in Dupuyer had a chance to hear from the Postal Service last Friday. Those meetings were important parts of a transparent decision-making process that should have taken public input into account. However, only days later and without adequate time to submit informed and considered comments following the public meetings, those communities are being faced with losing their local postal service and losing good paying jobs.

The Postal Service should take the time to make sure that they are thoroughly considering the impacts of these proposed closures. Instead, there is no indication of how public comment was collected, organized, and fully understood in just a few days. There is no indication that the decision was not already made for these towns before they finally had a chance to hear from the Postal Service. Closing the Galata, Dupuyer, and Melrose post offices will take away jobs and impact families and businesses. Those families and businesses should have had more time to consider the information from the public meeting and they should have had additional time to comment on the potential impacts of losing their post office. And the Postal Service should take time to weigh those comments heavily.

You have previously assured me that decisions to close post offices would come after significant and substantive consideration of public input. This has sadly not been the case. I strongly oppose closing any Montana post offices until the Postal Service has conducted all public meetings in Montana and has demonstrated that it is working in good faith to take community input into account as part of the closure studies. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to working with you to ensure that future Montana communities receive the adequate consideration they deserve and finding long term solutions for the Postal Service without disproportionately affecting mail service in rural communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Max Baucus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "B".

Max Baucus
U.S. Senator