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7TH DISTRICT OF ARIZONA

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
Subcommittee on Water and Power
Subcommittee on Parks, Forests and
Public Lands – *Ranking Member*

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
Subcommittee on Early Childhood,
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Subcommittee on Higher Education and
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February 26, 2013

The Honorable Patrick R. Donahoe
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza S.W.
Washington, DC 20260-0010

Dear Postmaster General Donahoe,

The residents of Southern Arizona and I have been adamantly opposed to the closure of the Cherrybell Processing Center in Tucson, Arizona, since it was first announced in 2011. The closure of the Cherrybell Processing Center comes at a very high cost to the residents of Southern Arizona. I am particularly concerned about the decline in quality of service to residents who rely on the post office for timely correspondence regarding social security and Medicare, the longer wait time for rural residents, and the negative impact to small businesses and non-profit organizations throughout Southern Arizona.

The shortsighted and aggressive step taken on February 25, 2013, to eliminate the Tucson postmark is increasingly troubling. Not only was this step taken without notifying the community, it was done prematurely. Last year, I called for a moratorium on post office closures and co-signed a letter with 110 other Members of Congress stating that “the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) reviewed the Postal Service’s Retail Access Optimization Initiative (RAOI), which is being used as the basis for the possible closure of more than 3,600 post offices and other retail facilities, and found serious flaws with the analysis that call into question the USPS’s current consolidation plans.” Other issues cited in the letter include incomplete post office data, inaccurate usage and revenue figures at certain branches, inaccurate distance measurements between branches, and an overall study methodology that wrongly targets rural post offices.

Comprehensive postal reform needs to be addressed through legislation passed by the United States Congress, and not a series of steps taken independently by the agency. This recent action does not adequately allow us to plan for the future and only offers an opportunity to save a penny today by costing ourselves a dollar tomorrow. Continuing to make decisions based on flawed analysis and attempting to save the post office by slowly dismantling it is another step toward privatizing the nation's mail system. Closing processing centers in growing communities will not fix the problem. Instead, it will unfairly burden rural communities and those lacking internet access, while unnecessarily eliminating good middle class jobs. This is why I proposed legislation to prevent closures in zip codes with high rates of population growth, as is the case in Southern Arizona.

The USPS has been the victim of bad policy on part of those looking to undermine it, including Members of Congress who claim to be fiscally conservative. The burden placed on USPS by Congress in 2006 to pre-fund 75 years of future health-care benefits for retirees over 10 years is unrealistic and has caused the current financial situation. Only comprehensive postal reform passed by Congress will solve the problem and allow USPS to be solvent.

This entire process has lacked transparency, and the most recent step taken to eliminate the Tucson postmark was done without notifying the community. The residents of Southern Arizona have continuously expressed their desire to keep mail processing in Southern Arizona, and at the very least they deserve a transparent process.

Please reconsider this recent decision, and reinstate the Tucson postmark until Congress passes comprehensive postal reform.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress