

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 4  
INTRODUCED BY J. COHENOUR

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA OPPOSING THE RELAXATION OF MAIL DELIVERY STANDARDS UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE; REQUESTING THAT THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE MAINTAIN CURRENT LEVELS OF SERVICE; AND REQUESTING THAT THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE MAINTAIN CURRENT OVERNIGHT DELIVERY STANDARDS AND NOT CENTRALIZE MONTANA'S MAIL-SORTING OPERATIONS.

WHEREAS, the United States Postal Service, founded in 1775, provides dependable, affordable mail service to Montana communities; and

WHEREAS, the United States Postal Service remains an important part of the nation's economic infrastructure through which nearly \$1 trillion of economic activity is conducted each year and in which 9 million people are employed; and

WHEREAS, many Montanans, especially in rural areas, do not have easy access to the Internet or to electronic banking and bill paying and are heavily dependent on the United States Postal Service for communication and conducting business transactions; and

WHEREAS, Americans currently enjoy the most extensive postal service at the lowest postage rates of any major industrialized nation in the world; and

WHEREAS, the President's Commission on the United States Postal Service has recommended changes to postal operations that could sever postal employees from federal employee health, retirement, and workers' compensation programs and has recommended repeal of laws that could pave the way toward reducing rank-and-file wages and benefits while simultaneously eliminating the current salary cap on executive level postal positions; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has recommended a new Presidentially appointed, corporate-style board of directors and a new postal regulatory board and has proposed giving these new politically appointed governing bodies broad authority to set rates; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has proposed to refine the scope of the United States Postal Service's "universal service" obligation and uniform rate structure and change and restrict the scope of services currently protected under postal monopoly regulations; and

WHEREAS, the new board's broad authority could allow post offices to be closed and prices to be set with a complicated postage rate structure or could turn over postal operations to private, for-profit enterprises; and

WHEREAS, replacing the United States Postal Service's public service obligation with a profit-seeking mandate would undermine the United States Postal Service's historical "universal service" obligation and weaken its national infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, in the interim period prior to legislated postal reform, the United States Postal Service may move forward with initiatives to close postal facilities in Montana; and

WHEREAS, the United States Postal Service is requesting that the United States Postal Rate Commission investigate relaxation of overnight delivery standards; and

WHEREAS, the United States Postal Service could consolidate the processing of mail in Montana, including moving all Helena outgoing mail-sorting operations to Great Falls; and

WHEREAS, this consolidation would not serve the public's best interest because of the decrease in productivity compared to the current processing of mail in Helena; and

WHEREAS, the consolidation could result in the elimination of the agency's current obligation to deliver local mail overnight and could relax other mail delivery standards across Montana; and

WHEREAS, the economy of the Helena area would be negatively impacted as a result of the relaxation of overnight delivery standards; and

WHEREAS, the public health and the public services provided by state agencies would be negatively impacted as a result of the relaxation of overnight delivery standards.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Montana Legislature urges the President, the Congress of the United States, and the United States Postal Service to continue to maintain affordable, dependable mail service at current levels because of its social and economic importance to our nation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any recommendation from the President's Commission on the United States Postal Service or the United States Postal Rate Commission that curtails public services in the current postal service be rejected.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Legislature of the State of Montana opposes any changes that would harm the public and workers of the United States Postal Service, including legislated or United States

Postal Service initiatives to close or consolidate postal facilities, relax overnight delivery standards, centralize mail-sorting operations, take away or modify the collective bargaining system of postal workers, or change the current bargaining system for employee benefits.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent by the Secretary of State to the Honorable George W. Bush, President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the Majority and Minority Leaders of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, the Postmaster General of the United States Postal Service, the United States Postal Rate Commission, the President's Commission on the United States Postal Service, the Committee on Ways and Means, the Committee on Rules, and the Committee on the Budget of the United States House of Representatives, the Budget Committee of the United States Senate, and each member of the Montana Congressional Delegation.

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