



NAPUS President Goff  
Before House Postal  
Subcommittee

## Postmaster Testimony Spotlights Staffing Deficiencies

On Tuesday, April 17, on behalf of the 40,500 NAPUS members, President Dale Goff shared his views on the implementation of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PL 109-435) with members of House Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, the Postal Service and the District of Columbia. Witnesses included the PMG Jack Potter, Board of Governors Chairman Jim Miller, PRC Chairman Dan Blair, a senior official of the Government Accountability Office, and representatives from the employee organizations.

In his testimony President Goff noted the erosion of timely mail delivery and mail processing in those post offices and postal facilities for which postmasters have requested upper level management to provide the necessary level of staffing. Referring to delivery services, Goff declared:

The upshot of ignoring Postmaster staffing requests compromise mail quality and undermine consumer confidence in our postal system. It is a poorly kept secret that mail deliveries are encroaching on the evening hours because there are not enough professional letter carriers. Upper level postal managers are leaving Postmasters with a series of bad choices: The Postmaster can make evening mail deliveries (i.e., after already putting in a full day of work), or the Postmaster can return letter carriers to the street to deliver the residual mail during the dark. Deferring mail delivery to the next day is not and should not be an option! Our customers rely on regular timely mail delivery. However, due to unmet postal staffing needs, this goal is becoming elusive.

Goff appeared before the Subcommittee, alongside National League of Postmasters President Charlie Mapa and National Association of Supervisors President Ted Keating. All three presidents agreed about the ubiquity of staffing problems, the impact of staffing on service, and that the trouble stems from ill-advised decisions handed down from above. In his testimony, President Goff identified such locals as Chicago and Albuquerque as communities that have experienced the impact of lower-than-necessary staffing. Moreover, President Goff anticipating assertions that personnel cuts could be blamed on working under PL 109-435's new rate plan pointed out that the staffing inadequacies predated enactment of the new law. In fact, Dale advised the Subcommittee that Postal Headquarters, as part of Postal Transformation, directed front line managers to trim 40 million work hours from their operations. This cut translated into 22,000 postal jobs. While automation can help cushion the blow, it assumes that the program works and is fully operational. In addition, it predicts that staff reductions would not have to be reassessed due to increased delivery points and mail volume.

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Rep. Ken Marchant (R-TX), Subcommittee Ranking Republican, asked President Goff how staffing deficiencies could affect the USPS ability of comply with parts of section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley statute. While the USPS already was committed to implement the appropriate provisions of this law, PL 109-435 requires the agency to be in full compliance by 2010. Dale pointed out that Postmasters have a limited role in compliance, however Postmaster certification of the relevant financial data could be impaired if they do not have the necessary staff complement to perform the post office's primary mission to accept, process and deliver mail. Understaffing means that Postmasters would have to complete the functions ordinarily performed by craft employees. This time commitment takes away from the necessary time to manage the post office, including the completion of the requisite financial paperwork necessary to comply with section 404.

The House Subcommittee spent considerable time questioning PMG Potter and Chairman Miller about the initiative to contract-out new letter carrier routes. President Goff was critical of the contracting-out scheme. Subcommittee members were also critical of the plan, fearing for the sanctity of mail. Other issues raised at the hearing included mailer fear of another rate increase prior to the implementation of the new regulatory scheme, the impact of the impending rate increase on nonprofit mailers and certain periodicals and cataloguers.

On Thursday, April 19, the Senate Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security conducted its oversight hearing on implementation of PL 109-435. President Goff submitted testimony that reflected the very same points that he shared with the House.

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## PMG Tells Senate Panel He Will Address Staffing Problems

The April 19 Senate hearing covered much of the same ground as the House. However, Sen. Susan Collins posed a question to PMG Potter that shined a spotlight on one of NAPUS' major ongoing concerns. Sen. Collins cited the March 2007 issue of the *Pinecone Postmaster* (published by the Maine NAPUS Chapter), where the cover story focused on staffing problems at Maine post offices. The Senator pointed out that inadequate staffing affects adversely mail service and employee morale. Sen. Collins asked PMG Potter about the points made in the *Pinecone Postmaster*. The PMG indicated that he will work to remedy the situation. He added that these situations tend to happen when postal managers "substitute their own judgment" for that of the local postmaster. Moreover, the PMG told the Senate panel that he would work with the Postmaster organizations to provide adequate staffing where necessary, and that he is soliciting Postmaster input into identifying the post offices where inadequate staffing is a problem. NAPUS is looking forward to working with the PMG in this area.

The PMG also stressed how "Americans love their post office" and how the federal government, in cooperation with the USPS, should make better use of the 37,000 postal retail facilities. The ubiquity of post offices and their affinity with the community should be maximized.

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