



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POSTMASTERS  
OF THE UNITED STATES

TESTIMONY OF  
OSCAR “DALE” GOFF, JR.  
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

BEFORE THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
FEDERAL WORKFORCE, THE POSTAL SERVICE,  
AND

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

JULY 19, 2007

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Marchant, and distinguished Subcommittee members, on behalf of the 40,500 member National Association of Postmasters of the United States (NAPUS), I want to thank you for inviting me to share my views regarding the Postal Service's use of contract services.

As the Postmaster of Covington, Louisiana, I have managed both private contractors and career Postal employees. Private service contracts can cover janitorial assistance, maintenance help, landscaping, or even mail delivery. However, it is vital to differentiate between contracting-out functions that are inherently governmental and relate to the core mission of the Postal Service, such as mail delivery, and those functions that are commercial in nature and not directly related to the agency's core mission – mail acceptance, processing, and delivery.

Failure of a contractor to fulfill the core mission of the USPS obligations is far more serious than janitorial or landscaping nonfeasance. In addition, replacing a contract janitor is far easier, than finding a substitute contract carrier. It is important to understand that postmaster managerial prerogatives over contract personnel are quite limited. Hiring, firing and sanctions for contractual failure are the responsibility of the Postal Area Office, not the Postmaster. However, the Postmaster has to operate his or her Post Office with the consequences of the decision – good or bad. So, I stand by the statement that I made in April to this Subcommittee: “You get what you pay for!”

In the Subcommittee's invitation, the Chairman indicated that this panel intends to examine the expansion of contract delivery services. As a Postmaster, I have the privilege of managing both professional letter carriers and contract carriers. I understand the Postal Service's desire to increase its contract carrier workforce is driven by its attention to the “bottom line”. After all, contract employees earn less, and are not entitled to health coverage, life insurance, retirement benefits, and overtime pay. However, I am concerned about the public policy implications of expanding contract deliveries. I recall that last year the Chairman severely criticized a proposal offered by Rep. Jeff Flake to expand alternative deliveries – labeling it “privatization.” Postmasters understand that the recently reached agreement between the National Association of Letter Carriers and the USPS calls for a six-month moratorium on contracting-out certain delivery routes, during which time the union and Headquarters will be discussing the future of the contract deliveries. Postmasters have a stake in outcome of these discussions.

Philosophically and historically, Postmasters believe that the first and last mile of the United States postal system is inherently governmental. Our Founding Fathers believed this fact and successive Congresses have

reconfirmed this truth. Consequently, the Postal Service bears a very heavy burden in justifying to Congress and to postal customers the privatization of postal deliveries and the privatization of retail postal operations. Privatized retail locations are known as community postal units.

Currently, contract carriers are used to staff Highway Contract Routes and are practical in sparsely populated rural areas. As I indicated earlier, Postmasters are the “administrative officials” of these contracts, meaning that the Postmaster is tasked monitoring contractor attendance and contract compliance. However, Postmasters do not hire the contractor, nor can they sanction the contractor. If the contractor fails to report to work, misdelivers mail, or does not fulfill the contract, the Postmaster is required to complete the contract carrier route, on their own time. In addition, the Postmaster must file a form “PS 5500” with the USPS Area office. Furthermore, NAPUS is extremely concerned about the way in which new contract routes are being executed. I am hearing from Postmasters that new routes are being implemented indiscriminately in “established” delivery territories. These are territories with already established carrier routes. Postmasters are aware of no standard policy for determining how new routes are being put out to bid. In addition, once a prospective contract route is identified, Postmasters are being required to deliver the route until the contract is awarded – after hours, on the Postmaster’s own time. Mr. Chairman, this is no way to run business.

Another area of postal privatization is the growth of community postal units, or contract units. In many instances, the units are being established to replace existing Post Offices, not complement them. Usually, the privatized postal operation uses counter space in an existing commercial enterprise. Non-postal personnel work the counter, selling stamps or accepting posted mailable material. However, these operations are not full service post offices. Arguably, such privatized facilities may be appropriate in congested urban areas where established post offices do not have the space, or resources to accommodate postal demand. For example, such a privatized operation may help to mitigate long lines high volume neighborhood post office during peak times. However, in many instances, the Postal Service is attempting to replace independent post offices with privatized community postal units, or establish privatized postal units in areas where a post office are clearly indicated. It appears that privatized postal operations are being used to make up for woefully inadequate staffing at the local Post Office. In more-than-a-handful rural areas, the Postal Service is trying to urge communities to surrender their Post Office and accept a part time privatized operation in its stead. NAPUS has been working with such communities to help maintain a reliable government-run Post Office in their midst.

Mr. Chairman, as I stated at the outset, mail acceptance, processing, and delivery are inherently governmental. Venturing from this firmly grounded policy bears a very heavy burden and puts the institution on a dangerous glide path towards total privatization.

Thank you.