



United States Senate
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman, ID-Conn.

Opening Statement of Chairman Joseph Lieberman
Markup Statement on 21st Century Postal Service Act
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
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As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning and welcome to everyone. Today, we are marking up bipartisan, rescue legislation to help a soon-to-be broke United States Postal Service survive and prosper into the 21st century.

Five years ago, Senators Collins and Carper worked together to reform the Postal Service and Congress enacted their plan. But a business climate radically changed by the internet plus the ongoing recession have taken a steep financial toll. The Postal Service will not survive unless we take action.

This year, Senator Brown and I joined Senators Collins and Carper in such an effort, and last week the four of us introduced the 21st Century Postal Service Act – the legislation before us today. In the interest of time, I will enter the remainder of my statement into the record:

Our goal is simple: to get the Postal Service back in the black and help it remain financially viable for years to come. We accomplish that by restructuring the way the Postal Service meets its obligations to the public – its customers – and to its employees. Without this rescue legislation, the USPS will be effectively insolvent next summer, with untold consequences for the millions of Americans who rely on it for communications and commerce. We cannot stand by and allow that to happen.

Let me summarize the provisions in our legislation that will yield the most cost-savings.

First, we refund the Postal Service \$7 billion that everyone agrees it has overpaid into the Federal Employee Retirement System.

Second, we restructure the amount and the timing of Postal Service payments for Retiree Health Benefits.

Third, we authorize USPS to offer incentives to longtime employees to take buyouts to help reduce the Postal Service workforce.

Fourth, we prevent the Postal Service – until two years after enactment - from reducing the number of days it delivers mail to five times a week, and only then if cost cutting is still needed and cannot be achieved any other way.

Fifth, we allow the Postal Service to work with its employee unions and the Office of Personnel Management to develop a new health plan for postal employees.

Many of these proposals are controversial. We expect lengthy debate and numerous amendments. But the bottom line is we must act quickly to prevent a Postal Service collapse and we must act boldly to secure its future.