

June 22, 2021

Manager, Public Classification
U.S. Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 4446
Washington, DC 20260-3436

RE: "Service Standards for Market-Dominant Mail Product"; Docket Number 2021-08463; FR Notice
Pages 21675-21680

On behalf of the nearly 4,000 farm, ranch, and rural families of the Nebraska Farmers Union (NeFU), thank you this opportunity to submit our comments regarding the USPS changes to the service standards for market-dominant mail products.

As part of the National Farmers Union (NFU), NeFU took part in this year's NFU Annual Convention. During the Convention Farmers Union member-delegates approved a special order of business entitled, "Family Farming and Moving Forward from COVID-19," which listed the changes necessary to enact "lasting, positive change in our nation's farm, food, education, communication, and healthcare systems."¹ Among the steps included in the document was a call to "support the United States Postal Service and ensure prompt delivery and affordable rates in all parts of the country, including rural areas." In agreement with comments submitted by NFU, NeFU also opposes the U.S. postal management's proposal to permanently slow-down their "service standards" applicable to certain First-Class mail with respect to delivery day ranges.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light many of the problems facing the USPS as well as farmers, ranchers, and rural residents' dependence on prompt and dependable mail service. The U.S. postal management's decision to slow-down First-Class mail from 1-3 days to 5 days for both First-Class mail and periodicals daily will only make matters worse for rural Americans who really depend on the USPS, especially people living in Nebraska. Rural communities rely on the USPS for far more than paper mail. Longer delivery times would put many of their businesses and livelihoods at risk. The results will be catastrophic.

Where priority mail is not an option, First-Class mail has always been the most reliable and affordable option for many farmers.² Nebraska farmers and ranchers depend on the USPS to deliver everything from our prescriptions to our baby chicks. Nebraskans also depend on the USPS to receive medication via mail. Between 2013 and 2018, 16 percent of independent rural pharmacies went out of business, leaving 630 communities with no pharmacy at all.³ Private services often do not provide delivery to certain rural areas in Nebraska, and when they do, many rural residents must pay high delivery rates.

¹ National Farmers Union. "2021 Policy of the National Farmers Union." March 1, 2021. <https://nfu.org/policy/>

² Larew, Rob. "Commentary: We Need a Strong Postal Service after the Election, Too." *The Daily Yonder*, 20 Aug. 2020, dailyyonder.com/commentary-we-need-a-strong-postal-service-after-the-election-too/2020/08/20/.

³ "Rural Pharmacies Are Closing: Where Does That Leave Patients? | Patient Advice | US News." *U.S. News & World Report*, U.S. News & World Report, [health.usnews.com/health-care/patient-advice/articles/2018-10-17/rural-pharmacies-are-closing-where-does-that-leave-patients](https://www.usnews.com/health-care/patient-advice/articles/2018-10-17/rural-pharmacies-are-closing-where-does-that-leave-patients).

With the whole world transitioning their day-to-day communication online, much of rural America continues to live without access to high-speed broadband internet. COVID-19 has transformed how our country conducts business, education, and overall communication. For many rural communities without internet, the USPS has always been the most reliable source.

The Federal Communications Commission's latest estimates (released on Jan. 19, 2021) show that 14.5 million people still don't have broadband—and experts believe the actual number is twice that or more.³ Considering that figure, that translates to 14.5 million people who rely on the USPS as their primary means of connectivity other than a phone. Making these longer delivery times permanent will be devastating to these folks who depend on the USPS.

We reject the notion that we ought to settle for second rate slow mail service. When we get slow and erratic mail service, we don't just passively accept it. Instead, we look for prompt and sustainable solutions. The proposed USPS proposal is a blueprint for an unacceptable future for Nebraska, and on we vigorously oppose it. It does not address the underlying problems.

Our organization's policy has consistently championed the benefits and need for USPS for many decades. While times change, the need for a prompt, accessible, affordable, and dependable USPS does not.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to submit our written comments.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John K. Hansen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John K. Hansen, President

³ Acp. "American Connection Project." *ACP - Home*, www.americanconnectionproject.com/.