

**Written Testimony of the Honorable Adrian Smith**  
**Prepared for the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform**

Good afternoon Chairmen Issa, Ranking Member Cummings, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing on the future of postal reform.

I come before you today as Nebraska's Third District Representative to discuss the importance of the United States Postal Service (USPS) to our rural communities.

USPS continues to face a severe fiscal crisis, losing \$25 million per day. Congress needs to ensure the Postal Service continues to uphold its mission to serve all Americans while USPS addresses its long-term challenges.

Throughout rural America, the post office is the center of the community and a link to the rest of the country. Every day, I hear from constituents who are concerned about losing access to basic mail services. Those in my district are among the most reliant on the Postal Service. I, myself, reside just a short walk from my local post office in Western Nebraska and know firsthand the impact the Postal Service has on small town Americans.

To us, the Postal Service is not just a convenience; it is a pathway to information, products, medications, and services which are essential to our daily work and lives. Millions of Americans are at risk of being further isolated without access to mail services.

Congress must enact postal reform which provides certainty for consumers and businesses. Commercial options already are scarce in rural America. Arbitrarily targeting the mail in these areas may cause potential businesses to lay roots elsewhere, limiting consumer choice and harming our rural economies.

Two years ago, USPS announced it was considering for closure more than 3,600 small mail facilities in attempt to address its budget shortfall. Included on this list for possible closure were 90 locations in the State of Nebraska, with a great majority in the Third District.

Locations across rural America were disproportionately singled out, despite the minimal savings which would have been achieved by closing these facilities. In fact, shutting down the smallest 10,000 post offices in the United States only would save the Postal Service roughly 3 percent of the cost of operating its more than 31,000 post offices nationwide.

As co-chair of the Congressional Rural Caucus, I have spent the last two years closely working with USPS, stakeholders, and this committee to ensure rural post offices are not unfairly targeted. Because of the importance of continuing this bipartisan effort, last week I introduced the Securing Access to Rural Postal Services Act, H.R. 2615.

I appreciate my colleagues for joining me in support of this bill. My Democrat co-chair of the Congressional Rural Caucus, Congressman Mike McIntyre, as well as Rural Caucus and Oversight and Government Reform Committee member, Congresswoman Cynthia Lummis, both are original cosponsors of H.R. 2615.

This legislation would cap small post office closures and consolidations at 5 percent of the total number of closures and consolidations executed by the Postal Service in any given year. The bill also would set guidelines for closing or consolidating any post office to ensure those affected by such changes would maintain access to the Postal Service.

USPS would be required to provide 60 days' notice of its intention to close or consolidate a post office. In addition, it would need to survey affected customers to determine their preferences for alternative access to postal services.

If USPS is unable to provide access through the alternative chosen by survey participants or if the preferred option is determined to be cost prohibitive, it would be required to provide access to postal services through a different means and give written explanation for why the surveyed option was not possible.

The Postal Service should focus on changes which provide the greatest savings with the least service disruption. My measure allows the Postal Service flexibility to pursue needed cost-cutting reforms while ensuring rural Americans are not disproportionately affected.

I am pleased the Securing Access to Rural Postal Services Act will be included in this year's comprehensive bill, the Postal Reform Act of 2013. I thank the Chairman and Committee staff for recognizing the unique set of challenges facing our rural communities and for their willingness to work with me on this important issue.

I also want to acknowledge the constructive input I have received from my district over the last two years. I appreciate the many ideas shared with me from industry, postal workers, and individual patrons of the Postal Service.

Congress must support a robust, efficient, and dynamic Postal Service. Without responsible legislation, USPS will not be able to return to solvency. I am confident this committee will produce a comprehensive reform bill which provides universal service standards for consumers, opportunity for businesses, and stability for the Postal Service.

I commit to continuing to work with this Committee, with members on both sides of the aisle, to ensure rural Americans continue to be an important part of the discussion on postal reform.

Thank you.