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Testimony of
Don Cantriel, President
National Rural Letter Carriers' Association

Before the

Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Federal Workforce,
Postal Service, and the District of Columbia

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Chairman Lynch, and members of the Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia Subcommittee, my name is Don Cantriel, and I am President of the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA), which represents 123,000 bargaining unit rural letter carriers. Our members work in rural, suburban, and urban areas throughout the United States and function as a "post office on wheels" because rural letter carriers offer Postal customers all of the services performed over the counter at a post office. We sell stamps and money orders, accept express and priority mail, offer signature and delivery confirmation, registered and certified mail, and, of course, collect our customer's parcels.

Mr. Chairman, first and foremost I would like to thank you and Representatives John McHugh and Danny Davis for your leadership on H.R. 22. I would also like to thank the Chairman of the full committee, Rep. Ed Towns, for his dedication on getting this important legislation passed at the full committee level. While H.R. 22 will not solve all of the Postal Service's problems during this financial crisis, it is a step in the right direction.

We are living in a truly challenging time. Our Country is in a deep recession and the Postal Service is a bellwether of the nation's economic well-being. Mail volume is down 11.9% in the first half of the year, and the Postal Service is expecting to lose approximately \$7 billion this year..

This decline in mail volume has hit the rural carrier craft extremely hard. Rural carrier pay is based on an evaluated compensation system, which is unique not just to the Postal Service but to American industry generally. In the evaluated compensation system, each rural carrier is paid an annual salary, based upon the estimated amount of time it will take to deliver the mail on his or her individual

As I have explained, there is already enough dislocation among the carriers I represent each year after the mail count. If the Postal Service were to consolidate the operations of retail stations and branches into nearby postal facilities that will only compound what has over the last several years become a real and troublesome problem. Our carriers will have to travel greater distances to work and our customers will increasingly feel isolated from the Postal Service when post offices begin to disappear. During these times, paying close attention to customer service is key, and we would expect a public outcry if stations and branches are closed. Especially in rural areas, customers will be particularly inconvenienced and some customers will unfortunately decide it simply is not worth it to continue to do business with the Postal Service any longer. Our customers and communities need to know that the Postal Service is here to stay. We will be sending the wrong message if offices across the country close up shop.

Mr. Chairman, our collective bargaining agreement with the Postal Service is based on a six-day work week. There is a lot of talk going around, especially among my members, about the Postal Service adopting five-day delivery. With mail volume at its lowest point since the 1930s, everyone is debating whether the volume is ever going to come back. I believe once the financial, advertising, mortgage, and banking industries get back on their feet, our mail volume will return. Mr. Chairman, if the Postal Service drops a day of delivery, we will drive businesses away. In today's modern age where competition is king, another business will jump in and take these customers away.

I spoke about the economic effects that my members experienced during the last two mail counts - while delivering six days per week. Instituting five day delivery could mean further salary decreases, not only the rural craft, but also to the employees of the businesses who use the Postal Service.

may not be able to travel this distance to the Post Office in order to pick up their medications.

CVS/Caremark is a good example but by no means the only example. It is just one of thousands of business that will be adversely affected if five-day delivery is implemented. Even small, local businesses who rely on the Postal Service to advertise coupons for special sales will also be affected.

Mr. Chairman, I know that times and finances are tough right now, especially for the Postal Service. But in my opinion, moving from six to five day delivery will only make the situation worse. This idea will not save the Postal Service. It will only hurt the business model and make other delivery options more attractive to the customers it so desperately needs to attract and retain

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify before the subcommittee today. I would be happy to answer any questions you or your fellow members may have.