

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

The Honorable Patrick Donahoe  
Postmaster General  
United States Postal Service  
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW  
Washington DC 20260-0010

December 14, 2012

Dear Postmaster Donahoe,

We are writing to express our deep concern with cutting operating hours for post offices on Maine islands at such a level that threatens the sustainability of these communities.

In Maine, we are proud to still have island communities where residents live year-round miles away from the mainland. On these small islands, the local Post Office performs several functions. It is a community center, distribution point for small businesses, lifeline for seniors, and window to the outside world for all residents. In short, the Post Office serves just as vital a connection to the mainland as the ferry.

In USPS's attempt to rein in costs, it has proposed cutting the hours of several Maine island post office hours from eight hours to four or even two hours a day. We are very concerned that limiting operating hours to such a level threatens the ability of these islands to continue as full-time communities. The towns impacted include: Chebeague Island, Cranberry Isles, Isleboro, Long Island, North Haven, and Swans Island.

One solution we urge the Postal Service to consider is granting these offices Part-Time Post Office (PTPO) status. The Postal Service has given this status to rural communities whose next nearest post office is at least 25 miles away. Setting minimum operating hours of six hours a day, this status addresses the hardships residents in these towns would have to undergo in make frequent and far trips to the next post office if their facility were only open a couple of hours a day.

If hours are cut to the proposed levels, residents of Maine island communities would have to bear these same hardships, or even worse. These islands are not connected to land by bridge, and a mile by road is not the same as a mile by water. Island residents don't have the option of driving to the next post office if they want to mail something in a timely fashion. To travel to the mainland is often an all day affair that involves riding on a ferry that may only run a couple of times a day. We believe the realities of island living and the challenges of traveling by boat or ferry should be taken into consideration by granting these offices PTPO status. In our opinion, six hours of operation is a bare minimum to keep these islands thriving.

These rural post offices did not cause the USPS's fiscal problems. If cuts do go through, however, we should look at limiting negative impacts to our communities. To that end, taking the special circumstances of Maine islands into account is a step in the right direction. Thank you for your consideration, we look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



Mike Michaud  
Member of Congress