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Senator Lisa M. Boscola Public Comment on the “U.S. Postal Service Mail Processing Facility Review”

Submitted December 15, 2023

As a State Senator representing a significant portion of the Lehigh Valley over many years, Lehigh Valley residents have contacted my office with complaints over delayed or lost mail with those complaints spiking over the last five years. Due to those increased concerns, I was pleased the United States Postal Service, at the urging of US Senator Bob Casey and Congresswoman Susan Wild, announced that there would be an audit of the Lehigh Valley Processing and Distribution Center back in March 2021.

The expectation of the findings of such an audit would be the need to fully modernize the facility to process all mail and ensure that staffing levels were at the level needed to ensure that incidents of delayed or lost mail would be significantly reduced.

And, when the USPS announced that a public meeting would occur here in the Lehigh Valley on November 30, 2023, to share its findings, once again, expectations were that positive changes would be announced to address the modernization and staffing issues.

Instead, what we heard was that the Lehigh Valley P&DC would no longer process originating mail and would under these findings only process destinating, or incoming mail. According to reports, originating mail, i.e. the mail you leave at your mailbox or drop off at your neighborhood post office, would now be trucked to Harrisburg for processing and returned to the Lehigh Valley if your outgoing mail was addressed to a Lehigh Valley or Pocono address.

In other words, an aunt from Bangor, who dropped off a birthday card at the Bangor Post Office on South 1st Street for her niece living in Hellertown, would have the card trucked 100 miles to Harrisburg, processed and returned to the Lehigh Valley to then be delivered to Hellertown.

This, according to the USPS audit, will reduce delays and lost mail. Huh?

Any reasonable person sees the fallacy in this proposition. Not only will the distance for mail delivery be multiplied by a factor of 8 (200 miles vs 25 miles), but there will now be additional steps in the process, i.e. more opportunities for mail to be lost.

And, there is no way this proposal to the delayed mail problem is a solution. As a State Senator, I know the route from the Lehigh Valley to Harrisburg as well as anyone. The opportunities for travel delays is always a concern. Accidents, construction and volume cause almost daily delays. Add winter weather to the equation and increased time for mail being processed and delivered grows substantially.

Modernizing equipment for the local processing of incoming mail at the Lehigh Valley P&DC is welcomed. It is not enough. The Lehigh Valley Processing and Distribution Center must be fully modernized to ensure that the residents of the Lehigh Valley and the Poconos receive their mail and receive it on time.

Two other issues need to be addressed. First, streamlining and reducing the cost of government have long been priorities of mine. Driving mail two hundred miles for no reasonable purpose will not streamline a government service, nor save taxpayers money. It is just not possible.

Second, the findings released at the November 30, 2023, meeting stated that no employee of the Lehigh Valley P&DC would lose their jobs. This would be done by offering new positions to those who would be displaced by the Lehigh Valley P&DC changes to positions at other locations. We all know that this means, current employees will not be retaining their jobs if that other job is 90 miles away at the Harrisburg P&DC.

The Lehigh Valley is the 3rd largest region in the state. Our location is an asset and is why we are seeing so much economic activity here. As such and in the final analysis, we should be a full-service processing and distribution site for mail. It is not only our residents who need mail on time, but it is a matter of economic importance to the region and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

In conclusion, I would like to urge USPS to do further analysis that will better address the need to ensure that the Lehigh Valley residents and businesses receive their mail in a timely and cost-efficient manner.

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