

## Congress puts brakes on USPS 5-day delivery

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

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Plans to eliminate a five-day mail delivery system were halted Tuesday, April 9 when the United States Postal Service Board of Governors met to discuss the Continuing Resolution recently passed by Congress.

In March, Congress inserted language into the Continuing Resolution that prohibited the new delivery schedule, which was set to go into place Monday, Aug. 5.

Through a press release, the Board of Governors stated, "Although disappointed with this Congressional action, the board will follow the law and has directed the Postal Service to delay implementation of its new delivery schedule until legislation is passed that provides the Postal Service with the authority to implement a financially appropriate and responsible delivery schedule."

A little over two months ago, after several years of seeking authority to go to a five-day delivery schedule, the USPS announced changes to their delivery schedule that included the elimination of Saturday mail delivery. Some were surprised, many were angered but no one could dismiss the economical dire straits that led to the decision.

The new schedule was supposed to save the USPS, who surpassed a \$14 billion deficit in 2012, an estimated \$2 billion a year.

The move by Congress has the USPS back at the drawing boards, searching for ways to reduce their sizable debt.

"We're sweeping every corner in order to be as efficient as possible," said David Rupert, Colorado's USPS media contact.

Across the nation, 250 mail processing plants have been closed, including plants in Colorado Springs, Salida, Alamosa and Durango, while plants in Grand Junction and Denver remain open. Colorado has also reduced retail hours at 130 post offices.

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Through a combination of attrition and retirements since 2006, the USPS workforce has been reduced from approximately 800,000 to 675,000, and the workforce numbers may continue to fall.

According to the press release, “Given these extreme circumstances and the worsening financial condition of the Postal Service, the Board has directed management to seek a reopening of renegotiation with the postal unions and consultations with management associations to lower total workforce costs and to take administrative actions necessary to reduce costs.”

Both parties must agree to enter renegotiations.

Management has also been asked to “evaluate further options to increase revenue, including an exigent rate increase to raise revenues across current Postal Service product categories and products not currently covering their costs.”

While the Congressional action may have been a blow to the USPS plan, the move was warmly accepted by a number of other organizations.

The National Newspaper Association welcomed the decision.

“The mission of the Postal Service is in its name: it is service,” said Merle Baranczyk, NNA president and publisher of the Mountain Mail in Salida, “Without reliable service, no price is fair. NNA is working with the Postal Service to do all we can to help newspapers avoid the impacts of the system changes, but we need universal service for our communities and our newspapers.

“We also believe the ultimate responsibility rests with Congress and we will continue our vigorous advocacy on behalf of community newspapers to pass important postal reform legislation.”

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