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Tester, Heitkamp request Postal study and improved mail delivery standards

(U.S. Senate) – As the U.S. Postal Service continues to face a budgetary shortfall, Senators Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.) want better postal data so policymakers can make informed decisions on how to improve service in rural America.

Tester and Heitkamp wrote Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) Chairman Robert Taub to urge his agency to conduct an in-depth study of rural mail delivery.

Since 2011, two-thirds of Montana’s mail processing facilities and one-third in North Dakota have been closed, increasing delivery times for First-Class Mail and virtually eliminating overnight mail delivery in much of the region.

“Recent changes to USPS delivery standards coupled with processing plant closures and consolidations have had a devastating impact on the quality of service in rural America,” the Senators wrote. **“We firmly believe that the continued closure and consolidation of mail processing plants across the country hinders letter carriers’ ability to ensure timely delivery and diminishes the Postal Service’s competitiveness and relevancy in a twenty-first century business environment.”**

“The National Newspaper Association is deeply concerned about the negative effects upon rural communities as rural mail service deteriorates due to plant closings and elimination of transportation. Slow and unreliable service affects our local economies and our readership. Because the Postal Service’s measurements of on-time delivery are heavily-weighted to urban areas, we believe there is an urgent need for separate rural mail measurements. NNA applauds Senators Tester and Heitkamp for their bold leadership to solve this critical problem,” said John Edgecombe Jr, president of the National Newspaper Association.

The Senators want the study to focus on mail service between rural communities and between urban and rural communities. They requested that PRC’s findings be made public semi-annually.

Tester and Heitkamp recently hosted a roundtable with stakeholders to discuss the Postal Service's sizeable impact in rural America. Earlier this month, Heitkamp brought together the first bipartisan meeting of solely Senators from rural states, including Tester, to speak with the U.S. Postmaster General about the impact that mail processing facility closures and service standard reductions have had on families and communities throughout rural America. Both senators were critical of recent Postal Service decisions that they say degraded delivery standards in their home states.

Tester and Heitkamp's letter is available online [HERE](#).

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