



City of Baltimore

City Council
City Hall, Room 408
100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Clarke

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
"Return to Sender" - In Opposition to Proposed Post Office Closings

FOR the purpose of opposing the inclusion of 8 Baltimore City post offices on the list of post offices being reviewed for possible closure; questioning the rationale for the entire post office closure process and the apparent targeting of low income and minority post office service areas; and calling on the Baltimore City Congressional Delegation to take all necessary steps to ensure that the City's post offices are removed from the list of locations being reviewed for possible closure.

Recitals

The Waverly Post Office in the 14th Council District is one of 8 Baltimore City post offices, in 7 different Council Districts, under review by the United States Postal Service (USPS) for closure in its current nationwide proposal to close 3,200 post offices nationwide and 41 in Maryland. The other 7 post offices being considered for closure are the Carroll, Clifton East End, Druid, Franklin, Hamilton, Market Center, and Walbrook locations.

Post offices under review have not yet been officially proposed for closure, and we seek to stop that possibility in its tracks.

We cannot afford to wait for official closure recommendations. We must act now, through our Congressional delegation, to be exempted from the preliminary review process so as to avoid any subsequent appeal process as required upon formal recommendation for closure. That formal appeal process itself is so difficult that, when USPS closed 676 post offices between FY1998-2007, only 25 appeals were submitted nationwide, representing only 3.7% of the closures; of those, only 3 appeals were sustained. A rate so low that an official government review of the closure process suggested that changes be made to the appeal process to make it more responsive to public concerns. (Post Office and Retail Postal Facility Closures: Overview and Issues for Congress, Congressional Research Service, August 7, 2009, pp. 18 & 19.)

If Waverly and the City's other 7 possible closures are any example, this entire review process should be "Returned to Sender" for lack of the adequate postage of transparent fiscal planning, geographic balance, and criteria for change which reflect the special reliance on traditional post office services by our City's, and our nation's, minority,

low-income, non-vehicle owning, and urban populations - populations that are disproportionately served by the post offices being reviewed for closure in Baltimore City.

The post offices being reviewed for closure serve nearly half of the City's total population and individually serve many more than the nation average. For example, the Waverly Post Office serves a population of 52,530, the 2nd highest post office service area in the City (after Arlington) and more than 5 times the national average population of 10,000 people served by local post offices. In general, the average post office slated for closure in Baltimore City serves 3.5 times that national average per post office. In a City where 36% of Baltimore households do not own cars, all 8 post offices on the chopping block have between 11,224 and 24,975 potential clients within ¼ mile walking distance.

The proposed cuts seem to be unduly focused on poor, urban, populations - the USPS is considering the closure of 11% of its post offices nationwide but 36% of Baltimore City's. In fact, the total population served by these 8 post offices under review for closure is about 275,000, substantially more people than the entire population of Harford County, which reportedly is not having any of its 21 post offices reviewed for possible closure. The majority of the post offices at risk in Baltimore are in communities where between one-fifth and two-thirds of the residents live below the poverty line. Seven locations serve African-American populations of 61 to 88%.

The Council does not believe that equally arbitrary closures should be considered in lieu of the 8 Baltimore City post offices under review for closing. Rather, we urge that the USPS and its Congressional overseers consider alternatives to closures in neighborhoods across the nation which, according to figures provided to The Baltimore Sun, will produce a national savings of only \$200 million of the USPS's annual projected deficit of \$1 billion to \$3 billion a year.

Although no longer supported with taxes, the USPS is a government-owned corporation, and, in establishing the USPS in 1971, Congress remains obliged to ensure that the USPS provides the public with adequate access to postal services.

"The United States Postal Service shall be operated as a basic and fundamental service provided to the people by the Government of the United States, authorized by the Constitution, created by Act of Congress, and supported by the people. The Postal Service shall provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas and shall render postal services to all communities." (39U.S.C. 101(a))

In its current review, USPS may eliminate 36% of our City's post offices and provide no plan or resources for relocating their services, thereby violating post office access and equity guarantees for minimal budget savings and putting Baltimore City's remaining post offices at risk of doubling-up, over-capacity, and denial of the entire City's "efficient services" guarantees.

We call for an immediate halt to this process in its entirety. We call upon Baltimore City residents and organizations to voice their objections to the inclusion of our 8 post offices in the current review process by supporting petitions in opposition to these closures. We call upon our Congressional delegation to ensure proper consideration of all protests and objections received by their offices.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council opposes the inclusion of 8 Baltimore City post offices on the list of post offices being reviewed for possible closure; questions the rationale for the entire post office closure process and the apparent targeting of low income and minority post office service areas; and calls on the Baltimore City Congressional Delegation to take all necessary steps to ensure that the City's post offices are removed from the list of locations being reviewed for possible closure.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to Senator Barbara A. Mikulski, Senator Ben Cardin, Congressman Elijah Cummings, Congressman C.A. "Dutch" Ruppersberger, Congressman John Sarbanes, the Governor, the Mayor, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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