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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 5, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MICHAEL K. SIMPSON to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2011, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFazio. Later today, something stunning is going to happen that will catch many Americans by surprise. The so-called Postmaster General is going to announce details that will lead to the end of the United States Postal Service and universal postal delivery in this country.

This is an incredible blow to our economy. You're talking about closing processing centers. Let me just be specific. In my area, they're talking about

closing the Eugene/Springfield processing center. It means if I mail a letter from Springfield to Eugene, 6, 7 miles away, it will be carried by truck to Portland, Oregon, and then sorted there and then trucked back down sometime that week.

They're saying they will no longer guarantee 1-day or 2-day delivery on first-class mail. They're going to move to a guarantee of sometime. If you mail it on Wednesday it will be a minimum of three days till—oops, wait—we don't have Saturday delivery anymore under this plan. So, actually, you mail a letter on Wednesday or a bill on Wednesday, it won't get there until the next Monday.

They will drive more people to use the services that have cut into their revenues. But some people don't have that option, and some things are essential to commerce in this country. There are many, many businesses that will be affected by these delays, and in addition to the delays of prescription drugs or Netflix, mailing DVDs, or, you know, people buying things on eBay, Amazon.com—these things will flood over to UPS and to FedEx and further undermine their revenues.

This guy, this so-called Postmaster General, should be fired because of a lack of any imagination or initiative in proposing the death knell for the great United States Postal Service. With 100,000 people laid off, oh, that's just what we need in America today. Let's lay off 100,000 people. Great idea.

And then he's going to close local post offices. Let's talk about little Tiller, Oregon, in my district, 16 miles on a winding road subject to heavy rain, subject to black ice and snow in the wintertime to the next town, a generally elderly population and generally not very affluent.

These sorts of closures, which will save minuscule amounts of money for the post office, are going to be death knell blows to small rural communities across America.

Now, weekly periodicals: Get today's news next week, sometime. Yep, that's right, 7 to 9 days for your weekly periodicals. That's going to do a great thing for the remaining periodical industry. That's really, really special and, again, driving people to look for alternatives that will further undermine their revenues.

I don't think there could be a more shortsighted proposal. Now, there's plenty of blame to go around because this Congress has failed to act. The Postal Service overpaid \$7 billion into a Federal retirement account, but the Republicans are refusing to give the money back to the post office.

They'd rather lay off 100,000 people. They think somehow the private sector will take this over. Tell me, who in the private sector is going to deliver a letter for 45 cents to a small rural community 40 miles from the nearest or 100 miles from the nearest sorting facility? That's not going to happen. These people will be deprived of any meaningful service.

There are other critical reforms that could be undertaken short of dismantling, killing the United States Postal Service. If these proposals go forward and if this Congress continues to fail to act, and this guy gets to continue to put in place his dyspeptic vision of a future for the Postal Service—and the White House continues to be totally silent, absent from this debate, as they are so many—we will no longer have a United States Postal Service in this country.

That would be an incredible blow to our economy, to our future, and to the prestige of the United States of America. I guess we'll become the first developed nation on Earth without a postal service, just like we're the only developed industrial nation on Earth without universal health care.

We're the best.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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