

Mr. Speaker, one reason I came to Congress is to make the Federal government a better partner to communities. One of the simplest ways to achieve that objective does not require new rules or regulations for local or state governments, and it does not require massive outlays of our budget driving us even deeper into deficit. The simplest answer is for the Federal government to follow the same rules that all others must follow.

To this end, I am reintroducing the Post Office Community Partnership Act. This bill outlines minimum community contact procedures that the United States Postal Service must pursue for any proposed closing, consolidation, relocation, or construction of a post office. Simply put, the bill requires the Postal Service to comply with local zoning, planning, or other land use laws.

This legislation has had the bipartisan support of the majority of the House of Representatives and in past Congresses passed the Senate only to become the victim of the politics of postal reform. In recent sessions there have been efforts at more comprehensive legislation that all include some variation of this bill as an enticement for passage. The pressure from our legislation has in fact encouraged some within the Postal Service to make significant progress. I've met with members of the Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service, the Postal Rate Commissioners, and the National League of Postmasters, and they have made progress. There are outstanding examples of where they have worked with the local community to make the post office an integral part of a downtown or main street.

It is time, however, to make this relationship something that every community can count on. It is time to make this relationship part of the Postal Service's regular activities. It should not be an exception, it should not require luck or extraordinary political action, and there should be no variation in the commitment to providing the finest examples of being a part of each and every community.

Last year, Congress failed on acting expediently to pass comprehensive postal legislation that included provisions from the Post Office Community Partnership Act. I am hopeful that this hesitation will not be repeated in the 109th Congress. Congress has the opportunity to set the tone for the Postal Service and federal government to become a full partner in the livability of our communities, leading by example so our families are safer, healthier, and more economically secure.