

Madam Speaker, I am pleased by the national attention to ways to make our communities more livable by this I mean our families safe, healthy, and economically secure; and ways to give our citizens a real voice in the decisions that impact their communities; and a special emphasis on simple, low-tech, low-cost but high impact solutions.

The Federal Government can make a huge difference in the liveability of our communities without new rules, regulations, fees and taxes for Americans and business. We can do so by having the Federal Government simply lead by example; work that is being done by the General Services Administration, for instance, and how they manage over 300 million square feet of office space in our inventory. Another area with tremendous potential is the Post Office which touches over 40,000 different areas across the country and most Americans six times a week.

Momentum is growing with over 100 House cosponsors for H.R. 670, the Post Office Community Partnership Act. Last week before the Senate Government Affairs Committee, there was a hearing, and I could not agree more with the testimony provided by the National Association of Home Builders. They stated, and I quote: As home builders, our members abide by local zoning, permit, and building code laws in order to develop responsibly and preserve the integrity of communities. The United States Postal Service, however, is currently not required to adhere to State or local codes when relocating, closing, consolidating, or constructing facilities.

This noncompliance undermines the economic and social well-being of communities by permitting the Post Office to build new facilities or modify existing facilities without regard to local plans for growth or traffic management, environmental protection, and public safety. The National Association of Home Builders strongly believes that the Federal Government should follow the same rules as it expects the American public. That is why we support the Post Office Community Partnership Act.

I could have quoted from similar testimony from the Sierra Club, sort of a strange partnership that we do not see too often between the home builders and the Sierra Club, or a coalition composed of the National Association of Counties, League of Cities, Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, Conference of Mayors, Preservation Action, American Planning Association and the International Downtown Association, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions. They stated as recently as last year the Post Office attempted to evade local clean water standards in Tallahassee, Florida and ignore local laws put in place in Ball Ground, Georgia, which were an attempt to meet Federal clean air standards. These actions would be criminal if they were attempted by a private company but are merely shameful when pursued by the Postal Service.

Comedian Lilly Tomlin's annoying and sadistic telephone operator, Ernestine, made popular the notion we do not care because we do not have to, we are the phone company. Well, the laughter that that provided was a bit bittersweet in part because of the grain of truth that was embedded. In today's competitive world with higher citizen expectations, it is time for the Post Office to care because they want to and because they have to start leading by example.

I strongly urge my colleagues to join me and over 140 House cosponsors of H.R. 670, the Post Office Community Partnership Act.