



Postal Service is a great asset

By Barbara Hull Richardson – August 15th, 2013

I am a happy, stubborn Luddite and am glad to know that our United States Postal Service is well and thriving.

Since 1971, taxpayers have paid no money for this service. All of its operations — including staffing 32,000 local post offices (more service outlets than Wal-Mart, McDonald's and Starbuck's combined) are paid for by the sales of stamps and related products.

FedEx CEO Frederick Smith, a former board member of the Koch brothers' Cato Institute would like USPS to fail. In 2006, Congress made the postal service pay the health care benefits of all current employees as well as those who would retire during the next 75 years — and to prepay them by 2016. These benefits were to cover health costs even of those people not yet born. No other corporation or agency has ever been saddled with that requirement.

In addition to the so-called “crisis” of the USPS being “broke” is the fact that the office of personnel management has overcharged the USPS by as much as \$80 billion for payments into the Civil Service Retirement System. Billions of the Postal Service sales dollars have been erroneously diverted into the Treasury.

It is true that the USPS's first-class business has fallen in each of the past several years, but the Postal Service provides much more than physically transporting mail to every corner of the country. Many rural post offices are the community centers of their towns. Local USPS employees who deliver to homes — some in very isolated areas — provide an important connection to the outside world. No private corporation or agency would cover such a wide territory with individual employees reaching virtually everyone in the country.

There are many additional services that the USPS could provide if it were allowed: It could sell products such as cellphones; notarization of documents; fishing licenses, etc. From 1910 until 1966 a postal banking system operated successfully through local post offices. It provided low-cost, federally insured savings accounts to the millions of Americans who couldn't meet the minimum deposit requirements of commercial bankers or afford their fees. Banking lobbyists brought this service to an end. Banks today are not interested in servicing the growing numbers of low-income people who must rely on exorbitantly high-cost payday lenders and check-cashing chains.

Corporate greed prevents the USPS from providing these worthwhile services. It's time to take back our country from corporations and corporate-funded Congress members and to bring our country into a caring community for *all* the people.

