

Extensive Grassroots Work Pays Off: Senate Committee Markup Adopts Small Post Office Closing Standards Amendment.

The LEAGUE wants to thank the many Postmasters who helped generate tens of thousands of legislative contacts who were instrumental in making this happen. We are pleased that the committee adopted this amendment for rural post offices that also resulted in an agreement to stop the closings until legislation has a chance to work. This idea of a moratorium was first suggested by President Strong in his direct testimony in front of the PRC on October 18.

On Wednesday the Senate Homeland Security Committee adopted by a 12-4 vote an amendment sponsored by Senators Moran (R KS), Tester (D MT), Collins (R ME), Pryor (D AR), Begich (D AK), and McCaskill (D MO) to S 1789, that will force the Postal Service to promulgate new and tighter standards for post offices closing. S 1789 is The 21st Century Postal Service Act of 2011, and was jointly introduced by Senators Joe Lieberman (I-CT), Susan Collins (R-ME), Tom Carper (D-DE), and Scott Brown (R-MA).

These standards will be based on a variety of factors, geography, population, demographics and other items. Under the amendment these new standards will apply to post offices in the existing closing processes. The significant part of this amendment allows a complaint to be filed with the PRC if the new standards that are set are violated. This is a separate and stronger process from the normal community appeal for a PRC Advisory and allows the PRC to take whatever action necessary to remedy the complaint. The Committee also mentioned that the Postmaster General has agreed to back off of current closing until the legislative process has a chance to work its way to fruition, and the setting of standards is complete. We will have to see what that means.

The bill passed out of Committee today, and we expect it to go to the floor fairly soon. The final language of the amendments has not yet been released, and we are making sure we have the absolute final version before we release it.

This is the direct result of the work of the thousands of contacts that League members and others have made over the last year and more importantly over the past few months to Congressmen and Senators, and discussions you have had with your citizens and local media. It is clear that our Representatives are hearing and acting on how important rural post offices and universal service is to rural America. Congratulations.

The bill S 1789 still has to go to the floor and be voted on. We again received a bi-partisan vote which covered most of the issues we brought forward during our work on the Postal Services request for an advisory on their RAOI with regard to the closing of 3653 offices.

It is important that we recognize our efforts, the game is not yet won, but we have just scored a lot of points. Please keep it up, and keep working on the House.