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General Oversight of the U.S. Postal Service Improving the Labor-management Relations in the U.S. Postal Service U. S. Postal Service: Status, Financial Outlook, and Alternative Approaches to Fund Retiree Health Benefits The Financial State of the U.S. Postal Service National Bulk Mail System Federal Employees' Compensation ACT (Feca) Pension Issues Cloud Postal Reform Debate United States Postal Service United States Postal Service Budget Government Operations EEO Government Operations Spreading the News The U.S. Postal Service in Crisis Injury Compensation Procedures for Control Offices/points

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GAO discussed its review of the U.S. Postal Service's (USPS) administration of its work-related injury compensation program. GAO noted that: (1) USPS measures effectiveness of division procedures to control lost workdays connected with work-related injuries; (2) lost-workday rates varied greatly among postal divisions; (3) the degree of division commitment to effective cost-control procedures affected divisional performance; (4) USPS limited-duty guidelines did not include criteria for how long employees could remain on limited duty or on how to monitor employees' medical progress; (5) local supervisors did not always complete accident reports for the USPS National Accident Reporting System; and (6) USPS safety and compensation staffs did not sufficiently coordinate their activities to ensure accident reporting. Reviews the Postal Service's (USPS) efforts to improve employee working

conditions and the overall performance of the USPS since the 1994 report which identified persistent labor-management relations problems and recommended improvements. Determines the status and results of the USPS's progress in implementing 10 specific recommendations and identifies approaches that could help the USPS and its unions and management assoc. achieve consensus on how to deal with these problems. Appendices include a description of the grievance/arbitration process and comments from USPS management assoc. and labor unions and assoc. The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) is the workers' compensation program for federal employees. Like all workers' compensation programs, FECA pays disability, survivors, and medical benefits, without fault, to employees who are injured or become ill in the course of their federal employment and the survivors of employees killed on the job. The FECA program is administered by the Department of Labor (DOL) and the costs of benefits are paid by each employees' host agency. Employees of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) currently comprise the largest group of FECA beneficiaries and are responsible for the largest share of FECA benefits. This book examines the key policy issues facing the FECA today, including the disproportionate share of claims and program costs attributed to postal workers, the payment of FECA benefits after retirement age, the overall generosity of FECA disability benefits as compared with those offered by the states, and the overall administration of the FECA

program. "The American Postal Service: History of the Postal Service from the Earliest Times" by Louis Melius is a comprehensive history of the USPS from its inception through the early years of the 20th century. Facts about this important branch of the government, the need for an efficient communication method, the English postal service, and more are all discussed to give readers a full-scope idea of just how essential postal workers and the mail system are to the country. "Reform of the business model of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) was given new momentum by the July 2003 report of a blue-ribbon presidential commission. The commission concluded that USPS faces a long-term decline in mail volume and revenues, and unless its finances are shored up, a taxpayer bailout or loss of universal service is threatened. The 108th Congress held a dozen hearings on the commission's report. Broad postal reform proposals, however, have been somewhat overshadowed by controversy over two pension funding issues left unsettled by passage of P.L. 10818, the Postal Civil Service Retirement System Funding Reform Act of 2003. The first issue is what to do with the "savings" to USPS from the reduction in its payments to the Civil Service Retirement Fund allowed by the law. Savings for the first three years were to be used to pay off the USPS debt to the Treasury, but for FY2006 and later years, the law provided that they be held in escrow pending further congressional action. Continuation of the escrow requirement greatly concerns mailers' organizations, because anticipated new rates

will extract \$18.3 billion from mail users over the next five years that cannot be used to deliver the mail or support the system. The Administration opposes removal of the escrow because it would add at least \$3 billion annually to the budget deficit. The second issue concerns the provision in the 2003 act transferring from the Treasury to USPS responsibility for paying the retirement benefits earned by postal employees when they were members of the armed forces, a \$27 billion obligation. USPS argues that the Treasury pays for military service credits held by employees of every other agency, and there is no connection between the USPS mission and that of the military. USPS points out that 90% of the obligation was incurred before USPS was established as an independent entity in 1971. The Administration, however, believes that USPS should pay the full cost of its employees' pensions, including those earned in military service, because the credits have pension value only by virtue of USPS having hired veterans in the first place. The Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), to which all postal employees newly hired since 1984 belong, fully funds military retirement costs through agency contributions. These two issues prevented postal reform legislation, reported without dissent by the House Government Reform and Senate Governmental Affairs Committees, from reaching the floor in the 108th Congress. Both bills would have removed the escrow requirement and relieved USPS of its current obligation to pay the military pension costs of its employees. They would also require USPS to begin funding its

future retiree health care obligations. The House bill was re-introduced and passed in the 109th Congress as H.R. 22. The Senate bill, S. 662, was reported from committee by a vote of 15-1 on June 22, 2005. Since USPS was granted a 5.4% rate increase this month to cover the costs of the escrow, and a compromise has emerged to split the military retirement costs, pension issues may no longer be a block to consideration by the full Senate." Describes salaries, job descriptions, and skill requirements for a variety of Post Office jobs. A review was made of complaints that the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) may be putting improper pressure on mail contractors and forcing them to carry mail at a loss. Some of the mail contractors were contacted to determine the nature of their complaints.

Contractor complaints fell into three categories: (1) financial administration of the contract, including the initial solicitation of bids and the contract cost adjustment system; (2) contract performance monitoring by USPS; and (3) problems with the Departments of Transportation (DOT) and Labor. USPS officials said that when contract problems do arise, they try to resolve them according to the Contract General Provisions and in a manner as fair as possible to both parties. The review indicated that this was generally true. USPS policies and procedures seem to provide contractors with fair compensation for their routes. Some contractors alleged inaccuracies in USPS contract solicitations for bids on a route. Most of the solicitations reviewed were correct. A few contractors complained that the USPS contract cost adjustment system did

not provide them with adequate compensation. However, few contractors were defaulting on their contract because they were financially unable to provide the service required by the contract. At the facilities visited, contractors generally met USPS standards for on-time performance. With deficient contractors, USPS officials were sometimes very tolerant before instituting disciplinary procedures. Surprise inspections by DOT inspectors at two mail centers resulted in grounding significant amounts of contractor equipment because it was not in compliance with motor carrier safety regulations. Grounded equipment cannot be used again until it is properly repaired. Labor investigations of mail contractors disclosed some contractor pay violations. USPS reviewed all of these findings and concurred with them. Christopher Shaw, the book's author said, "Through preferential postage rates for nonprofits the Postal Service facilitates civic involvement and a healthy democracy." Nader also noted, "Postal employees are fairly remunerated in an increasingly low-wage, low benefit 'Wal-Mart' economy." According to Nader, "Post offices serve as the heart of community life in neighborhoods and towns nationwide and the presence of postal workers on community streets make them safer, as the many beneficiaries of their frequently heroic efforts attest." "The lack of citizen-consumers' involvement in the recently passed postal reform legislation has highlighted the need for a public dialogue about the future of our postal system. The book provides a starting point for that conversation," stated Nader. Reform of the

business model of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) was given new momentum by the July 2003 report of a blue-ribbon presidential commission. The commission concluded that USPS faces a long-term decline in mail volume and revenues, and unless its finances are shored up, a taxpayer bailout or loss of universal service is threatened. The 108th Congress held a dozen hearings on the commission's report. Broad postal reform proposals, however, have been somewhat overshadowed by controversy over two pension funding issues left unsettled by passage of P.L. 10818, the Postal Civil Service Retirement System Funding Reform Act of 2003. The first issue is what to do with the "savings" to USPS from the reduction in its payments to the Civil Service Retirement Fund allowed by the law. Savings for the first three years were to be used to pay off the USPS debt to the Treasury, but for FY2006 and later years, the law provided that they be held in escrow pending further congressional action. Continuation of the escrow requirement greatly concerns mailers' organizations, because anticipated new rates will extract \$18.3 billion from mail users over the next five years that cannot be used to deliver the mail or support the system. The Administration opposes removal of the escrow because it would add at least \$3 billion annually to the budget deficit. The second issue concerns the provision in the 2003 act transferring from the Treasury to USPS responsibility for paying the retirement benefits earned by postal employees when they were members of the armed forces, a \$27 billion obligation. USPS argues that

the Treasury pays for military service credits held by employees of every other agency, and there is no connection between the USPS mission and that of the military. USPS points out that 90% of the obligation was incurred before USPS was established as an independent entity in 1971. The Administration, however, believes that USPS should pay the full cost of its employees' pensions, including those earned in military service, because the credits have pension value only by virtue of USPS having hired veterans in the first place. The Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), to which all postal employees newly hired since 1984 belong, fully funds military retirement costs through agency contributions. These two issues prevented postal reform legislation, reported without dissent by the House Government Reform and Senate Governmental Affairs Committees, from reaching the floor in the 108th Congress. Both bills would have removed the escrow requirement and relieved USPS of its current obligation to pay the military pension costs of its employees. They would also require USPS to begin funding its future retiree health care obligations. The House bill was re-introduced and passed in the 109th Congress as H.R. 22. The Senate bill, S. 662, was reported from committee by a vote of 15-1 on June 22, 2005. Since USPS was granted a 5.4% rate increase this month to cover the costs of the escrow, and a compromise has emerged to split the military retirement costs, pension issues may no longer be a block to consideration by the full Senate. This report will be updated to reflect

significant legislative developments. In the seven decades from its establishment in 1775 to the commercialization of the electric telegraph in 1844, the American postal system spurred a communications revolution no less far-reaching than the subsequent revolutions associated with the telegraph, telephone, and computer. This book tells the story of that revolution and the challenge it posed for American business, politics, and cultural life. During the early republic, the postal system was widely hailed as one of the most important institutions of the day. No other institution had the capacity to transmit such a large volume of information on a regular basis over such an enormous geographical expanse. The stagecoaches and postriders who conveyed the mail were virtually synonymous with speed. In the United States, the unimpeded transmission of information has long been hailed as a positive good. In few other countries has informational mobility been such a cherished ideal. Richard John shows how postal policy can help explain this state of affairs. He discusses its influence on the development of such information-intensive institutions as the national market, the voluntary association, and the mass party. He traces its consequences for ordinary Americans, including women, blacks, and the poor. In a broader sense, he shows how the postal system worked to create a national society out of a loose union of confederated states. This exploration of the role of the postal system in American public life provides a fresh perspective not only on an important but neglected chapter in American history, but

also on the origins of some of the most distinctive features of American life today. Table of Contents: Preface
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this book: "[A] splendid new book...that gives the lie to any
notion that 'government' and 'administration' were 'absent' in
early America." DD--Theda Skocpol, *Social Science History*
"This well-researched and elegantly written book will become
a model for historians attempting to link public policy to
cultural and political change...[It] will engage not only
historians of the early republic, but all scholars interested in
the relationship between state and society." DD--John
Majewski, *Journal of Economic History* "The strength of the
book is...the author's ability to untangle the thousands of
social, political, economic, and cultural threads of the postal
fabric and to rearrange them into a clear and compelling social
history." DD--Roy Alden Atwood, *Journal of American
History* "Richard R. John provides an insightful cultural
history of the often-overlooked American postal system,
concentrating on its preeminent status for long-distance
communication between its birth in 1775 and the
commercialization of the electric telegraph in 1844...John
effectively draws upon government documents, newspapers,
travelogues, and contemporary social and political histories to

argue that the postal system causes and mirrors dramatic changes in American public life during this period...John focuses his study on the communication revolution of the past, yet his meticulous analysis of the complex motives forming the postal institution and its policies relate to such current controversies as those that surround the transmission of information in cyberspace. These contemporary disputes highlight the power of the government in shaping the communication of the people. John privileges the postal institution as the reigning communication system, yet he links it with the developing ideology of the nation, and the scope of his study ensures its value--in the disciplines of communication studies, literature, history, and political science, among others--as a history of the past and present."

DD--Sarah R. Marino, *Canadian Review of American Studies*
"Spreading the News exemplifies the kind of sophisticated and nuanced research that US postal history has long needed.

Richard R. John breaks from the internalist, antiquarian tradition characteristic of so many post office histories to place the postal system at the centre of American national development."

DD--Richard B. Kielbowicz, *Business History*

"[John] presents a thoroughly researched and well-written book...[which will give] insight into the history of the post office and its impact on American life."

DD--*Library Journal*
"It is surely true that in Richard John the post has had the good fortune to have found its proper historian, one capable of appreciating the complex design and social importance of the

means a people use to distribute information. He has also accomplished the impressive feat of gathering together the pieces of a postal history present elsewhere as so many tiny fragments. John has drawn into a coherent design the stories of postal patronage, the decisions about postal privacy, the incidents along post roads used by others as illustrative anecdotes. John's work has inspired in him a deep appreciation for the accomplishments of the post." DD--Ann Fabian, *The Yale Review* "John's book explains how the letters and newspapers sent through the post were really the glue that held the early 13 states together and that embraced additional states as the nation expanded westward...It is a splendid attempt to show the importance of mail service in the years before the telegraph or the telephone made at least brief news transmission possible. The postal system of the 19th century really was a factor, perhaps the major factor, in making the United States one nation." DD--Richard B. Graham, *Linn's Stamp News* "This book traces the central role of the postal system in [its] communications revolution and its contribution to American public life. The author shows how the postal system influenced the establishment of a national society out of a loose union of confederated states. Richard John throws light onto a chapter in American history that is often neglected but sets up the origins of some of the most distinctive features of American life today...The book is a comprehensive study on an important American institution during a critical epoch in its history." DD--Monika Plum, *Prometheus [UK]* "John has

produced an original, well-documented, and thoughtful study that offers alternative and enticing interpretations of Jacksonian policies and public institutions." DD--Choice The Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund (PSRHBF) covered about 49 percent of the U.S. Postal Service's (USPS) \$94 billion retiree health benefit liability at fiscal year-end 2012. USPS's deteriorating financial outlook, however, will make it difficult to continue the current prefunding schedule in the short term, and possibly to fully fund the remaining \$48 billion unfunded liability over the remaining 44 years of the schedule on which the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) was based. The liability covers the projected benefits for about 471,000 current postal retirees and a portion of the projected benefits for about 528,000 current employees; it does not cover employees not yet hired. Under PAEA, USPS is responsible for contributing an additional \$33.9 billion to the PSRHBF by fiscal year 2017, including the \$11.1 billion USPS has defaulted on over the past 2 years. PAEA also requires the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to calculate the remaining unfunded liability in 2017 and develop an initial 40-year amortization payment schedule. USPS, however, projects further declines in mail volume and revenues that may continue to limit its ability to prefund the remaining retiree health benefit liability. GAO's analysis of maintaining current law requirements compared to five alternative approaches showed differing impacts on USPS's future annual payments and unfunded liabilities. For example,

three of the approaches--1) the Administration's Approach, 2) Senate Bill (S. 1789) and 3) "Pay-as-You-Go" (no prefunding)--would reduce USPS's annual payments in the short term, thereby easing its immediate cash flow problems and financial losses. However, these approaches would increase USPS's unfunded liability, sometimes substantially, and require larger payments later. Deferring funding could increase costs for future ratepayers and increase the possibility that USPS may not be able to pay for some or all of its liability. Conversely, a fourth approach--the House Bill (H.R. 2309)--and the current law requirement would reduce USPS's unfunded liabilities more aggressively but may result in significantly higher USPS financial losses in the near future. If USPS stopped prefunding and let the existing fund grow with interest, the unfunded liability is projected to significantly increase. Under a fifth approach, if USPS stopped prefunding and used the existing fund to pay current and future premiums, the fund is projected to be exhausted by 2026. Private sector, state, local, and other federal entities are not required to prefund these benefits, though some do so to a limited extent, and most are required to recognize the future costs in their financial reporting. GAO identified several key considerations including: (1) the rationale and consequences of prefunding such benefits; (2) trade-offs affecting USPS's financial condition, such as sizes of the annual payments and unfunded liability; (3) fixed versus actuarially determined payments; (4) targeted funding levels; and (5) assumption criteria. USPS is

intended to be a self-sustaining entity funded almost entirely by postal ratepayers, but its financial losses are challenging its sustainability. GAO has testified that USPS should prefund its retiree health benefit liabilities to the maximum extent that its finances permit, but none of the funding approaches may be viable unless USPS has the ability to make the payments. USPS's default on its last two required PSRHBF payments and its inability to borrow further make the need for a comprehensive package of actions to achieve sustainable financial viability even more urgent. Any Chairman of the British Post Office dwells in the shadow of Rowland Hill, and, if he were an honest man, he probably from time to time, while singing the praises of Rowland Hill, as is his due, thinks a silent thought of sympathy for his predecessor Colonel Maberly, the head of the Post Office, the Champion of established orthodoxy, the leader of the Professionals, who had to endure the irresistible force of Hill's arguments combined with his skills as a pamphleteer, agitator, and political propagandist. My favorite passage of the book *Royal Mail* by Martin Daunton (1985) shows how much the Post Office of the day needed a Rowland Hill to challenge Colonel Maberly and all that he stood for. I quote from a passage describing how the Colonel, when he arrived at about 11:00 a.m. and while enjoying his breakfast, listened to his private secretary reading the morning's correspondence. Daunton records: The Colonel, still half engaged with his private correspondence, would hear enough to make him keep up a

rumring commentary of disparaging grunts, "Pooh! stuff! upon my soul!" etc.

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