

To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: The Washington Post
Sent: Fri 5/26/2017 4:00:21 PM
Subject: [SPAM] Federal Insider: Will Trump's budget cut mail delivery? Plan revives contentious question.

Will Trump's budget cut mail delivery? Plan revives contentious question.

By Joe Davidson

President Trump is shown at the NATO summit in Brussels on May 25. (Etienne Laurent/EPA)

President Trump, with his well-crafted disrupter reputation, potentially could disrupt one self-funding service Americans directly use almost every day — mail delivery.

In the fiscal 2018 budget plan the Trump administration released this week, he reopened the divisive issue of cutting Saturday mail service. After a long and contentious effort, Republicans and Democrats, postal officials, postal unions and mass mailers managed to reach a compromise on postal reform with Saturday service intact.

But deep, very deep, in the budget's appendix is a line that says that “the budget proposes operational reforms to reduce costs and improve revenue, including ... authority to reduce mail delivery frequency where there is a business case for doing so.”

It could be easily overlooked, coming on page 1,207 of the 1,284-page document. But it has the potential to tear the scab off a wound that has been healing for more than a year.

For years, U.S. Postal Service officials insisted that moving to five-day mail delivery was a needed tonic to the chronic financial ailment that continues to afflict the agency. Unlike other parts of the government, USPS survives on the sale of goods and services, not tax dollars.

After repeated failed attempts to persuade Congress, former postmaster general Patrick R. Donahoe announced, in February 2013, unilateral action

ending Saturday mail delivery, except for packages, that August.

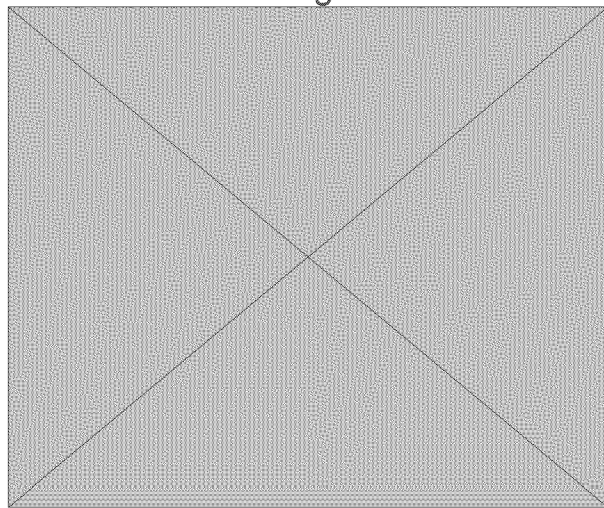
Postal unions and many members of Congress went ballistic. Harry M. Reid (Nev.), then the top Senate Democrat, said Donahoe had “damaged his reputation with congressional leaders.” The National Rural Letter Carriers Association board voted unanimously for his dismissal.

Two months later, his unilateral plan was dead, but not the Postal Service’s insistence that five-day delivery was crucial for financial health.

That turnaround came in January of last year, when a new postmaster general, Megan J. Brennan, made another plea to Congress for help. But this time, going to five-day delivery was not among her requests.

Dropping that was an important development in advancing reform legislation. The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee approved a bill in March with broad bipartisan support. It does not include elimination of Saturday delivery.

“Congress has made clear it would not support cutting mail delivery from six to five days, and for good reason. Eliminating a critical competitive advantage, Saturday mail delivery, would kick off a vicious cycle of increasing volume reductions, service standard degradation, and customer alienation,” said Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-Va.), a co-sponsor of the Postal Service Reform Act of 2017. “We’ve finally got a postmaster general that understands that six-day delivery is an asset. It would be foolish for the Trump administration to re-litigate this debate.”



Veteran GOP official on personnel policies named to

The Office of Management and Budget, the Postal Service and no Republican contacted would comment on the budget's postal provisions, but Sen. Claire McCaskill, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, did.

"Cutting the frequency or reliability of delivery is terrible for my state, especially in rural Missouri," she said, "where so many families and small businesses depend on their services for everything from their medications to Internet sales for their small business."

American Postal Workers Union President Mark Dimondstein said it is "widely accepted now that a reduction in delivery days would hurt the people of this country and the businesses of this country."

Meanwhile, regarding another part of the budget, OMB said Trump's plan to cut retirement programs for federal employees generally would save the government \$148.9 billion over 10 years.

Uncle Sam's savings are individual employees' loss.

That comes to about \$75,000 per employee, the National Federation of Federal Employees calculated. But averages like that are misleading, OMB warned, because "these proposals would impact individual employees and retirees differently."

Yet even the least affected don't want the hit under Trump's plan, despite its 1.9 percent federal pay raise and the six weeks of paid parental leave that would be available generally, not just for feds.

Referring to previous actions, including a three-year partial pay freeze and increased retirement contributions for new employees, Rep. Steny H. Hoyer (Md.), the second-ranking Democrat in the House, said that's "on top of the \$182 billion [over 10 years] that federal employees, frankly, have had their pay and benefits reduced from what otherwise would have been current law."

During a telephone interview, he called the budget "draconian as it relates to federal employees."

"We're making federal employment less attractive, we're making retention more difficult and recruitment more difficult," he added. "I think this is a very negative proposal that we're going to fight very hard."

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He warned that while Trump's overall budget proposal might be dead on arrival on Capitol Hill, that doesn't necessarily apply to everything in the budget.

Will Congress approve the retirement hits?

"I hope not," Hoyer added.

Republicans "will talk about giving everybody a tax cut, except federal employees and federal employees they'll give a tax increase essentially, effectively, by reducing their take-home pay."

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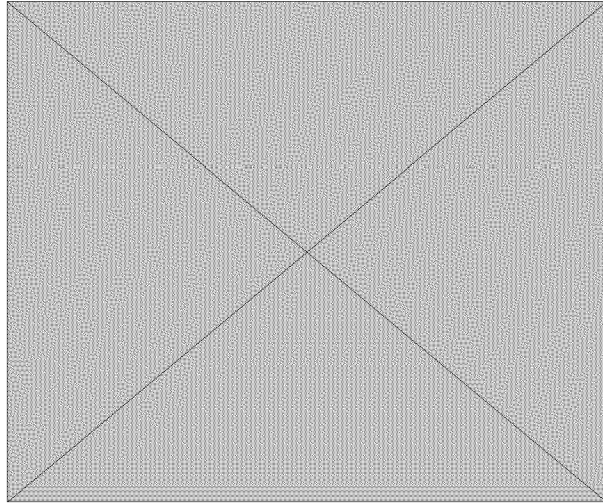
George Nesterzuk has been nominated to head the agency where he first worked during the Reagan administration.

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