

[By Emily Stephenson](#)

A bipartisan group of lawmakers is trying to drum up support in the House of Representatives to vote on a Senate-passed bill that would make it tougher for the Postal Service to close some facilities, in part by targeting representatives who may lose postal facilities and jobs in their districts.

The group hopes representatives who are concerned about the planned closures of post offices or mail processing sites under the Postal Service's own cost-cutting plan will join them in pressing House leadership to hold a vote on the Senate bill.

The new push comes as the Postal Service intends on May 15 to lift its months-long moratorium on postal closings. The closures would eliminate middle-class jobs at a time when the United States is still struggling with high unemployment.

Officials had put that moratorium in place to give Congress more time to pass a restructuring of the Postal Service, which has been losing billions of dollars each year. The postal service does not receive taxpayer dollars but relies on the sale of postage and other products to pay for its operations.

Democratic Representative Peter Welch said he and Republican Michael Grimm will begin when Congress returns from recess next week by talking with House members from states with Republican senators who voted for the Senate bill last week.

"There were 13 Republican senators who voted for this, and we think many of them represent rural areas," Welch said.

"That obviously indicates that the senators from those districts see the importance of rural delivery and the jobs."

## POSTAL SERVICE LOSING BILLIONS

The Postal Service lost more than \$3 billion in the last three months of 2011 due to low mail volumes, as consumers send more email, and to high labor and other costs. Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe has said the agency needs to cut \$20 billion in annual costs by 2015.

The Postal Service wants to close thousands of post offices and about 220 mail processing sites, but it has said it also needs congressional relief to get its costs under control.

The Senate last week passed a bipartisan bill that would boost protections for rural post offices, allow USPS to end Saturday mail delivery after two years, and let it use a surplus of about \$11 billion in a retirement account to offer retirement incentives to older workers.

The bill's authors, Independent Joe Lieberman, Democrat Thomas Carper, and Republicans Scott Brown and Susan Collins, wrote a letter this week to House Speaker John Boehner and other leaders urging them to bring a Postal Service bill to the floor.

House leaders have not scheduled a vote on postal legislation, and a bill from Republican Darrell Issa that passed his Oversight Committee more than six months ago is significantly different from the Senate version.

Supporters of the Senate bill hope lawmakers feeling pressure from coming closures will demand a vote on postal legislation.

Welch, a Vermont Democrat, said he is worried about the loss of service for rural residents if post offices close. A spokeswoman for Grimm, a New York Republican, said the potential

closure of a mail processing site on Staten Island could cost jobs in his district.

Democrats in the House would likely back the Senate bill, Welch said. Representative Gerry Connolly said Thursday he had joined Welch's and Grimm's effort and had signed onto a letter to Speaker Boehner and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi urging a vote on the bill.

"Our challenge in the House is to get Republican support," Welch said. The letter to Boehner and Pelosi admits the Senate bill is "far from perfect" but says the legislation's changes would help the Postal Service avert layoffs and service cuts.

Issa, whose bill would create oversight groups to cut costs and close post offices, was critical of the Senate bill after it passed. Spokesmen for House Republican leadership have indicated that they do not think the Senate's reforms are sufficient.

"The House, led by Chairman Issa, is committed to passing legislation that offers the Postal Service a pathway to long-term solvency, not simply a bailout," Boehner spokesman Kevin Smith said in an email.