

[By Bob Kinzel](#)

Congressman Peter Welch wants a bipartisan group of his colleagues from rural areas to fight the U.S. Postal Service plan to close mail processing centers.

Welch also wants to preserve mail delivery on Saturdays.

If Congress fails to act in the next 10 days, the U.S. Postal Service says it could begin to shut down a mail processing center in White River Junction, and others like it across the country, in order to deal with its budget deficit.

The Senate has passed a bill placing a one year moratorium on the closing of rural post offices and the bill also continues the delivery of mail on Saturdays for the next two years.

Now the bill is in the House and Congressman Peter Welch is working to build a coalition that's based on geographical and not ideological grounds.

"We're in the House going to reach out to those Republican members in those districts because we've got a common cause trying to make certain rural America is treated right in this postal bill."

Welch says the Postal Service deficit is largely due to some requirements that force the agency to prepay health care and pension obligations beyond their actuarial requirements.

"If you have an obligation you want to meet it but if you make somebody pay twice or three times what's required then you're artificially making their balance sheet look much worse than it is and we've got legislation in the House to right size that."

Lawrence Miller is Vermont's secretary of commerce and community development. He says the loss of 250 good paying jobs at the processing center in White River Junction would be a big blow to the state.

He says it would also signal the end of overnight mail for many Vermont businesses.

"It's a huge impact and I think the destruction would result from closing out not just those 250 jobs but the layers of impact that would follow on from that for the rest of the community is severe."

And Miller says ending Saturday mail service will lead to a further loss of business for the Post Office.

"It seems to me that when you're running an enterprise like the Post Office maintaining your competitive advantage and fulfilling your mission are the first two things you should do and then figure out how the cost structure may need to work to be sustainable."

Congressman Welch says he's hopeful that the Postal Service will extend its May 15th deadline to give Congress more time to work on a compromise solution.