

A U.S. Postal Service proposal to close more than 3,600 post offices and branches, including 14 in Vermont, drew opposition today from the Vermont congressional delegation.

“Post offices in a rural state like Vermont are not just post offices – they are often the heart and soul of the town – and they must not be closed down,” Sens. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) said in a letter to Postal Service commissioners.

“Many of these post offices have been in continuous operation for over 100 years and are an essential part of the fabric of Vermont’s rural landscape,” the delegation letter added.

They also questioned the legality of this regulation citing a provision in federal law that says the Postal Service “shall provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, communities, and small towns where post offices are not self-sustaining.” The law also says, “No small post office shall be closed solely for operating at a deficit, it being the specific intent of the Congress that effective postal services be insured to residents of both urban and rural communities.”

Businesses and individuals from throughout Vermont have contacted members of the congressional delegation about the threatened closures.

“We have heard from residents across our state concerned about the loss of their post office and the harm it will have on their community,” the letter said. “Additionally, many small business owners have contacted us to express their serious concerns about the negative economic impact this regulation would have on their businesses if their local post office is closed.”

The letter acknowledged that the Postal Service faces serious budget challenges, but suggested other measures that would save more money than shuttering rural post offices.

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