

The U.S. Postal Service mail-sorting center at White River Junction, Vt. will remain open, Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) announced today.

The Postal Service decision to continue operating the White River Junction plant once targeted for closure is part of a new national plan by Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe. The latest plan was developed after sweeping service cuts he proposed ran into widespread opposition from postal customers, businesses and members of Congress.

"This is great news for the 245 employees at the White River Junction plant and every Vermonter who relies on the Postal Service to deliver their mail on time, especially small businesses and the elderly. It shows that when unions, customers and small businesses speak out their voices can be heard and their opinions matter. This process has been a lesson in democracy at its best," said Sanders.

The Senate on April 25 overwhelmingly passed comprehensive postal reform legislation, which Sanders helped write, that would protect dozens of processing centers, including the one in White River Junction. "I hope the House acts as quickly as possible," Sanders said.

"I am relieved that the Postmaster General will keep the mail processing facility at White River Junction open. This facility is critical to local mail delivery standards in our area, and keeping it open is the right decision for our state and for USPS overall. The Postal Service's future must be forged through better customer service, not by endangering service and performance," Leahy said.

"This is great news for the hard-working employees at White River Junction and all Vermonters. The Postal Service has a vital mission to serve all Americans regardless of where they live. Today's announcement reaffirms that mission, ensuring Vermonters will continue to receive reliable, timely service," Welch said.

Gov. Peter Shumlin said, "Today's good news that the processing plant will remain open, preserving more than 200 jobs, shows that the U.S. Postal Service listened to the hundreds of

Vermonters and New Hampshire residents who stepped forward to protest the potential closure. Post offices and processing facilities are critical to local economies, rural communities and the employees and residents who rely on those jobs and services."

The Postal Service had announced last year that it was considering closing more than 250 mail-processing centers and as many as 15,000 post offices, many of them in rural areas, as part of an overall plan to save about \$20 billion a year. The only two mail processing plants in Vermont, located in White River Junction and Essex Junction were targeted for closure. In February, the Postal Service announced that it would keep the Essex Junction plant open, but moved ahead with plans to close White River Junction. The plan announced today keeps both mail sorting centers in Vermont open.

Just last week the Postal Service backed off the plan to close the 15,000 post offices, saying it would keep them all open but reduce the hours that many of them are open each day.

Today's announcement will detail the plan to keep operating about 100 of the sorting centers that were slated for closure in order to maintain timely first-class mail service. The plan calls for another review in 2014.

Congress continues to work on legislation that would maintain mail delivery standards, keep postal facilities open and create a new business model for the Postal Service.

The Senate-passed bill addresses the major reason for the Postal Service's financial troubles – a \$5.5 billion annual mandate to pre-fund 75 years of future retiree health benefits in just 10 years. This onerous requirement, unparalleled by any entity in the private sector or government, is responsible for more than 80 percent of the Postal Service's debt. Without that obligation, the Postal Service would have posted a profit of \$700 million from 2007-2010, and a \$200 million profit in the first quarter of this fiscal year. The Senate-passed bill also addresses the reality that the Postal Service overpaid \$11 billion into the Federal Employees Retirement System.

The measure now awaiting action by the House also includes a Sanders provision to let the Postal Service become more entrepreneurial. He wants the Postal Service to explore new opportunities to increase business, such as expanding digital services, selling hunting and fishing licenses, making copies, notarizing documents, and cashing checks.