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The Rural Postal Act of 2015

Mail is a critical lifeline in rural America—for connections to loved ones, pharmaceutical deliveries, supplies, and tools, as well as small businesses shipping products all over the world. Rural America has been disproportionately impacted by cuts to mail service over the past few years, making things like overnight delivery nonexistent even when stronger service standards were in place. It is essential that we protect the Postal Service's ability to serve these communities at the highest level possible. This bill restores strong overnight July 2012 service standards, places a 2-year moratorium on the closure of additional mail processing plants, makes 6-Day delivery permanent, protects rural post offices from unnecessary closures or reductions in hours, and includes a number of other provisions that ensure that all families and businesses have high-quality mail service, regardless of where they live.

Key provisions in the Rural Postal Act of 2015:

- Makes sure mail reaches its destination faster by restoring stronger service standards indefinitely and places a 2-year moratorium on the closure of additional mail processing plants.
- Preserves 6-Day delivery by making the appropriations rider permanent.
- Protects rural post offices with strong mitigation procedures for additional closures and reductions in hours, and allows for communities to petition post offices that have already had their hours reduced.
- Creates a Chief Morale Officer for the Postal Service who would be responsible for overseeing working conditions, staffing, communication, and training.
- Would reinstitute stronger July 2012 service standards for Alternative Means of Transportation (AMOT) contracts, where the Postal Service contracts with private air carriers to provide delivery on certain routes.
- Creates a Rural Postal Advisory Commission that would focus specifically on the needs of rural communities.
- Encourages the Postal Service to look at the feasibility of equipping delivery vehicles for rural letter carriers that could not only handle landscape challenges, but would also be able to handle severe weather conditions.
- Includes a pilot program for implementing WiFi in rural post offices.
- Provision that seeks to protect current residences and businesses from conversion by the Postal Service to clusterboxes.

Senator Heitkamp is working closely with Senators Carper, Johnson, and postal stakeholders on comprehensive postal reform and believes it is essential that we find a path forward this Congress to return the Postal Service to a fully-functioning, financially viable agency.