



San Antonio Alamo Area Local Legislative Updates

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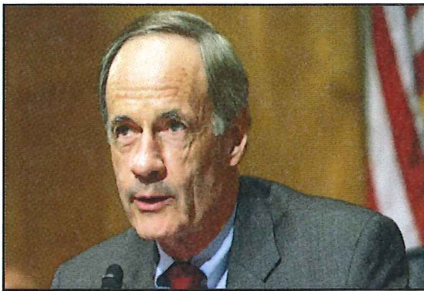


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Congress Once Again Tries to Save the Postal Service



For each of the last several sessions of Congress, Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., has committed himself to shepherding a major reform of the U.S. Postal Service to President Obama's desk.

Each effort has fallen short, but his resolve has not waned. In the 114th Congress, Carper is starting from scratch to bring relief to the cash-strapped agency.

The problems facing a legislative overhaul are too familiar: a wide array of parochial interests voiced by labor unions, large-scale mailers and rural customers, leading to a clash among the lawmakers representing those interests.

Carper recently joined the Democratic caucus, and a majority of Republicans, in supporting an amendment to the budget that advised the Postal Service to delay the facility closures scheduled for this year. The consolidations were a major sticking point for Democrats in the last Congress.

The Carper-Coburn bill, which cleared committee but never received a vote on the Senate floor, would have delayed the closures temporarily. This time around, Carper helped craft the closure moratorium amendment with Sanders. The non-binding provision passed last month with 85 votes.

As it has done for years, the Postal Service is attempting to right its fiscal ship, to the extent that it can, without Congress' help. In addition to "right-sizing" its network with the consolidations, USPS is looking to grow revenues by investing in new business opportunities. Just this week, the Postal Service held a symposium to discuss new innovations and possibilities for delivery.

Postal revenues have increased in recent months, and last quarter the agency actually turned a \$1.1 billion operational profit. A lot of that success, however, is due to an emergency rate increase set to expire this summer. A Carper aide said the recent positive news has not changed the senator's perspective.

After years of near misses, there could be room for optimism this time around: Carper has held dialogues with new House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, and hopes to have everyone "in sync" at some point in the months to come. The Postal Service also has a new postmaster general in Megan Brennan, and mailing groups appear more eager to work with her than her predecessor.

We're looking at every perspective, the Carper aide said. "He's still working at the same rate, the same energy level," to pass legislation. "I think everybody agrees we need to find a way to make the Postal Service sustainable."