



Legislation Text

File #: Res 2166-2009, **Version:** A

Res. No. 2166-A

Resolution calling upon the federal government to pass H.R. 658, which would help to increase community input as the United States Postal Service reorganizes branches throughout the city of New York and the country, and also calling upon the Postal Service to use a significant portion of the \$3.5 billion increase in its operating budget, received when President Obama signed into law Public Law 111-68, to prevent the closing of as many postal locations as possible throughout the City and the nation.

By The Speaker (Council Member Quinn), Council Members Sears, Lappin, Barron, Brewer, Comrie, Dickens, Ferreras, Fidler, Foster, Gentile, James, Nelson, Sanders, Seabrook, Stewart, Weprin, Gerson, Mendez, White, Felder, Koppell, Arroyo, Mark-Viverito, Jackson, Gennaro, Liu, Mitchell and Reyna

Whereas, On August 20, 2009, elected officials from all levels of government in the City of New York gathered to officially call on the United States Postal Service (“USPS”) to halt unnecessary closures of neighborhood post offices and to call for greater community involvement in the USPS’s procedures for closing or consolidating post offices throughout the city; and

Whereas, Because of the recent economic downturn and the increasing popularity of digital forms of communication, the USPS is facing a potential loss of \$7 billion for the 2009 fiscal year; and

Whereas, The USPS established the cost-cutting Station and Branch Optimization and Consolidation Initiative in the summer of 2009, which, according to the USPS, “examined approximately 3,600 stations and branches in urban and suburban areas across the country, focusing on facilities in relatively close proximity to one another, to determine where consolidations might be feasible, while maintaining customer access to postal services;” and

Whereas, If the USPS’s fiscal crisis is not resolved soon, the USPS announced on October 8, 2009 that it will likely be forced to close 371 locations throughout the nation, including as many as 14 locations in New York City; and

Whereas, The two boroughs that would be most adversely affected are Manhattan and the Bronx with a potential for 5 and 7 closings, respectively; and

Whereas, The post office is an important but often overlooked component of the nation's and city's infrastructure that is critical to the success of the economy; and

Whereas, Since the USPS announced its consolidation plan in the summer of 2009, New York City elected officials have called upon the federal government to enact two bills - one of which contains provisions that have already been signed into law - that could potentially alleviate the fiscal crisis facing the USPS and ultimately ensure that the level of postal service remains unchanged throughout the City: H.R. 22, the United States Postal Service Financial Relief Act, and H.R. 658, the Access to Postal Services Act; and

Whereas, H.R. 22, the United States Postal Service Financial Relief Act, would save the USPS approximately \$3.5 billion per year in operating expenses - money which could be used to preserve postal service throughout the country - by allowing it to access the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund to pay health insurance for postal retirees; and

Whereas, According to the Congressional Budget Office, the use of such funds from the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund would not jeopardize the USPS's ability to provide proper healthcare to its employees in the future; and

Whereas, On September 15, 2009, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 22 with 388 votes in the affirmative and 32 votes in the negative, and, on September 16, the legislation was sent to the United States Senate where the measure was substantially absorbed into a Continuing Resolution which the Senate passed on September 30; and

Whereas, On October 1, 2009, President Obama signed into law Public Law 111-68, which included the cost-saving provision from H.R. 22; and

Whereas, The Council urges the USPS to use these new operating funds to prevent postal closings throughout the City and the nation; and

Whereas, H.R. 658, the Access to Postal Services Act, would improve the USPS's procedures for closings or consolidating services by ensuring that communities that now are only notified of potential changes through mailings and newspaper notices, would, in the future, also have the ability to participate in such decisions at public hearings; and

Whereas, Congressman Jerry Nadler, a co-sponsor of both bills, said in support of the legislation at a press conference on August 20, 2009: "There is no excuse for the Postal Service to give short shrift to customers and cut services that every person and business depends on; I am calling on the USPS to work harder to make sure that needs of community members and businesses are met;" and

Whereas, The USPS performs an invaluable service in every community throughout the nation by enabling the dissemination of information and helping to make the movement of goods possible; and

Whereas, A well functioning Postal Service is critical to the nation's overall economic recovery, as it not only helps to increase economic activity in the short term, but also ensures that the nation has a strong foundation that makes sustained growth and prosperity possible throughout the 21st century; and

Whereas, Postal closings will have a negative impact on all affected communities, but pose the greatest harm to the most economically vulnerable New Yorkers, including many seniors and low-income families; and

Whereas, What used to be a simple trip to the local post office for a senior citizen or a working parent, for example, if these closings occur, could potentially necessitate the use of public transportation to get to the closest post office, making such a visit more costly and time consuming; and

Whereas, The preservation of post offices will help ease the financial burden on not only New Yorkers but all Americans; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the federal government to pass H.R. 658, which would help to increase community input as the United States Postal Service reorganizes branches throughout the city of New York and the country, and also calling upon the Postal Service to use a significant portion of the \$3.5 billion increase in its operating budget, received when President Obama signed into law

Public Law 111-68, to prevent the closing of as many postal locations as possible throughout the City and the nation.