

HONORING MACK STRONG AND
ZOE HIGHEAGLE-STRONG

HON. DAVID G. REICHERT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of a husband-and-wife team filled with love, faith, and determination. I'm proud to call them constituents and friends and I'm honored to be able to recognize their efforts on this floor today.

Mack Strong and Zoe Higheagle-Strong will be honored on Saturday evening, September 17 by the Association of Washington Generals as the Washingtonians of the Year. Mack and Zoe earned the honor by founding and leading the TEAM-WORKS Academy, a program that "develops strong minds, strong bodies, and strong character in underserved youth." Founded in 2002 by Mack and Zoe, TEAM-WORKS Academy grew out of many years of dedicated community service and a strong belief in the validity of their vision for the future. I am thankful that Mack, a graduate of the University of Georgia and a longtime fullback of the Seattle Seahawks, put down roots in the community. His selfless and tireless work on behalf of at-risk youth in my District and beyond is an inspiration. And his wonderful wife Zoe, a member of the Nez Perce tribe and the Executive Director of TEAM-WORKS, is an inspiration to us all. The tandem of Mack and Zoe in the Puget Sound region represent an unstoppable force in the betterment of our communities, schools, and families.

It is clear that TEAM-WORKS is having a positive effect on the young people it directly serves. Over and over again, I hear stories and see the results of improved performance in the classroom and on the field of play. Mack, an accomplished athlete, believes that the link between consistent physical activity and school performance in our young people is a strong one. I couldn't agree more. I think the tactics of TEAM-WORKS should be replicated across this Nation. Mack and Zoe are doing remarkable things. Reading and math scores are up. Relationships at home have never been better. TEAM-WORKS is a god-send and Mack and Zoe show no signs of slowing down.

Again, Mr. Speaker, please join me in thanking Mack and Zoe for their efforts and congratulate them on their well deserved honor. They truly represent the best of the State of Washington. In addition, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Association of Washington Generals for recognizing their efforts and providing Mack and Zoe with the kind of official recognition too many of our best community leaders go without.

IN SUPPORT OF THE WORKERS OF
THE UNITED STATES POSTAL
SERVICE

HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the 685,000 workers of the United States Postal Service (USPS), who face a

devastating future which may close thousands of post offices, eliminate hundreds of mail processing facilities, lay off 120,000 of their colleagues, cut their pay, and end their collective bargaining rights.

Each day, the USPS processes an average of 584 million pieces of mail and delivers to 146 million addresses. In my home State of California alone, there are a total of 38,000 active and retired letter carriers.

These employees are fixtures within their communities and are some of the most dedicated, hardworking people out there. That is why I have been a strong advocate for letter carriers throughout my career in public service.

The United States Postal Service offers the most affordable postage in the industrialized world, while being able to sustain efficient delivery schedules at no expense to the taxpayer.

Established in 1775, the Postal Service and the thousands of families who depend on it now face an unprecedented crisis.

Since 2006, an unsustainable retiree healthcare system has saddled the USPS with a \$5.5 billion overcharge to be paid in full at the beginning of every year. Based on longterm projections which are routinely called into question, this fund has established an enormous, unused surplus, estimated by the Postal Regulatory Commission and the Inspector General of the Postal Service to be between \$55–75 billion.

No other Federal agency or private business is forced to pre-fund retiree health benefits in this manner. Since it is not funded by taxpayers, this requirement puts the USPS at a distinct competitive disadvantage. Fixing this problem would allow the Postal Service to compete more effectively with the private sector and return to profitability.

Without this mandate, the USPS would have actually been profitable to the tune of \$611 million over the last 4 years, saving its \$15 billion line of credit from the U.S. Treasury to ride out the bad economy. Instead, the entire agency, which has not taken taxpayer funds for 30 years, is facing default. Its line of credit is nearly exhausted.

Mr. Speaker, the real financial struggles at USPS do not stem from the cost of labor, but from the 2006 congressional mandate requiring the USPS to pre-fund future retiree benefits.

Unfortunately, House Republicans are bent on destroying the Postal Service as we know it and using this crisis as an opportunity to weaken collective bargaining rights.

The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee conducted a hearing in April entitled: "Are Postal Workforce Costs Sustainable?" Led by Committee Chairman DARRELL ISSA, this hearing was held to investigate a recent agreement between the USPS and the American Postal Workers Union.

Chairman ISSA's decision to hold a hearing to scrutinize and interfere with the collective bargaining process represents a dangerous precedent that could lead to more GOP interference in labor-management agreements.

In June, Chairman ISSA proposed H.R. 2309, the Postal Reform Act of 2011, which would establish a "solvency authority" with the power to unilaterally cut wages, abolish benefits, and end protection against unfair layoffs. It orders \$1 billion worth of post office closures in the first year and another \$1 billion worth of

facility closures in the second year. It also ends Saturday deliveries.

Mr. Speaker, 6-day delivery is an important service that the USPS provides to the American people and is vital to its long-term sustainability. Ending Saturday deliveries reduces incentive for the American people to send mail through USPS and would lead to more jobs lost and larger reductions in service.

If Saturday delivery ends, it is possible that 80,000 full- and part-time jobs could be eliminated. At a time when we are still recovering from the worst economic recession since the Great Depression, now is not the time to put thousands of jobs in jeopardy.

The USPS estimates that cutting deliveries on Saturday will cut costs by 5 percent, but will slash mail delivery by 17 percent. Clearly the money saved by eliminating Saturday delivery is negligible and does not justify the lapse in efficiency and the loss of jobs that would certainly follow.

Reducing mail delivery service to 5 days a week would cause delays in the delivery of mail and would inevitably lead to increased costs due to the overtime Postal Service workers will be forced to endure in order to handle the backlog of mail. It is also vital for seniors who depend on mail-order prescription drugs and small businesses that need Saturday delivery to meet payroll.

Most importantly, ending Saturday service will remove the Postal Service's key strategic advantage over its competitors and result in a massive loss of revenue for the program.

We can't allow House Republicans to pursue an agenda that threatens the wellbeing of thousands of working families in California and across the Nation. They want to turn back the clock on the progress that has been made over the last century to ensure that American workers have the right to organize and demand fair wages and benefits.

We cannot stand by while thousands of American workers lose their jobs, and House Democrats are putting forth solutions that will take immediate steps to end this crisis without cutting jobs or resorting to taxpayer funded bailouts.

Take for instance H.R. 1351, the United States Postal Service Obligation Recalculation and Restoration Act of 2011, which would realign the Postal Service's retiree health prefunding schedule to a larger time period consistent with what the Postal Service can afford. It would do this by first establishing the exact size of the surplus and then transferring it to the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund where it belongs.

Furthermore, when the Post Office Department became the Postal Service in 1971, employees who belonged to the Federal pension fund started contributing to the new Postal Service. For employees who worked for both the Post Office Department and the Postal Service, the Federal and the postal pension funds shared responsibility. However, the Federal fund paid for retirements based on 1971 salaries, not final salaries. In essence, the Federal fund collected full contributions, but paid only partial benefits. The USPS was shortchanged \$75 billion as a result of this error.

H.R. 1351 takes necessary steps to correct this by altering the methodology used to determine the allocation of costs for retirement benefits between the Federal government and the USPS. By making these changes, Congress