

and I have expressed this to the Postmaster General, the U.S. Postal Service on many occasions has made a decision that I think, while it may save a few dollars, reduces the service the Postal Service provides and ultimately hastens the day in which the Postal Service has even more challenges remaining viable. One of those was the decision by the Postal Service to close many rural post offices across the country, 130-plus in Kansas.

We have had attendance at more than 90 of the community meetings that revolve around the potential closing of a post office. I have expressed great concern in the committee. I serve on the Committee on Homeland Security, in which this bill originates. During that markup and debate, I expressed concern then and expressed concern on several occasions to the Postmaster General that there is no basis for making an intelligent decision about which post office should or should not be closed. In fact, when citizens across Kansas and across the country attend one of these community meetings, their question to the representative of the Postal Service is, What can our community do? What can I do to make certain our post office remains open and we have the opportunity to receive and have mail delivered from here at the U.S. post office in our community?

In working with the committee, provisions were added to the 21st Century Postal Service Act that create criteria by which these decisions would be made and the community has an opportunity to appeal should the decision be adverse and those criteria not met.

In my view, the Senate should not delay any longer addressing the issue of what we do to make certain the Postal Service is and remains viable today and in the future. It matters, as I say, for a series of reasons but certainly to me as a Kansan who is concerned about what happens to the community, its senior citizens, if there is no longer postal service provided.

I know there are some in the Senate and in the House of Representatives and across the country who want to make certain the Postal Service is operated as a business. I certainly support that concept and believe we ought to do what is necessary to improve the business environment by which the Postal Service conducts its business. There is a long list of those. Some of them are addressed in the legislation that I hope remains pending here in the Senate.

But there is another reason in addition to the need to provide service to Americans that we need to address this issue. I want to make certain the decisions we make today eliminate the need that there ever would be a call upon the taxpayers of the United States to provide taxpayer dollars to support the Postal Service.

I am here this evening to encourage my colleagues but particularly the majority leader to work to find an agree-

ment by which amendments can be offered to this bill so that we do not lose the opportunity we have this week and next to address this issue of making certain we make changes to the Postal Service that allow it to be successful.

I am concerned that, as I understand it, there is no agreement yet that would allow Members of the Senate to offer amendments to this legislation. While the provisions of this bill are important to me and important to Kansans, I also recognize the importance to every Member of the Senate to be able to offer legislation, to have debate, to make certain that our rights are protected. I know that particularly in a sense as a member of the minority, as a Republican in the Senate, but I know that even more as a member of a minority called rural America. I do not want to lose the opportunity in the Senate for me to be able to speak on issues that are important to my constituents and to be able to offer amendments to legislation that is important to a minority of Americans called rural America.

What I am troubled by and what I want to see addressed is the legislation that is pending. I do not want it to disappear because there is no agreement for Members of the Senate, all 100 of us, majority and minority, to offer amendments. So I am asking the majority leader to work with Senators to make certain their amendments are available for consideration in this legislation. Don't put me and other Senators, who care about this legislation, in the position of not being able to support moving forward because the rights of some Senators have been violated in their ability to offer amendments to this piece of legislation.

Again, this matters. The Postal Service desperately needs our attention. The American people who are served by the Postal Service desperately need our attention. We need to set the stage today in which the taxpayers of the United States are protected from any future calls for support for the U.S. Postal Service. We need to make certain in that process, as we pursue this legislation, that the ability of those who live in rural communities, where it is very difficult for the Postal Service to be financially viable, to have access to the Postal Service is not trampled on by the desire to see that only those post offices that are financially viable individually are the ones that remain. In fact, I remind my colleagues that the Postal Rate Service Commission in their study said we could close 3,700 post offices in the United States and save less than .7 percent of the money necessary to put the Postal Service back on a financially sound basis.

This legislation is important. The concepts that are contained in it matter to me as a Member of the Senate who represents a very rural State, Kansas. But I also know how important it is to make sure we do not lose our ability to offer amendments on this legislation or legislation in the future.

Please, Mr. Majority Leader and other Senators, please come together to make certain those rights are protected so this legislation can be fully considered by the Senate.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO JUDGE G. WIX UNTHANK

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I rise today in honor of a man who has made a great contribution to our Nation's judiciary system and to his native Commonwealth of Kentucky. The man of whom I speak has valiantly served in the line of duty and justly served in almost every level of our Nation's court system. He is a pioneer in the legal discipline, a patriot through and through, and a dear friend: the Honorable Judge G. Wix Unthank of Harlan County, KY.

Judge Unthank has announced his retirement and will soon bang the gavel for the last time on June 1 of this year, ending a six-decade-long legacy in the legal field. Although his official day-to-day job may be coming to an end, his public service is most likely far from over. Judging by the colorful life he has led thus far, I trust that his passion for the law and the legal system will lead him back inside the familiar walls of the courthouse for many years to come.

The Honorable Judge Unthank is a solid testimony to the attainment of the American dream. G. Wix Unthank proved that with hard work and ambition you can accomplish truly anything. He was born in the small Harlan County, KY, town of Tway in 1923. His father, Green W. Unthank, and mother, Estelle Howard Unthank, were both teachers in the Harlan County school system. Between the two of them, they spent 68 years in the classroom inspiring young men and women to achieve great things. The emphasis placed on education in the Unthank household rubbed off on young Wix, and he graduated from Loyall High School in Harlan County with the class of 1940. That same year he enlisted in the U.S. Army and proudly served in World War II.

Not even having been on this Earth for two decades, the young Mr.