OVERSIGHT OF THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE: ENSURING THE SAFETY OF POSTAL EMPLOYEES AND THE U.S. MAIL

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

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CONTENTS

Page

Hearing held on October 30, 2001 1

Statement of:

Burrus, William, president-elect, American Postal Workers Union, AFL–CIO; Mo Biller; William Young, executive vice president, National Association of Letter Carriers; Gus Baffa, president, National Rural Letter Carriers' Association; and William H. Quinn, national president, National Postal Mail Handlers Union 134

Potter, John E., Postmaster General of the U.S. Postal Service, accompanied by Patrick Donohoe; S. David Fineman, vice chairman, Board of Governors, U.S. Postal Service; and Thomas G. Day, vice president, engineering 86

Weaver, Kenneth C., Chief Postal Inspector, U.S. Postal Inspection Service; Mitch Cohen, Director, Division of Bacterial and Mycotic Disease, National Center for Infectious Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accompanied by Rema Kabazz; and James F. Jarboe, Section Chief, Counterterrorism Division, Domestic Terrorism/Counterterrorism Planning Section, Federal Bureau of Investigation 28

Letters, statements, etc., submitted for the record by:

Baffa, Gus, president, National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, prepared statement of 159

Burrus, William, president-elect, American Postal Workers Union, AFL–CIO, prepared statement of 139

Burton, Hon. Dan, a Representative in Congress from the State of Indiana, prepared statement of 9

Cohen, Mitch, Director, Division of Bacterial and Mycotic Disease, National Center for Infectious Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, prepared statement of 37

Maloney, Hon. Carolyn B., a Representative in Congress from the State of New York:

Letters dated October 30, 2001 67

Prepared statement of 21

McHugh, Hon. John M., a Representative in Congress from the State of New York, prepared statement of 5

Morella, Hon. Constance A., a Representative in Congress from the State of Maryland, prepared statement of 184

Moser, Charles, president of the National Association of Postmasters 104

Potter, John E., Postmaster General of the U.S. Postal Service, prepared statement of 90

Quinn, William H., national president, National Postal Mail Handlers Union, prepared statement of 167

Shays, Hon. Christopher, a Representative in Congress from the State of Connecticut, prepared statement of 18

Sombrotto, Vince, president, National Association of Letter Carriers, prepared statement of 153

Towns, Hon. Edolphus, a Representative in Congress from the State of New York, prepared statement of 186

Waxman, Hon. Henry A., a Representative in Congress from the State of California, prepared statement of 14

Weaver, Kenneth C., Chief Postal Inspector, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, prepared statement of 31

Weldon, Hon. Dave, a Representative in Congress from the State of Florida, article by Alan Robinson 108

Page

Letters, statements, etc., submitted for the record by—Continued
Young, William, executive vice president, National Association of Letter Carriers:
A picture of letter carriers working out of tents 150
An expression from the Brooklyn family 148

OVERSIGHT OF THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE: ENSURING THE SAFETY OF POSTAL EMPLOYEES AND THE U.S. MAIL

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2001

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 12 noon, in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Dan Burton (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Members present: Representatives Burton, Cummings, Weldon, Norton, Shays, Maloney, Horn, Mink, Otter, Lantos, Duncan, Waxman, Schrock, Watson, Mrs. Davis of Virginia, Schakowsky, LaTourette, Turner, Souder, Tierney, Morella, Kucinich, Barr, Davis of Illinois, Kanjorski, and Clay.

Staff present: Kevin Binger, staff director; Daniel R. Moll, deputy staff director; James C. Wilson, chief counsel; David A. Kass, deputy chief counsel; Mark Corallo, director of communications; John Callender, Matt Rupp, Randall Kaplan, and Jennifer Klute, counsels; Caroline Katzen, professional staff member; Robert A. Briggs, chief clerk; Robin Butler, office manager; Josie Duckett, deputy communications director; Joshua E. Gillespie, deputy chief clerk; Danleigh Halfast, assistant to chief counsel; Michael Layman, staff assistant; Leneal Scott, computer systems manager; Corinne Zaccagnini, systems administrator; Phil Schiliro, minority staff director; Phil Barnett, minority chief counsel; Kate Anderson, minority counsel; Josh Sharfstein and Denise Wilson, minority professional staff members; Ellen Rayner, minority chief clerk; and Jean Gosa and Earley Green, minority assistant clerks.

Mr. BURTON. The Committee on Government Reform will come to order.

A quorum being present, I ask unanimous consent that all articles, exhibits and extraneous or tabular material referred to be included in the record. Without objection, so ordered.

Because we have limited time of the first two panel witnesses, we are going to ask the Members to limit their opening statements. We were going to just have the chairman and the ranking member give opening statements, but because others would like to make opening statements, I'd urge you, because we want to get to questions as quickly as possible, to limit them to just what essentially you have to say instead of giving the normal 5 minute opening statement.

Over the past 2 months, we've been struck by the terrorists not once, but twice. They've attacked us with weapons developed from things we use in our every day lives, commercial airplanes and the U.S. mail. Prime Minister Netanyahu called the attacks on the World Trade Center a wake up call from hell. It feels like we hardly woke up at all before we were hit with the anthrax infected letters. Now we have three people dead and at least a dozen more are infected, and we heard this morning someone else is in critical condition.

We have thousands of people up and down the East Coast taking antibiotics. Every day traces of anthrax are found in more post offices, more mail rooms and more office buildings. As a Nation, we'll probably never be the same. The sense of security that we once felt has vanished. We now know that terrorists can strike at any time and any place. We have no other choice but to fight back.

As we speak, the men and women of our armed services are fighting to bring Osama bin Laden to justice and to destroy his terrorist network. The President has rallied the American people and the world community to this cause. His leadership has given the American people a lot of confidence.

But we can't stop with the Taliban or al Qaeda. We have to strike back hard at those who would use biological or chemical or nuclear weapons. Eight years ago, terrorists tried to blow up the World Trade Center. Obviously, not enough was done by our intelligence agencies because we saw what happened on September 11th.

This time it's anthrax. We shouldn't make the same mistake twice. We need to take action now. We should strike hard at any site that our intelligence agencies shows is producing chemical, biological or nuclear material for terrorists or terrorist nations anywhere in the world. And we need to do it very, very quickly. We need to do it now before they perfect those weapons. Remember, 8 years ago, we had an attack on the World Trade Center and they didn't succeed. And 8 years later, they did succeed. So we've had that wake-up call and we have to act.

We must not wait, even if the current anthrax attack is not from a foreign entity. Our enemies abroad are watching and preparing. If we don't do anything, I think we'll regret it.

Obviously, we also have to step up the security here at home. Following the disaster of September 11th, we've gone to great lengths to make our airports and airplanes more secure. After the last 2 weeks, we have to do the same things with our Postal Service. We have to do what's necessary to protect the American people from biological and chemical threats. That's why we're holding this hearing today.

We're going to look at how the Postal Service has handled the situation so far and what still needs to be done. I want to thank our new Postmaster General, Jack Potter, who is going to be with us later on this afternoon. I know it's a very stressful time for the Postal Service. The task ahead is monumental. The Postmaster General is going to be here, I think, around 2 p.m. He'll be accompanied by David Fineman, the vice chairman of the Postal Service Board of Governors. I want to thank them in advance for being here.

I also want to thank our other witnesses, Mr. Jarboe, from the FBI, who came on very short notice. I really appreciate that. The FBI is working very hard to try to meet these new threats. Their cooperation with this committee has always been very good and appreciated.

Dr. Mitch Cohen from the CDC also came on very, very short notice. A new case of inhalation anthrax was reported in New York City last night, and I know that the CDC is doing everything they can to stay on top of the situation. So I want to thank you for coming on short notice.

I want to also thank as well our Chief Inspector, Mr. Weaver, from the Postal Service, for being here. I also want to thank our witnesses from the four postal unions who are going to testify later today.

I think it's fair to say that the situation hasn't been handled perfectly, but we're in uncharted territory. With the advantage of hindsight, it's easy for us to second guess. Given the little experience that we've had with anthrax in this country, it's not surprising that we've had some rough spots. I was told that the last time we had a case of anthrax was about 25 years ago. So we'll have some questions about decisions that were made and the way the situation was handled.

We lost two employees from the Brentwood facility. Did we wait too long to start testing there? What lessons have we learned? I think the most important thing we can do at this point is to work together so we're better prepared for the next attack, and we understand that there probably will be more attacks.

We have 800,000 people working in the Postal Service. Their safety comes first. We have millions of people and businesses across the country who rely on the Postal Service. They send and receive mail every day. We have to restore their confidence that the mail is safe.

We want to hear from the Postmaster General about what steps they're taking, what's being done so we can open the mail again without fear. What type of technology is the Postal Service investing in? How effective is it? How long will it be before it's up and running, and how much will this equipment cost?

The first figure we heard last week was $800 million, and before long it was up to almost $2.5 billion, including infrastructure changes. Where does this money come from? This is an area where the Congress and the Postal Service need to work together. If the Postal Service has to pass along all these costs to the ratepayers, the impact on their finances will be devastating. The Postal Service is already losing money, about $165 million last year. The combination of a sluggish economy and increased use of e-mail could make this year's losses even greater. And that's not even considering the cost that's been a result of these terrorist attacks.

The September 11th attacks cost the Postal Service over $60 million in damages alone. The economic slowdown that followed cost them another $300 million to $400 million in lost revenue. The costs related to this anthrax attack will be many times that. In its current financial condition, the Postal Service cannot absorb these costs.

The White House has already committed $175 million in emergency funds to help the Postal Service take the first steps. More is going to be required. I hope we can get a more exact idea on how much more today or in the very near future. I'm going to work with the White House, and so will the committee and the Postmaster General and my colleagues on this committee will work as well to make sure the Postal Service has the resources it needs to face this challenge.

I also want all my colleagues to know that we're not going to give up on postal reform. It's more clear now than ever that we need to have a financially strong Postal Service. They need to have greater flexibility or they can't compete in today's environment. I know that John McHugh agrees with me, and so does Danny Davis, who is not here yet, but they've been working very hard on the postal reform issue.

John McHugh can't be here with us because of a family problem, but he has a statement that we will insert into the record, without objection.

[The prepared statement of Hon. John M. McHugh follows:]

The McHugh Report

News From North Country Congressman John McHugh

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 30, 2001

Contact: Dana Johnson/Chris Mathey
202-225-4611

REP. McHUGH: REFORM IS A VITAL PART OF THE FUTURE VIABILITY & SECURITY OF OUR NATION'S POSTAL SYSTEM

WASHINGTON -- Rep. John M. McHugh (R-NY), a senior member of the House Government Reform Committee, released the following statement Tuesday in conjunction with the panel's hearing to examine the safety of postal employees and general oversight of the U.S. Postal Service. Rep. McHugh has led efforts to reform the Postal Service for the last seven years.

"Today's hearing comes at a critical juncture in our nation's history, a history that is closely intertwined with the U.S. Postal Service. For more than 226 years, our country has provided a postal and delivery service to bind Americans together through their business and personal correspondence. And I believe it is fair to say without overstatement that the U.S. Postal Service faces the biggest crisis of its long existence.

"Before discussing the crisis, however, I want to say a word about the dedicated men and women of the Postal Service. They have done an outstanding job of delivering mail during this time of national emergency. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, the Postal Service has delivered more than 20 billion pieces of mail. As they have for centuries, postal employees today are literally putting their lives on the line every day for us in America, and it is their commitment to the job that is ensuring our nation can continue to communicate through the mail.

"Even before September 11, the Postal Service was already entering a crisis, which the former Postal Service Subcommittee that I chaired from 1995 until January of this year had long predicted. Six months ago, before this very Committee, the Comptroller General of the United States testified that the Postal Service was in the midst of a serious operational and financial free-fall, which – absent legislative change – placed the Service's ability to meet its universal service obligations at "high risk." The challenges were clear:

- A looming deficit of $2 to $3 billion for the coming year;
- Barred from borrowing due to the fast approaching statutory debt limit;
- Another proposed rate hike of more than 10 percent, that is following quickly on the heels of an unprecedented two rate increases in less than a year; and
- A severe cash crunch as the Service runs out of cash and freezes capital spending.

"The double punch of the terrorist attacks on September 11 and the current horror of anthrax in the mails has caused a severe drop-off in mail volume and revenue. The problems that existed prior to September 11 will greatly worsen as the Postal Service incurs increases in security, labor, workers' compensation, and environmental costs – all in the face of unexpected decreases in already sluggish mail volume due to the economic slowdown, delays in mail delivery, and even outright refusal by some mailers to use the postal system.

(over)

"Understandably, there are calls to break down the basic "subsidy-free" operating framework of the 1970 Postal Reorganization Act to start subsidizing the Postal Service again with taxpayer monies. However, as those calls begin to take the form of concrete and substantiated requests, we in the Congress have a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayer to not blindly send money to a sinking ship without also shoring up that ship. We must preserve universal postal service.

"Because of my former Subcommittee's careful work to advance postal reform the past seven years, and our more recent efforts this past year in collaboration with my colleague Representative Danny Davis, we fortunately don't have to start from scratch. More than a month ago, we provided for public review a substantive new draft reform bill, the "Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act." I am attaching to my statement a paper outlining the highlights of the draft bill, and all are encouraged to visit my web site to examine the bill in more depth (www.house.gov/mchugh). While building upon the former bill, which was twice passed by the former Subcommittee in a bipartisan manner, the new draft represents a different approach, incorporating a proposal presented to us by a broad coalition of postal unions and businesses.

"I look forward to working with my colleagues in Congress and the White House to enact substantive postal reform. The Postal Service, its 850,000 dedicated employees, and the 281 million American citizens who depend on universal service at affordable rates are counting on us, now more than ever. As President Sombrotto of the National Association of Letter Carriers stated in the Washington Post on Sunday, October 28, '*If this whole institution collapses, that is as great a threat to the individuals who work in the Postal Service as contracting this anthrax. Their future is at stake here.*'"

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HIGHLIGHTS

Preserve Universal Service – Maintenance of a universal postal system must be the cornerstone of any postal reform measure and the bill preserves this mandate by giving the Postal Service the ability to remain relevant and effective. The statutory mission of the Postal Service is focused strictly on postal services. The Postal Service will be required to develop and recommend concrete standards for universal service, for the first time. In addition, the Postal Regulatory Commission will develop an annual estimate of the costs of universal service so that Congress can better understand how to provide the necessary protections in the future.

Promote Efficiency and Flexibility – The bill will give postal management and employees the tools to adapt and survive in the face of enormous challenges caused by changing technology and a dynamic communications marketplace. The bill encourages innovation and efficiency by permitting the Postal Service to distribute profits as bonuses to all employees. In the same way, losses could not be recovered by increasing rates beyond specified parameters. The bill also allows the Postal Service to better react to market conditions by streamlining the rate setting process, and permitting rates that are better tailored to the needs of the mailing consumer.

Ensure Fair Competition and Accountability – Under the legislation, the Postal Service will compete on a level playing field, under the same terms and conditions as faced by its private sector competitors. The Postal Service will be given flexibility to price competitive products as it sees fit, but competitive products and services would have to pay their own costs without subsidy from First-Class mail revenues. The bill clarifies the distinction between competitive and market-dominant products and ensures that the Postal Service will not regulate areas in which it competes. In addition, the bill will, for the first time, subject the Postal Service's competitive products to many of the same laws as private companies, such as

- Antitrust laws
- Fair-trade laws
- Equal customs procedures
- An assumed federal income tax payment

Establish a Basis for Future Reforms – The legislation mandates several studies, including a comprehensive assessment of the nation's postal laws. Other evaluations address:

- Employee-management relations
- Universal service
- Equal application of laws
- Plans for assisting displaced workers
- Quality of ratemaking data for Periodicals' costs
- An assessment of the revenue deficiency process

Mr. BURTON. I just have a couple more remarks. This is probably the great challenge America has faced in decades. I can't remember the last time so many Americans were afraid to go about their daily lives. I can't remember the last time so many people felt insecure. Yet we're rising to that challenge. And it wouldn't be possible without the hard work of thousands and thousands of people, the men and women of the armed forces flying combat missions over Afghanistan, conducting commando raids in hostile territory, and all the people at the Defense Department who are supporting them.

The Justice Department and the FBI have committed vast resources to investigating these crimes. They're working tirelessly to try to protect the public, and we appreciate that very much. At the CDC, they're working around the clock, and I really appreciate them being here today, because I know how difficult it is right now to contain this outbreak of anthrax. The men and women of the Postal Service who continue to keep the mail moving despite all the uncertainties they face, the local firefighters and policemen who risk their lives to try to save others.

I'd like to correct one thing I said, I said $165 million. It's $1.65 billion that the Postal Service was asking for.

On behalf of everyone on this committee, I want to thank everyone who is doing his or her part. With that, that concludes my opening statement.

Mr. Waxman, you're recognized.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Dan Burton follows:]

Opening Statement
Chairman Dan Burton
Committee on Government Reform
"Oversight of the U.S. Postal Service: Protecting Postal Employees and the Mail"
October 30, 2001

Over the last two months, we've been struck by terrorists not once, but twice. They've attacked us with weapons developed from things we use in our everyday lives -- commercial airplanes and the U.S. mail.

Prime Minister Netanyahu called the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, "a wake-up call from Hell." It feels like we hardly woke up at all before we were hit with Anthrax-infected letters. Now we have three people dead and at least a dozen more are infected. We have thousands of people up and down the East coast taking antibiotics. Every day, traces of Anthrax are found in more post offices, more mailrooms and more office buildings.

As a nation, we'll never be the same. The sense of security that we once felt has vanished. We now know that terrorists can strike at any time in any place. We have no other choice but to fight back.

As we speak, the men and women of our Armed Services are fighting to bring Osama bin Laden to Justice and destroy his terrorist network. The President has rallied the American people and the world community to this cause. His leadership has given the American people a lot of confidence.

But we can't stop with the Taliban and al Qaeda. We have to strike back hard at those who would use biological weapons. We can't afford to wait. Eight years ago, terrorists tried to blow up the World Trade Center. Obviously, not enough was done by our intelligence agencies, and we saw what happened on September 11.

This time it's Anthrax. We shouldn't make the same mistake twice. We need to take action now. We should strike hard at any site that our intelligence shows is producing chemical, biological or nuclear material for terrorists or terrorist nations -- anywhere in the world. We must not wait, even if the current Anthrax attack is not from a foreign entity. Our enemies abroad are watching and preparing. If we don't do anything, we'll regret it.

Obviously, we also have to step up security here at home. Following the disaster of September 11, we've gone to great lengths to make our airports and airplanes more secure. After the last two weeks, we have to do the same thing with the Postal Service. We have to do what's necessary to protect the American people from biological and chemical threats. That's why we're holding this hearing today.

We're going to look at how the Postal Service has handled this situation so far, and what still needs to be done. I want to thank our new Postmaster General, Jack Potter, for being with us today. I know it's a very stressful time for the Postal Service. The task ahead is monumental. The Postmaster will be here around 2:00. He'll be accompanied by David Fineman, the Vice Chairman of the Postal Board of Governors. I want to thank them for carving out some time to be here today to answer our questions.

I also want to thank our other witnesses. Mr. Jarboe from the FBI came here on very short notice. I really appreciate that. The FBI is working very hard to try to meet these new threats. Their cooperation with this Committee has always been appreciated. Dr. Mitch Cohen from the CDC also came in on very short notice. A new case of inhalation Anthrax was reported in New York City last night, and I know that the CDC is doing everything they can to stay on top of the situation. Dr. Cohen, thank you for coming. Thank you as well to Chief Inspector Weaver from the Postal Service.

I also want to thank our witnesses from the four Postal unions who will testify later today.

I think it's fair to say that this situation hasn't been handled perfectly. With the advantage of hindsight, it's easy for us to second guess. Given the little experience that we've had with Anthrax in this country, it's not surprising that we've had some rough spots. I was told that the last time we had a case of Anthrax poisoning in this country was 25 years ago.

So we'll have some questions about decisions that were made and the way this situation was handled. We lost two employees from the Brentwood facility. Did we wait too long to start testing there? What lessons have we learned? I think the most important thing we can do at this point is to work together so we're better prepared for the next attack.

We have 800,000 people working in the Postal Service. Their safety comes first. We have millions of people and businesses across the country who rely on the Postal Service. They send and receive mail every day. We have to restore their confidence that the mail is safe.

We want to hear from the Postmaster about what steps they're taking. What's being done so we can all open the mail again without fear? What type of technology is the Postal Service investing in? How effective is it? How long will it take before it's up and running?

We need to know how much this new equipment is going to cost. The first figure we heard last week was $800 million. Before long it was $2.5 billion. Where is this money going to come from?

This is an area where the Congress and the Postal Service need to work together. If the Postal Service has to pass along all these costs to the ratepayers, the impact on their finances will be devastating. The Postal Service is already losing money -- $1.65 billion last year. The combination of a sluggish economy and increased use of e-mail could make this year's losses even greater -- and that's not even considering the costs of these terrorist attacks.

The September 11 attacks cost the Postal Service over $60 million in damages. The economic slowdown that followed cost them another $300 to $400 million in lost revenue. The costs related to this Anthrax attack will be many times that. In its current financial condition, the Postal Service can't absorb those costs.

The White House has already committed $175 million in emergency funds to help the Postal Service take the first steps. More is going to be required. I hope we can get a more exact idea how much more today, or in the very near future. I'm going to work with the White House, and the Postmaster, and my colleagues on this Committee to make sure that the Postal Service has the resources it needs to face this challenge.

I also want all of my colleagues to know that I'm not giving up on Postal Reform. It's more clear now than ever that we need to have a financially strong Postal Service. They need to have greater flexibility or they can't compete in today's environment. I know that John McHugh agrees with me. He can't be here today, but he and I are going to keep working toward that goal. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join us.

I have just a few closing remarks. This is probably the greatest challenge America has faced in decades. I can't remember the last time that so many Americans were afraid to go about their daily lives. I can't remember the last time so many people felt so insecure.

Yet, we're rising to that challenge. And it wouldn't be possible without the hard work of thousands and thousands of people:

- The men and women of the armed forces -- flying combat missions over Afghanistan -- conducting commando raids in hostile territory -- and all the people at the Defense Department who support them.
- The Justice Department and the FBI have committed vast resources to investigating these crimes. They are working tirelessly to try to protect the public, and we appreciate that very much.
- At the CDC, they're working round the clock to try to contain this outbreak of Anthrax.
- The men and women of the Postal Service continue to keep the mail moving despite all of the uncertainties they face.
- The local firefighters and policemen who risked their lives to try to save others.

On behalf of everyone on this Committee, I want to thank everyone who is doing his or her part to respond to these attacks and make us all safe again.

That concludes my opening statement. I now yield to Mr. Waxman for his statement.

Mr. WAXMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding this important hearing.

There are two questions we need to focus on today: Is it safe for families, businesses and Government agencies to open their mail? And is it safe for postal workers to handle the mail?

Ensuring the safety of the mail is a paramount Federal responsibility. The public depends on the U.S. mail. We use the mail to stay in contact with family and friends, to pay our bills and to transfer goods. When the mail is not safe, our national economy cannot function properly.

Since the attack on our country on September 11th, the Postal Service has delivered 20 billion pieces of mail. Since that time, only a handful of mail has been found to be contaminated with anthrax. The odds of any family receiving a contaminated letter during this period are vanishingly small.

But it is also clear that the mails are being used by terrorists to kill and injure innocent Americans. Since the September 11th attacks, anthrax contaminated mail has killed three people, caused inhalation or cutaneous infections in at least one other. Most of those killed or injured have been postal workers who were unknowingly infected while serving the public. I especially want to express my sympathies to the families of Thomas Morris, Jr., and Joseph Curseen, Jr., the two postal workers who died earlier this month from inhalation anthrax.

We must do everything in our power to stop these terrorists and ensure the safety of the mail. On September 11th, terrorist attacks were launched on New York and Washington using airlines; 3 days later, Congress provided $40 billion to help New York and Washington respond. And 1 week after that, Congress provided another $15 billion to help the airlines cope.

The mails are now under attack. We must respond just as quickly and just as forcefully to protect the mail.

The Postal Service has said that the technology needed to respond to the anthrax attacks will cost $2.5 billion. I fully support helping the Postal Service pay for its response to the anthrax threat. In fact, I believe the Postal Service may need even more money to adequately protect the mail.

But I also have questions about how this money will be spent. We need to act fast. But we also need to do it right.

The Postal Service should have done emergency planning before the recent attacks that would provide a blueprint for how to respond. But the Postal Service didn't do this. In fact, the only emergency planning by the Postal Service before September 11th involved how the Postal Service would respond if attacks were launched against other targets. For example, if airlines were attacked and couldn't be used, the Postal Service looked at alternatives for delivering the mail. The Postal Service had no plan for responding if the Postal Service itself were attacked.

As a result, the Postal Service is now trying to do emergency planning at the worst possible time, in the midst of an emergency. Along the way, serious mistakes are being made, such as the tragedy at the Brentwood facility. We cannot afford additional mistakes. Improvements will cost money, but throwing money into the system doesn't necessarily bring about more safety.

I will ask hard questions today about whether there is a magic technological fix to this problem. I will ask questions about whether the right process was in place for making sound judgments. Ultimately, what we may need is a common sense strategy that uses both low tech safety precautions and new technologies.

It's natural for families to have concerns about postal safety. But there is a problem we can address, and it's a problem that we must fix. Today's hearing will be an important part of that process.

I look forward to the testimony of the witnesses today and the opportunity to ask questions so that we can evaluate what they have to tell us and figure out the best response, given the difficulties we're facing, the fast timeframe in which we have to act, and the amount of money that will be involved.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Henry A. Waxman follows:]

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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Committee on Government Reform
Hearing on
"Oversight of the U.S. Postal Service: The Safety of Postal Employees and the Mail"
October 30, 2001

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing.

There are two questions we need to focus on today:

1. Is it safe for families, businesses, and government agencies to open their mail?
2. Is it safe for postal workers to handle the mail?

Ensuring the safety of the mail is a paramount federal responsibility. The public depends on the U.S. mail. We use the mails to stay in contact with family and friends, to pay our bills, and to transport goods. When the mail is not safe, our national economy cannot function properly.

Since the attack on our country on September 11, the Postal Service has delivered 20 billion pieces of mail. And since that time, only a handful of mail has been found to be contaminated with anthrax. The odds of any family receiving a contaminated letter during this period are vanishingly small.

But it is also clear that the mails are being used by terrorists to kill and injure innocent Americans. Since the September 11 attacks, anthrax-contaminated mail has killed three people and caused inhalation or cutaneous infections in at least 15 others. Most of those killed or injured have been postal workers who were unknowingly infected while serving the public.

I especially want to express my sympathies to the families of the Thomas Morris, Jr. and Joseph Curseen, Jr., the two postal workers who died earlier this month from inhalation anthrax.

We must do everything in our power to stop these terrorists and ensure the safety of the mail.

On September 11, terrorist attacks were launched on New York and Washington using airlines. Three days later, Congress provided $40 billion to help New York and Washington respond. And just one week after that, Congress provided another $15 billion to help the airlines cope.

The mails are now under attack. We must respond just as quickly and just as forcefully to protect the mails.

The Postal Service has said that the technology needed to respond to the anthrax attacks will cost $2.5 billion. I fully support helping the postal service pay for its response to the anthrax threat. In fact, I believe the Postal Service may need even more money to adequately protect the mail.

But I also have questions about how this money will be spent. We need to act fast. But we also need to do it right.

The Postal Service should have done emergency planning before the recent attacks that would provide a blueprint for how to respond. But the Postal Service didn't do this. In fact, the only emergency planning by the Postal Service before September 11 involved how the Postal Service would respond if attacks were launched against other targets. The Postal Service had no plan for responding if the Postal Service itself were attacked.

As a result, the Postal Service is now trying to do emergency planning at the worst possible time -- in the midst of an emergency. Along the way, serious mistakes are being made, such as the tragedy at the Brentwood facility.

We cannot afford additional mistakes. Improvements will cost money, but throwing money into the system doesn't necessarily bring more safety. I will ask hard questions today about whether there is a magic "technological fix" to this problem. I will also ask questions about whether the right process is in place for making sound judgments. Ultimately, what we may need is a common-sense strategy that uses both low-tech safety precautions and new technologies.

It's natural for families to have concerns about postal safety, but this is a problem we can address and it's a problem that we must fix. Today's hearing will be an important part of that process.

Mr. BURTON. Dr. Weldon.

Dr. WELDON. I too want to commend you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this hearing. I practiced general internal medicine and infectious disease for 7 years prior to being elected. I also was in the Army Medical Corps and received some training on chem-bio.

Also, interestingly, my father, who is now deceased, was a retired postal worker. Certainly, my condolences go out to the family members of those who have been stricken and all postal workers. I certainly support efforts to get our postal system fully up and running and do everything that we can to reassure the American public that the postal system is safe. I commend you for the timeliness of this hearing and I yield back.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Dr. Weldon.

Mr. Lantos.

Mr. LANTOS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to commend you and the ranking member for holding this hearing.

First, Mr. Chairman, let me express on behalf of all the American people the sorrow and anguish we all feel for the postal employees who lost their lives. The postman or the postwoman on the beat are beloved fixtures on the American landscape. And to see this group of remarkably committed and decent and hard working men and women under this threat pains every single American citizen.

Mr. Chairman, I am as confident that we will win the war domestically as I am confident that we will win the war in Afghanistan. But while we can express our confidence in our long term victory, it is important to put the minds of our loyal postal workers at ease. Their prime concern at the moment, obviously, is a health concern. And with the best health advice in the world, we will deal with that issue.

I would like to spend a moment on their financial concerns. Long before September 11th, the Postal Service was in very serious financial difficulties. As a matter of fact, in the 30 years since 1970, the cumulative deficit of the Postal Service was about $5 billion. I predict that the deficit of the Postal Service in the next 2 or 3 years will exceed $5 billion. I for one want to put at ease the minds of all the postal workers that this Congress will stand beside them in meeting the financial challenge that the Postal Service will have to face.

Since the first letter containing anthrax was mailed on September 18th, 25 billion pieces of mail were safely delivered by the men and women of the Postal Service. And the very least these people are entitled to expect from their Congress is that we will see to it not only that their health is fully protected, but their financial future is fully protected for all postal employees currently working.

Now, in the long run, there may be a systemic impact of this change. And that systemic impact may drastically reduce the use of the Postal Service. But I think it would be eminently unfair to impose a burden on men and women who have been devoting years of their lives to this important endeavor.

My commitment, Mr. Chairman, is to see to it that we as a Government stand behind the men and women of the Postal Service in these difficult days. I yield back.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Lantos. Mr. Shays.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for having this hearing, and thank you, Mr. Waxman, for being so supportive of this hearing.

I believe this is a hearing in honor of Thomas Morris and Joseph Curseen and all their fellow employees. That's what this hearing is about, to make sure that they are protected in the future and to never forget the two who have lost their lives.

I'm going to submit my written statement. I just want to say these brief words. We are at war, we are at war, we are at war. We are in a race with terrorist organizations to shut them down before they have a better delivery system for chemical and biological agents, before they get nuclear waste material they can put in a bomb and explode with all the toxicity that presents, and before, heaven forbid, they get a nuclear weapon with which they can blackmail us or detonate.

That's what this is about, and Thomas Morris and Joseph Curseen are victims, casualties of this war. We're going to learn how to fight it better and better as we go along, and we're going to succeed. But the bottom line is, we have a tough task ahead of us. I know there are going to be lot of should haves. There isn't anyone in this room who can't look at themselves in the mirror and say, we should have or I should have. And that includes all of us. But obviously, we in Government have a responsibility to take action, and we're going to.

But I'm going to try real hard not to be part of the should haves, because I know that list is endless and I know I'm part of that list. I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Christopher Shays follows:]

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Statement of Rep. Christopher Shays
October 30, 2001
"Ensuring the Safety of Postal Employees and the Mail"

Like the airlines, railroads, highways, telephone lines and the Internet, the postal delivery system is a critical element of the national economic and social infrastructure. Those who rely on it, and those who work in it, must be sure the mail is as safe as possible.

This is not the first time the mail has been used as the delivery system for terror. Sadly, it probably won't be the last. Just as the Unabomber case prompted new safeguards and procedures to protect postal workers and the public from explosives in the mail, the system must now be reconfigured and strengthened against new threats.

But bombs are more easily detected than bacteria. Protecting a vast public enterprise against a potent microscopic intruder presents unprecedented challenges. Scanning and decontamination technologies offer the prospect of a more secure mail stream. But for that final measure of comfort the machines will never provide, we will always rely on the patience, vigilance and dedication of a postal workforce that wants the mail to go through. To do their jobs, they need a safe workplace, one that is proactively and prospectively monitored for likely contaminants.

I look forward to hearing our witnesses' testimony today and to a frank discussion of what more can be done to protect postal workers and the public from mail order terror.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Shays. Mrs. Maloney, do you have an opening statement? I would urge everyone, because we're going to lose part of our panel, I think, at 1:30.

Mrs. MALONEY. Just very briefly, thank you, Mr. Chairman and ranking member.

Three people, including two postal workers have died, and others have been infected. We need to review and do everything possible to protect their health in the future.

This is an issue of tremendous importance to me. Anthrax spores were found in four sorting machines at New York City's largest mail distribution center. The executive board of the city's largest postal workers union voted yesterday to file a lawsuit to have the facility closed for a thorough cleaning.

Health officials, however, have told the workers that there is no danger for employees and that they should continue working in the building. I must say that many postal workers have been calling my district office and calling me saying, why will you not close the post office when you closed the congressional buildings when spores were found? And I think that's a legitimate question.

On Wednesday night, the Postal Service began giving a 10 day supply of the antibiotic Cipro to 7,000 New York City postal employees as a precautionary measure. The Cipro is being made available to employees at Morgan Sorting Center, the James A. Farley Mail Building, Estonia Mail Station, Radio City Station, Rockefeller Center Station and the Times Square Station. So we are responding to their health.

I must mention that even before the September 11th tragedy and the anthrax scares, the Postal Service was projected to lose $1.6 billion in 2001. Now it's going to be much worse. Since September 11th, five magazines have gone out of business, many of them housed in the District that I represent. Mademoiselle, that I grew up with, is now out of business. One of the challenges that we face is to make sure that we continue to have a competitive and universal mail service.

You can't really blame anyone for being concerned about the mail these days. But we have to keep things in perspective. 680 million pieces of mail move each and every day. And the risk to the general public is infinitesimal. And anthrax mailings have apparently been confined to a small number of organizations and elected officials. Though I must mention very disturbing news that a 61 year old woman who worked in my district at Manhattan Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital, had no contact, or didn't work with the mail, is deathly ill and has been exposed and infected.

The mailing industry is tremendously important to our economy. It's actually 8 percent of our GNP, a $900 billion industry. And really, it's tremendously important to our country. I certainly support the efforts by the Postal Service to purchase the sanitation machines. The price tag alone for this is going to be in the neighborhood of $2 billion to $3 billion, I'm told. What many people have not focused on is that the mail volume has dropped since September 11th, which means that the USPS is losing more money every single day. I have seen some estimates that put this reduction at 10 percent.

I applaud the administration for coming forward with a $175 million influx of funding to assist and support the U.S. mail service, and I applaud the efforts of my colleagues, Danny Davis and Congressman McHugh. Danny Davis has come forward with a stirring resolution honoring the postal workers, their loss of life, their bravery. They are soldiers every day going to work and getting the mail out to people. And I applaud the work of the task force that McHugh and Davis have put forward to look at postal reform. This may be the time that we should move forward, not only the influx of the dollars for the new machines, the new protections, but the reform that has so long been debated.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Carolyn B. Maloney follows:]

14th District • New York

Congresswoman

Carolyn Maloney

Reports

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Prepared Statement of Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney of New York

before the Government Reform and Oversight Committee

"Oversight of the U.S. Postal Service:
The Safety of Postal Employees and the U.S. Mail"
October 30, 2001

Thank you Chairman Burton and Ranking Member Waxman for holding this important hearing.

Over the last several weeks, we have had to ask questions that just a few months ago would have seemed unimaginable. Today, again, we are faced with a hard reality: one of the country's most valued national services is being used to propagate terror.

Our postal system is under siege. Two postal workers in Washington D.C. have been killed simply because they did their jobs. Several others are infected. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of all those who have been affected. To prevent further illness and loss of life, we need to take every precaution to protect the safety of postal workers.

Legitimate questions are being asked about how this crisis is being handled. In some areas, anthrax detection has led to the immediate closure of buildings. Today at least four government buildings and several mail facilities are closed in the Washington D.C. area. But the Morgan Processing and Distribution Center in Midtown Manhattan, where anthrax spores have been discovered on four machines, remains open. Postal workers are suing, claiming there's a double standard, and that lives are being put at risk. I have had constituents call me to question why the House Office Buildings were closed but the Morgan Station was not.

I look forward to the testimony today. I hope this issue and their concerns will be adequately addressed. Decisions have been made in recent weeks that haven't always considered what effect they would have on the people who handle the mail. Safety must be our foremost priority going forward.

(Over)

We are all aware that the Postal Service needs significant help in order to deal with various security issues, including the purchase and operation of the mail sanitation machines. The price tag for this alone is in the neighborhood of $2 to 3 billion.

The Postal Service faces other serious issues. It was projected to lose $1.6 billion in 2001, even before the September 11 tragedy and the anthrax scares. Mail volume has dropped significantly since September 11th – which means the USPS is losing money every single day. I have seen some estimates that put the reduction at ten percent -- and I understand that the Postal Service has little confidence that this will rebound. There is full justification, therefore, for help in the form of funding to cover this lost revenue as well.

The last thing we want to do during this economic downturn is put these costs on the backs of postal customers. High mailing costs have contributed to the demise of several high-profile magazines this year, including *Mademoiselle, Mode, Brill's Content* and *Industry Standard*. We can't just keep passing along these costs to customers.

I am hopeful that today's hearing will unearth answers on how we can guarantee that the Postal Service continues to provide universal service while becoming a more effective and safe organization.

As we look to a challenging future, however, we can take heart in the fact that postal workers have performed heroically in this time of crisis. I wholeheartedly support a House resolution introduced by Mr. Davis and Mr. McHugh that honors their efforts. I hope we can work swiftly on their postal reform bill as well. Thank you.

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Mr. BURTON. Mr. Schrock, I guess you don't have an opening statement? Thank you, Mr. Schrock.

Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS OF VIRGINIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd just like to say thank you for holding this very important hearing at a time when our postal workers have been put at high risk and the possibility still remains that there will be even more risk. I look forward to hearing the comments from the distinguished panel. Thank you.

Mr. BURTON. Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you especially for your rapid response in holding this hearing.

I don't need to tell you that we in the District feel very much at ground zero. We're still grieving the loss of two postal workers who served us valiantly, had a particularly good record in the Postal Service. Soldiers go to battle prepared to die. People don't go to the post office prepared for their families to hear that they, too, have died.

I believe, because I've worked closely with the Post Office and the CDC, that our Federal officials are working very hard every day, very long hours, trying to come to grips with this matter. I agree with my good friend, Mr. Shays, who says the finger pointing won't do us any good now. I am a problem solver, not a finger pointer.

I do think it is important to assure the country that the District of Columbia experience will not be repeated elsewhere and that we will get control of the experience in this city very soon, not only because Congress is here or the President is here, but because 600,000 people live here. I don't believe that the people who live here or even our postal workers have been guinea pigs, as some have said out of bitterness, and bitterness is perhaps understandable. I do believe that we were the first to test the system and that the test showed multiple defects, including the worst defect of all, the death of two postal workers.

Unfortunately for the post office, the shutdown of the House has created a gold standard. I was just on MSNBC, and I was asked this question. After detailing these deaths, I was asked, "why then should we not close down the mail system of the United States or at least of the East Coast until we get this problem under control?" I want you to know I said, I don't think you should do that. I said that without a lot of evidence and information, except the information I have. And I told them this, that I am not about to be terrorized to the point of getting that far in front of the evidence before us.

And I certainly hope we are not anywhere near there. But I do say to you that we need an alternative to doomsday scenarios like closing down the House. It's going to be very hard for me to say to the people now in two of our post offices in the District of Columbia, Southwest and Friendship, that they shouldn't evacuate the place immediately and close it down. We evacuated this place before a single granule was found, and now we've only found trace amounts. There have got to be alternatives to this kind of panic scenario, panic that everyone understands in the absence of information, but surely not the best way to go about ensuring the coun-

try that we've got to get back to normal, as the President, I think justifiably, says.

If we can terrorize a nation on the cheap this way, but putting an envelope or two in the mail, then all our administration is doing to close off the money supply becomes quite irrelevant. It doesn't take a lot of money to do what you have to do to terrorize a nation. We've got to quickly find a way to meet the major challenge of lumbering bureaucracies that are being called upon to somehow be a finely honed machine that can take on a crisis and solve it quickly. I suggest that small, task-oriented groups, with all the major actors working at the same time, at the same table, may be necessary if you have an unprecedented crisis.

For example, postal facilities were not the logical place to start, given the science that you knew. But the science that we knew didn't turn out to be definitive because you had so little science, so little experience with anthrax, and it was so old. I think we need new hypotheses in order to reach beyond the science. I'm very concerned that the two neighborhood facilities were there has been some anthrax will send yet another perhaps false message to the public, hey, it's coming downstream, it's finally going to get in your mail.

We've got to stop. We've got to have enough information to make people cautious without panicking them to the point of believing that now one of the great institutions of the United States, without which we cannot do, ought to be shut down until we can somehow "solve this problem." As you get closer to the general public, that is going to be your challenge. I'm sure you can meet it.

I'll be very pleased to hear what you have to say today.

Mr. BURTON. I thank the gentlelady.

Mr. Kucinich.

Mr. KUCINICH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Because we all want to see our mail service continue, and because we must provide for the health of postal workers, and for the security of our mail, those entities handling anthrax incidents need to abide by at least three principles. First, affected individuals must be given detailed information and receive consistent updates as to the potential contamination, levels of confirmed contamination, the health risks posed, steps that can be taken to prevent infection, symptoms to watch out for, and treatment options.

Unfortunately, this has not occurred. Numerous postal employees have complained to me about the lack of information from postal and health authorities. Initially, for instance, the CDC did not believe postal workers and mail handlers were at risk of anthrax infection from handling sealed mail. Well, the first deaths of postal workers from inhalation anthrax forced CDC to revise its assumptions. The conflicting information undermined the trust of postal workers in their leadership and in the health authorities.

Moreover, though CDC has revised its recommendations and many postal workers are now receiving prophylactic treatment, those still on the job still have not received adequate instruction on precautionary measures and symptoms to look out for. Many postal employees have received gloves, but it appears few have been told how to use them and how to dispose of them properly so that potential contaminants are not spread.

In the wake of these recent anthrax incidents, the Postal Service is experiencing as much as a 40 percent absenteeism rate in cities such as New York. This, I believe, is a direct consequence of postal employees feeling under-informed about the threat, health risk, safety precautions and treatment. This must change.

The second principle. CDC, the post office, mail operations and Government entities and other potential targets and local health authorities must better coordinate their efforts and respond aggressively to potential contamination and infection. Press reports suggest that health authorities have been unable to comprehensively track the condition of all employees who work in contaminated areas. This renders likely the possibility that an exposed individual might contract anthrax infection and become seriously ill before the CDC and other health authorities are even aware of the case. It also appears that not all local health authorities and individual entities with mail operations are able to immediately recognize contamination or infection.

The mail room employee at the Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital at New York recently hospitalized for inhalation anthrax went 4 days after exhibiting initial symptoms before she was admitted. Now she's on a ventilator.

Third, the FBI's criminal investigation of these attacks, while very important, must not trump the public health response to these attacks. Though authorities have been reluctant to do so, the level of contamination at affected sites, the nature of the contamination and the way in which testing is being conducted to determine contamination must be made known to all interested parties.

Moreover, the FBI must expedite the sharing of information on anthrax exposure and infection by Federal and local health authorities. This would seem self evident. However, we must make sure that the interim guidelines for reporting of anthrax by the CDC, which requires the FBI receive notice first, are not interpreted to mean that information in a criminal investigation takes priority over emergent public health concerns.

In the weeks since the September 11th attacks, many officials here in Washington have invoked the following principle, that a Government's No. 1 responsibility is the protection of its citizens. Let us proceed with this hearing in that spirit. I thank you.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Kucinich. Mr. Cummings.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I will be brief.

Mr. Chairman, just a few days ago my colleague, Ben Cardin, and I went to the main post office in downtown Baltimore and had an opportunity to visit the post office. After seeing the many people there hard at work with their masks on, many of them with gloves, and having a chance to talk to them, it's interesting, Mr. Chairman, that not one of them said we should slow down.

What they did say, Mr. Chairman, was that, Congressman, we want you to look out for us. We want you all to make sure that we are protected. We want you to do every single thing in your power to make sure that there is not another death. And Mr. Chairman, that's why this hearing is so timely. Twenty men, when we got to the end of the tour, after about an hour, who were sitting in a lunch room, and I'll never forget the questions that they asked.

One of them said he had been at Brentwood, and should he not be getting tested, should he be getting Cipro. Another one asked, well, will it make a difference whether we wear gloves. It seems like these particles are so minute that it won't make too much difference, so does the mask make a difference.

And Ben Cardin and I stood there as the union people and the administrators tried to answer their questions. On my way here today, one of them said to me, I ran into him on the street, he said, I heard they're having a hearing on us today. And he said, don't forget what we said. Look out for us, don't forget us. We're the ones that make sure the mail goes through.

So Mr. Chairman, a lot of people don't realize it, but you, to your credit, were addressing the issue of anthrax long ago, far earlier than September 11th, because I remember sitting in the hearings. And so we've got a major situation here. But I too agree with Congressman Shays. We've got to be careful that we make sure that the mail goes through, but we've got to also do everything in our power to protect these men and women who are very, very brave and do a job that many Americans probably wouldn't even want to be bothered with.

But that American spirit, Mr. Chairman, that bold spirit that Ben Cardin and I saw, just cries out for us to do everything in our power to protect them. If we don't do it, then they ask the question, who will.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Cummings. Mr. Davis.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you and the ranking member, Mr. Waxman, for convening this hearing to discuss the safety of postal employees and the mail.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, life as we once knew it has never been and never will be the same. The attacks of September 11th have caused a ripple effect that has reverberated throughout our economy and throughout our entire society. Earlier this month reports surfaced of anthrax-tainted mail. The anthrax-tainted mail seems to have been targeted to Government officials, media and other innocent civilians.

Since the founding of our postal system, there is no report of biological agents being used as a weapon of war in the mail. Our mail system is vital to the Nation, accounting for approximately 8 percent of the gross national product. The overall goal of the Postal Service is to bind the Nation together through a communication system that is the best in the world.

The perpetrators of anthrax-tainted mail seek to disrupt our communications network and threaten the viability of not only our mail service but of our Nation. There are those who criticize the Postal Service for responding too slowly to the anthrax threat. To those I say, I understand the criticism, but I also suggest that it is much easier to criticize than to find solutions, to find solutions to fear and terror that is spreading throughout the country.

The threat of anthrax-tainted mail is new for all of us. Now is the time to pull together to successfully combat it. I, along with Representative John McHugh, will introduce a resolution later today honoring the 800,000 plus men and women in the U.S. Postal Service who have done an outstanding job of delivering the mail

throughout this national emergency. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, the men and women of the U.S. Postal Service have processed and delivered more than 20 billion pieces of mail. In addition to honoring postal workers, we pledge to help make sure that the Service, with the resources that they are available to ensure the safety of their employees and the general public.

I also, Mr. Chairman, want to extend my condolences and prayers to the families of the postal workers and all the rest of the people in our country who have actually died as a result of this assault. It is important that we hold this hearing today, as more than 13,000 USPS employees are being treated for anthrax prophylactically. And of course, three U.S. postal employees remain hospitalized, suffering from inhalation anthrax.

Today, Mr. Chairman, I believe that we send a message to the terrorists that we will not be frightened into fear, we will not be delayed and we will not be denied. We will make every effort to make absolutely certain that every employee of the Postal Service has the safest, most desirable work related and work experiences that we can possibly have.

And yes, Mr. Chairman, there were problems relative to the funding and financing and the business of the postal operation and services before the anthrax scare. But I believe that this also provides us with an opportunity to look comprehensively at what is needed, and at the same time that we find a solution to the problem of bioterrorism, that we also find a way to bind up the postal system period, so that we can continue to provide service, be the great Nation and continue to communicate as the postal system has allowed us to do.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BURTON. Mrs. Mink, do you have an opening statement?

Mrs. MINK. Mr. Chairman, I too want to join my colleagues in expressing great appreciation for the convening of this hearing. I hope that it's a mere beginning of a series of hearings that you will hold, so that we can find out exactly what happened in these last 2 weeks.

I'm very much distressed to read reports of dissatisfaction among the postal workers that their needs and concerns about their health are not being attended to. I'm concerned with the reliance of the postal authorities on the CDC's recommendations that the facility at Brentwood did not need to be closed. We already knew 2 days before that a cutaneous anthrax infection did occur in a postal worker that merely handled mail in New Jersey.

I'm also distressed that it's taken us 2 weeks to really get into understanding the nature of this threat and who did it, and all the rest of it. So I think that, Mr. Chairman, this should be a mere beginning of our inquiry, because I think we are expressing concerns that are felt throughout this Nation.

Frankly, I think that the burdens of inquiry and protection and safety for the workers ought not to be the expense of the postal system. The Congress ought to be willing to fund whatever is necessary. If the facilities are closed and there are expenses with relation to that, the Congress ought to fund it, just as we were ready to fund the other atrocious events that have overtaken our country.

So Mr. Chairman, I thank you for these hearings. Thank you very much.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mrs. Mink.

Before we get to our panel, let me just ask that we have a moment of silence for Thomas Morris and Joseph Curseen and the other people who have been infected with this terrible thing, and for our Nation. Can we have a moment of silence.

[Pause.]

Mr. BURTON. Thank you.

We will now welcome our first panel, Chief Inspector Kenneth C. Weaver, Dr. Mitch Cohen and James Jarboe. Would you please rise and raise your right hands.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. BURTON. Be seated.

Do any of you have an opening statement you'd like to make, or do you want to go right to questions?

Mr. WEAVER. I do, Mr. Chairman, if you'll permit.

Mr. BURTON. Mr. Weaver.

STATEMENTS OF KENNETH C. WEAVER, CHIEF POSTAL INSPECTOR, U.S. POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE; MITCH COHEN, DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF BACTERIAL AND MYCOTIC DISEASE, NATIONAL CENTER FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, ACCOMPANIED BY REMA KABAZZ; AND JAMES F. JARBOE, SECTION CHIEF, COUNTERTERRORISM DIVISION, DOMESTIC TERRORISM/COUNTERTERRORISM PLANNING SECTION, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Mr. WEAVER. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. I appreciate very much the opportunity to update you today on the activities of the Inspection Service as they relate to the terrorist attacks of September 11th and the anthrax mailings. I'm pleased to participate on a panel with our law enforcement partners in this war on terrorism, the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented attack on our Nation's mail system. Never in our history has the mail been used to deliver biological terror as we have experienced this month. Postal employees have been placed directly in harm's way during this attack, and sadly, we have lost two of our own in this new war. The entire postal community mourns these two fine, dedicated employees who died in the line of duty.

Since September 11th, the Postal Inspection Service, the law enforcement and security arm of the Postal Service, has been on high alert, as all law enforcement agencies across our country have been. Our mission of protecting the U.S. Postal Service, its employees and customers from criminal attack, and protecting the Nation's mail system from criminal mis-use, has never been more challenging since September 11th.

I have directed all 1,900 postal inspectors and 1,400 uniformed police officers that their highest priority is the investigative and security work in support of the terrorist and anthrax investigations. Unless these personnel are involved in the investigation of crimes of violence, such as assaults of postal employees, robberies of post

offices or mail bombs, they are now on the front lines in this war on terrorism.

As you may know, the FBI has been designated by the Department of Justice as the lead agency on all terrorist investigations. In matters involving the Postal Service and the U.S. mail, and where our investigative or forensic expertise can be beneficial to the overall investigation, the Postal Inspection Service commits resources to terrorist investigations.

Postal inspectors are members of the Joint Terrorism Task Forces and the Attorney General's anti-terrorism task forces in all parts of the country and are integral contributors to the September 11th terrorist investigation. Inspectors are assigned to the FBI's strategic information operation center and FBI agents are assigned to Inspection Service headquarters, where they partner with postal inspectors to coordinate our national efforts.

The Deputy Director of the FBI and my deputy chief for investigations are in regular contact to ensure our respective organizations are working together. Postal inspectors are assigned to FEMA, and we are also coordinating our efforts with the new Office of Homeland Security. We have assigned some of our forensic experts to assist in the examination of the anthrax letters and other evidence.

On October 18th, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, in partnership with the FBI, offered a reward of $1 million for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those who are responsible for the anthrax mailings. In addition, a unique partnership has been established with America's Most Wanted to handle the phone calls. To date, we have received over 165 investigative leads from these calls and are following up on them.

The safety of postal employees remains the top priority of our service. We are working with postal management to provide security updates and educating employees about the critical need to make security everyone's business.

Security of the mail also continues to be a top priority. Inspection Service personnel are posted at selected postal mail processing facilities to screen mail. The Postal Service has established a mail security task force comprised of representatives of the labor unions, management associations, postal operations and the mailing industry. The Postmaster General has put me in charge of this effort.

The safety of the American public is also paramount to our mission. We have produced an informational video on mailroom security, a poster on suspicious packages and letters, and a post card that was delivered to every address in the Nation, advising them of precautions to take in handling the mail.

Regular messaging continues via our Web sites, and inspectors are making presentations to businesses, community groups and law enforcement organizations on safe mail handling procedures. We are coordinating our efforts with State and local governments. For example, we've discussed mail handling procedures with the adjutant generals of all 50 States' National Guards. And we have reached out with the same message to over 500 congressional district offices via telecons.

Our joint investigative and security efforts are resource intensive. But we'll continue until the mails are safe and the criminals

who are committing these crimes are behind bars. The strict devotion of resources is strained by the need to respond and investigate anthrax hoaxes, threats and suspicious letters and packages. Over 7,000 incidents have been reported to the Inspection Service in the past few weeks, an average of almost 600 per day. Almost 300 postal facilities have had periods of evacuation as a result of these threats and hoaxes.

But we have a message for those who use this time to contribute to the unrest and terror. If we find you, we are going to prosecute you and send you to jail. So far, we have arrested 18 people and have an additional 14 cases pending prosecution. The Inspection Service has a long and proud tradition of aggressively pursuing all types of postal criminals, from robbers to murderers, mail bombers to child pornographers, mail thieves to mail fraud con artists. The men and women of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service will stay on the case until the perpetrators are caught and brought to justice.

Mr. Chairman, you can be assured the Postal Inspection Service will continue this proud tradition and stay on this case to make sure the mails are safe and ensure America's confidence in the mail. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Weaver follows:]

Testimony

Of

Chief Postal Inspector Kenneth C. Weaver

Before the

House Government Reform Committee

October 30, 2001

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to update you on the investigative activities of the United States Postal Inspection Service as they relate to the terrorist acts of September 11 and the anthrax mailings. I am pleased to participate on a panel with our law enforcement partners in this war on terrorism – the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented attack on our nation's mail system. Never in our history has the mail been used to deliver biological terror as we have experienced this month. Postal employees have been placed directly in harm's way during this attack. And, sadly, we have lost two of our own in this new war. The entire postal community mourns these two fine, dedicated employees who died in the line of duty.

Since September 11 the Postal Inspection Service, the law enforcement and security arm of the U.S. Postal Service, has been on high alert as all law

enforcement agencies are across our nation. Our mission of protecting the United States Postal Service, its employees and customers from criminal attack and protecting the nation's mail system from criminal misuse, has never been more challenging since September 11. I have directed all 1900 Postal Inspectors and 1400 uniformed Postal Police Officers that their highest priority is the investigative and security work in support of the terrorist and anthrax investigations. Unless these personnel are involved in the investigation of crimes of violence, such as assaults of postal employees, robberies of post offices or mail bombs, they are now on the front lines in this war on terrorism.

As you may know, the FBI has been designated by the Department of Justice as the lead agency on all terrorist investigations. In matters involving the Postal Service or the U. S. Mail and where our investigative or forensic expertise can be beneficial to the overall investigation, the Postal Inspection Service commits resources to terrorist investigations. Postal Inspectors are members of the Joint Terrorism Task Forces and the Attorney General's Anti-Terrorism Task Forces in all parts of the country and are integral contributors to the September 11th terrorist investigation. Inspectors are assigned to the FBI's Strategic Information Operations Center and FBI agents are assigned to Inspection Service Headquarters where they partner with Postal Inspectors to coordinate our national efforts. The Deputy Director of the FBI and the Deputy Chief Inspector for Investigations are in regular contact to ensure our respective organizations are working together.

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Safety of the American public is also paramount to our mission. We have produced an informative video on mail room security, a poster on suspicious packages and letters, and a postcard that was delivered to every address in the nation, advising them of precautions to take in handling mail. Regular messaging continues via our websites. Inspectors are making presentations to businesses, community groups and law enforcement organizations on safe mail handling procedures. We are coordinating our efforts with state and local governments. For example, we have discussed mail handling procedures with the Adjutant Generals of all 50 states' National Guards. And we have reached out with this same message to over 500 congressional district offices via telecons.

Our joint investigative and security efforts are resource intensive, but will continue until the mails are safe and the criminals who are committing these crimes are behind bars. The strict devotion of resources is strained by the need to respond and investigate anthrax hoaxes, threats and suspicious letters and packages. Over 7,000 incidents have been reported to the Inspection Service in the past few weeks – an average of almost 600 incidents per day. Almost 300 postal facilities have had periods of evacuation as a result of these threats and hoaxes. But we have a message for those who use this time to contribute to the unrest and terror: if we find you, we are going to prosecute you and send you to jail. So far we have arrested 18 people and have an additional 14 cases pending prosecution.

The Postal Inspection Service has a long and proud tradition of aggressively pursuing all types of postal criminals. From robbers to murderers; mail bombers to child pornographers, mail thieves to mail fraud con artists; the men and women of the united States Postal Inspection Service will stay on the case until the perpetrators are caught and brought to justice. Mr. Chairman, you can be assured the Postal Inspection Service will continue this proud tradition and remain on this case to make sure the mails are safe and ensure America's confidence in the mail.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you.

Any other opening statements? Dr. Cohen.

Dr. COHEN. First, Chairman Burton and Mr. Waxman, I'd like to thank you for inviting me to participate in this hearing. I am the Director of the Division of Bacterial and Mycotic Diseases at the Centers for Disease Control. I'm accompanied today by Dr. Rema Kabazz, who is the team leader for the investigative team in the D.C. area.

I've provided a written statement for the record and just want to make a couple of brief comments. Since October 3rd, we've been investigating cases of anthrax in four areas: Florida, New York, New Jersey and in the District. To date there have been 15 confirmed cases of anthrax; 9 of these have been inhalational; 6 of them have been cutaneous. There have been three deaths.

The epidemiologic investigation has indicated that letters containing anthrax were the vehicle of transmission for these illnesses. The Centers for Disease Control has expended a great effort to be able to investigate these outbreaks. We are working very closely with many State and local health departments, various Federal agencies, Federal workers, to try to protect the public health and the health of all of our citizens.

I'd be very happy to answer any questions that you might have.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Cohen follows:]

Testimony
Before the Committee on Government Reform
United States House of Representatives

Bioterrorism: CDC's Public Health Response

Statement of
Mitchell L. Cohen, M.D.
Director
Division of Bacterial and Mycotic Diseases
National Center for Infectious Diseases
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Department of Health and Human Services

For Release on Delivery
Expected at 12:00 pm

on Tuesday, October 30, 2001

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. I am Dr. Mitchell L. Cohen, Director, Division of Bacterial and Mycotic Diseases, National Center for Infectious Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Thank you for the invitation to update you on CDC's public health response to the threat of bioterrorism. I will update you on CDC's response to recent anthrax exposures, and I will discuss the status of implementing the overall goals of our bioterrorism preparedness program.

As has been highlighted recently, increased vigilance and preparedness for unexplained illnesses and injuries are an essential part of the public health effort to protect the American people against bioterrorism. Prior to the September 11 attack on the United States, CDC was making substantial progress toward defining, developing, and implementing a nationwide public health response network to increase the capacity of public health officials at all levels–federal, state, and local–to prepare for and respond to deliberate attacks on the health of our citizens. The events of September 11 were a defining moment for all of us, and since then we have dramatically increased our levels of preparedness and are implementing plans to increase it even further.

Recent Anthrax Exposures

As you are aware, many facilities in communities around the country have received anthrax threat letters. Most were received as empty envelopes; some have contained powdery substances. However, in some cases, actual anthrax exposures have occurred. On Wednesday, October 3, the Florida Department of Health notified CDC of a positive anthrax laboratory test

result in a Florida resident who had recently visited North Carolina. Samples were sent overnight to CDC for confirmatory testing, and CDC dispatched two investigative teams–to Florida and North Carolina–on October 4. By Sunday, October 7, test results confirmed that a second person–a coworker of the first individual–had been exposed to anthrax and that traces of the bacteria had been found in their workplace. A decision was made to close the building, and additional CDC staff were sent to help the state and local public health department manage notification, health evaluations of other coworkers, and provision of prophylactic antibiotics after the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile was deployed.

As CDC was continuing to receive clinical specimens and environmental samples from Florida, we became aware of a possible case of cutaneous anthrax in New York City. This person, an NBC employee in Rockefeller Plaza, had opened envelopes containing powder on September 18 and 25 and subsequently developed a skin lesion. A biopsy of the lesion yielded evidence of anthrax. The diagnosis was confirmed by immunohistochemistry on a skin biopsy specimen in CDC's laboratory in the early morning of October 12. The New York City Department of Health and CDC immediately implemented appropriate public health actions, including restricting access to two floors of 30 Rockefeller Plaza and evaluating workers for the need for prophylactic therapy. CDC sent additional personnel to New York, joining the more than 30 epidemiologists and other CDC staff assisting with worker injury and enhanced syndrome surveillance following the September 11 terrorist attack. Laboratory studies on the powder from the September 25 letter were negative for the organism causing anthrax.

Subsequent investigation identified the letter that had arrived on September 18, which was found to be contaminated with *Bacillus anthracis*, the organism that causes anthrax.

On October 15, CDC was notified of a possible anthrax exposure on Capitol Hill. A letter, which has now been confirmed to have contained *B. anthracis*, was opened by a Senate staff member. This person took appropriate action, notifying emergency personnel, and public health measures were promptly implemented. Certain areas of the office building were closed, and employees were screened by history for exposure and started on antibiotic prophylaxis after a nasal swab was obtained to assess the extent of the exposure zone. CDC has sent over 70 epidemiologists, laboratorians, environmental health experts, industrial hygienists, and other public health professionals to Washington, DC, to assist local, state, and federal authorities in the investigation.

Environmental specimens have tested positive from the initial area of exposure as well as several other locations in Congressional office buildings. In addition, mail rooms in the U.S. Capitol complex have had positive environmental samples. Environmental specimens have also tested positive from mail facilities servicing the Departments of State and Justice, the CIA, the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Late Friday evening, October 19, enhanced regional surveillance activities–a collaborative effort between the Washington, DC, Department of Health (DCDOH), the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Virginia Department of Health–identified a patient with an acute respiratory illness who was an employee of the U.S. Postal Service's Washington, DC, Processing and Distribution Center (the Brentwood facility).

The patient's illness progressed, and on Sunday, October 21, the illness was confirmed as inhalational anthrax. Between October 20 and 22, three additional postal workers at the Brentwood facility were hospitalized for what was determined to be inhalation anthrax. On Thursday, October 25, a mail handler for diplomatic pouch mail at an off-site mail facility servicing the Department of State was hospitalized and subsequently confirmed as having inhalational anthrax. Two of these five workers have died.

On Saturday, October 20, CDC and DCDOH initiated an investigation of the Brentwood facility, based on the clinical presentation of illness in the index case. Although no specific exposure event was identified, the contaminated tightly sealed letter that was mailed to the Senator's office was processed at this facility on October 12 before entering the Capitol mail distribution system. The Brentwood facility was closed on October 21, and antibiotic prophylaxis was recommended to employees working there. In addition, business visitors to nonpublic operations areas of this facility also were offered antibiotics. Subsequently, antibiotic therapy has been recommended to all mail handlers in facilities receiving mail directly from the Brentwood facility pending results of ongoing epidemiologic and environmental investigation.

The first patient also worked at a second postal facility. On October 21, this facility also was closed. Antimicrobial prophylaxis also was recommended for workers at this facility pending further epidemiologic and environmental testing.

As of this morning–October 30–2 cases of inhalational anthrax have been identified in Florida, 5 cases of inhalational anthrax have been identified in Washington, DC, 1 case of inhalational anthrax and 6 cases of cutaneous anthrax have been identified in New York City,

and 2 cases of inhalational anthrax and 4 cases of cutaneous anthrax have been identified in New Jersey.

CDC is working with U.S. Postal Service employees and managers on strategies to protect workers in mail-handling and processing facilities from exposure to anthrax. These strategies include administrative controls to limit the number of workers potentially exposed, engineering and house-keeping controls to prevent exposure, and personal protective equipment for workers handling mail.

The best defense against such biologic threats continues to be accurate information regarding how to recognize a potential threat and knowledge of appropriate actions. In the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (*MMWR*) and in multiple health advisories distributed via the Health Alert Network, CDC has issued several updates on the investigations as well as interim guidelines for health departments with recommended procedures for handling such incidents. These guidelines include advice to the public and state and local health officials dealing with suspicious incidents, as well as guidance to clinical laboratory personnel in recognizing *Bacillus anthracis* in a clinical specimen. The guidelines also outline post-exposure prophylaxis and anthrax treatment recommendations. In persons exposed to *Bacillus anthracis*, disease can be prevented with antibiotic treatment. Early antibiotic treatment of all forms of anthrax is essential. The *Bacillus anthracis* strains in this outbreak are susceptible to doxycycline and fluoroquinolones. Ciprofloxacin or doxycycline is recommended as the antibiotic for initial use for prophylaxis. Copies of the October 26, 2001, *MMWR*, which addresses these issues, have been provided to the Committee.

This is the first bioterrorism-related anthrax attack in the United States, and the public health ramifications of this attack continue to evolve. In collaboration with state and local health and law enforcement officials, CDC and the FBI are continuing to conduct investigations related to anthrax exposures. During this heightened surveillance, cases of illness that may reasonably resemble symptoms of anthrax will be thoroughly reviewed. The public health and medical communities continue to be on a heightened level of disease monitoring to ensure that any potential exposure is recognized and that appropriate medical evaluations are given. This is an example of the disease monitoring system in action, and that system is working.

Public Health Leadership

The Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) anti-bioterrorism efforts are focused on improving the nation's public health surveillance network to quickly detect and identify the biological agent that has been released; strengthening the capacities for medical response, especially at the local level; expanding the stockpile of pharmaceuticals for use if needed; expanding research on disease agents that might be released, rapid methods for identifying biological agents, and improved treatments and vaccines; and preventing bioterrorism by regulation of the shipment of hazardous biological agents or toxins.

As the nation's disease prevention and control agency, it is CDC's responsibility on behalf of DHHS to provide national leadership in the public health and medical communities in a concerted effort to detect, diagnose, respond to, and prevent illnesses, including those that occur

as a result of a deliberate release of biological agents. This task is an integral part of CDC's overall mission to monitor and protect the health of the U.S. population.

In 1998, CDC issued *Preventing Emerging Infectious Diseases: A Strategy for the 21st Century*, which describes CDC's plan for combating today's emerging diseases and preventing those of tomorrow. It focuses on four goals, each of which has direct relevance to preparedness for bioterrorism: disease surveillance and outbreak response; applied research to identify risk factors for disease and to develop diagnostic tests, drugs, vaccines, and surveillance tools; infrastructure and training; and disease prevention and control. This plan was developed with input from state and local health departments, disease experts, and partner organizations such as the American Society for Microbiology, the Association of Public Health Laboratories, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, and the Infectious Disease Society of America. It emphasizes the need to be prepared for the unexpected – whether it is a naturally occurring influenza pandemic or the deliberate release of anthrax by a terrorist. It is within the context of these overall goals that CDC has begun to address preparing our nation's public health infrastructure to respond to acts of biological terrorism. Copies of this CDC plan have been provided previously to the Committee. In addition, CDC presented in March a report to the Senate entitled *Public Health's Infrastructure: A Status Report*. Recommendations in this report complement the strategies outlined for emerging infectious diseases and preparedness and response to bioterrorism. These recommendations include training of the public health workforce, strengthening of data and communications systems, and improving the public health systems at the state and local level.

CDC's Strategic Plan for Bioterrorism

CDC outlined necessary steps for strengthening public health and healthcare capacity to protect the nation against bioterrorist threats in its April 21, 2001, *MMWR* release of *Biological and Chemical Terrorism: Strategic Plan for Preparedness and Response - Recommendations of the CDC Strategic Planning Workgroup*. This report reinforces the work CDC has been contributing to this effort since 1998 and lays a framework from which to enhance public health infrastructure. In keeping with the message of this report, five key focus areas have been identified which provide the foundation for local, state, and federal planning efforts: Preparedness and Prevention, Detection and Surveillance, Diagnosis and Characterization of Biological and Chemical Agents, Response, and Communication. These areas capture the goals of CDC's Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Program for general bioterrorism preparedness.

- ***Preparedness and Prevention***

CDC has been working to ensure that all levels of the public health community – federal, state, and local – are prepared to work in coordination with the medical and emergency response communities to address the public health consequences of biological and chemical terrorism.

CDC is creating diagnostic and epidemiological guidelines for state and local health departments and will help states conduct drills and exercises to assess local readiness for bioterrorism. In addition, CDC, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Department of Defense (DOD), and other agencies are supporting

and encouraging research to address scientific issues related to bioterrorism. In some cases, new vaccines, antitoxins, or innovative drug treatments need to be developed, manufactured, and/or stocked. Moreover, we need to learn more about the pathogenesis and epidemiology of the infectious diseases which do not affect the U.S. population currently. We have only limited knowledge about how artificial methods of dispersion may affect the infection rate, range of illness, and public health impact of these biological agents.

- ***Detection and Surveillance***

As was evidenced in Florida, New York, and Washington, DC, the initial detection of a biological terrorist attack occurs at the local level. .Therefore, it is essential to educate and train members of the medical community – both public and private – who may be the first to examine and treat the victims. It is also necessary to upgrade the surveillance systems of state and local health departments, as well as within healthcare facilities such as hospitals, which will be relied upon to spot unusual patterns of disease occurrence and to identify any additional cases of illness. CDC is providing terrorism-related training to epidemiologists and laboratorians, infection control personnel, emergency responders, emergency department personnel and other front-line health-care providers, and health and safety personnel. CDC is providing educational materials regarding potential bioterrorism agents to the medical and public health communities on its website for Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response at www.bt.cdc.gov. CDC is working with partners such as the Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense Studies **(www.hopkins-biodefense.org)** and the Infectious Diseases Society of America to develop

training and educational materials for incorporation into medical and public health graduate and post-graduate curricula. With public health partners, CDC is spearheading the development of the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System, which will facilitate automated, timely electronic capture of data from the healthcare system.

- ***Diagnosis and Characterization of Biological and Chemical Agents***

To ensure that prevention and treatment measures can be implemented quickly in the event of a biological or chemical terrorist attack, rapid diagnosis is critical. CDC has developed guidelines and quality assurance standards for the safe and secure collection, storage, transport, and processing of biologic and environmental samples. In collaboration with other federal and non-federal partners, CDC is co-sponsoring a series of training exercises for state public health laboratory personnel on requirements for the safe use, containment, and transport of dangerous biological agents and toxins. CDC, also in cooperation with the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) and the National Laboratory Training Network (NLTN) have sponsored a "hands-on" laboratory course for public health microbiologists. In conjunction with the course, CDC produced two videos that were distributed to the participants as well as to members of the NLTN. The participants in this course are now using these videos and the other materials developed by CDC to train other laboratorians in their states. CDC is also enhancing its efforts to foster the safe design and operation of Biosafety Level 3 laboratories, which are required for handling many highly dangerous pathogens. Furthermore, CDC is developing a Rapid Toxic Screen to detect people's exposure to 150 chemical agents using blood or urine samples.

- ***Response***

A decisive and timely response to a biological terrorist event involves a fully documented and well rehearsed plan of detection, epidemiologic investigation, and medical treatment for affected persons, and the initiation of disease prevention measures to minimize illness, injury and death. CDC is addressing this by (1) assisting state and local health agencies in developing their plans for investigating and responding to unusual events and unexplained illnesses, and (2) bolstering CDC's capacities within the overall federal bioterrorism response effort. CDC is formalizing current draft plans for the notification and mobilization of personnel and laboratory resources in response to a bioterrorism emergency, as well as overall strategies for vaccination, and development and implementation of other potential outbreak control strategies such as quarantine measures. In addition, CDC is developing national standards to ensure that respirators used by first responders and by other health care providers responding to terrorist acts provide adequate protection against weapons of terrorism.

- ***Communication Systems***

Rapid and secure communications are crucial to ensure a prompt and coordinated response to an intentional release of a biological agent. Thus, strengthening communication among clinicians, emergency rooms, infection control practitioners, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, and public health personnel is of paramount importance. To this end, CDC is making a significant investment in building the nation's public health communications infrastructure through the Health Alert Network (HAN). HAN is a nationwide program to

establish the communications, information, distance-learning, and organizational infrastructure for a new level of defense against health threats, including bioterrorism. Currently, 13 states are connected to all of their local health jurisdictions; 37 states have begun connecting to local providers as well; and CDC is also directly connecting to groups, such as the American Medical Association, to cast a broad net of coverage. CDC has also established the Epidemic Information Exchange (Epi-X), a secure, Web-based communications system that provides information sharing capabilities to state and local health officials. CDC also provides timely satellite broadcast and web-broadcast training through the Public Health Training Network. For example, CDC experts recently shared information on anthrax with physicians, hospitals, and other healthcare providers across the country.

Ongoing communication of accurate and up-to-date information helps calm public fears and limit collateral effects of the attack. CDC communicates with the public directly through its website on emergency preparedness and through a public inquiry telephone and email system, which, since the recent attacks, has responded to hundreds of questions daily. In addition, CDC communicates to the public by releasing daily updates to the news media, answering inquiries from the press and providing medical experts for interviews.

The National Pharmaceutical Stockpile

Another integral component of public health preparedness at CDC has been the development of a National Pharmaceutical Stockpile (NPS), which is mobilized in response to an episode caused by a biological or chemical agent. The role of the CDC's NPS program is to

maintain a national repository of life-saving pharmaceuticals and medical material that can be delivered to the site or sites of a biological or chemical terrorism event in order to reduce morbidity and mortality in a civilian population. The NPS is a backup and means of support to state and local first responders, healthcare providers, and public health officials. The NPS program consists of a two-tier response: (1) 12-hour push packages, which are pre-assembled arrays of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies that can be delivered to the scene of a terrorism event within 12 hours of the federal decision to deploy the assets and that will make possible the treatment or prophylaxis of disease caused by a variety of threat agents; and (2) a Vendor-Managed Inventory (VMI) that can be tailored to a specific threat agent. Components of the VMI will arrive at the scene 24 to 36 hours after activation. The NPS was mobilized for the first time on September 11, when a 12-hour push pack was deployed to New York City, delivering 50 tons of medical supplies to the site of the disaster in 7 hours. In addition, substantial quantities of VMI were delivered to New York City within 24 hours. Components of the VMI were deployed to Palm Beach, Florida, Montgomery County, Maryland, and Trenton, New Jersey, to provide adequate supplies of antibiotics to provide prophylaxis to individuals who were potentially exposed to anthrax. CDC has developed this program in collaboration with federal and private sector partners and with input from the states.

Core Capacities for State and Local Health Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response

CDC has been working with partners at all levels to develop core capacities needed to respond to pubic health threats and emergencies. CDC is also developing specific guidelines to

assist public health agencies in their efforts to build comprehensive bioterrorism preparedness and response programs. This collaborative effort engages federal, state, and local partners in determining what is needed for state and local public health agencies to improve their preparedness and response to bioterrorism. This process enables health departments to more effectively target specific improvements to protect the public's health in the event of a biological or chemical terrorist event and will provide the framework for future program efforts. The core capacities effort is for dual purpose. While these capacities focus on bioterrorism events, they are also relevant to naturally occurring infectious disease outbreaks and natural disasters.

Challenges

CDC has been addressing issues of detection, epidemiologic investigation, diagnostics, and enhanced infrastructure and communications as part of its overall bioterrorism preparedness strategies. Based on federal, state, and local response in the weeks following the events of September 11, and on recent training experiences, such as the National TOPOFF event and the *Dark Winter* exercise, CDC has learned valuable lessons and identified gaps that exist in bioterrorism preparedness and response at federal, state, and local levels. CDC will continue to work with partners to address challenges such as improving coordination among other federal agencies during a response and understanding the necessary relationship needed between conducting a criminal investigation versus an epidemiologic case investigation. These issues, as well as overall preparedness planning at federal, state, and local levels, require additional action to ensure that the nation is fully prepared to respond to acts of biological and chemical terrorism.

Disease experts at CDC are working with partners at other federal agencies and in state and local health departments to develop strategies to prevent the spread of disease during and after bioterrorist attacks. Specific components include (1) creating protocols for immunizing at-risk populations subject to the availability of suitable vaccines; (2) isolating large numbers of exposed individuals when there is risk that the disease can be spread from person to person; (3) reducing occupational exposures; (4) assessing methods of safeguarding food and water from deliberate contamination; and (5) exploring ways to improve linkages between animal and human disease surveillance networks since threat agents that affect both humans and animals may first be detected in animals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, CDC is committed to working with other federal agencies and partners as well as state and local public health departments to ensure the health and medical care of our citizens. We have made substantial progress to date in enhancing the nation's capability to prepare for and respond to a bioterrorist event. The best public health strategy to protect the health of civilians against a biological attack is the development, organization, and enhancement of public health prevention systems and tools. Priorities include strengthened public health laboratory capacity, increased surveillance and outbreak investigation capacity, and health communications, education, and training at the federal, state, and local levels. Not only will this approach ensure that we are prepared for deliberate bioterrorist threats, but it will also ensure that we will be able to recognize and control naturally occurring new or re-emerging infectious diseases. A strong and flexible public health infrastructure is the best defense against any disease outbreak.

Thank you very much for your attention. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Dr. Cohen.

Mr. Jarboe, you're a Hoosier, I understand, so welcome.

Mr. JARBOE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the other ladies and gentlemen of the committee.

Just a couple of things very briefly, so that the questions may be put forth. Currently we've restructured the investigation from where it was in the inception as far as the anthrax investigation goes. We've brought in a senior agent from our Washington field office, an assistant special agent charged to oversee the combined efforts of the investigation for Miami, New York, Washington, DC, and the ancillary investigation in Newark. We've done this to make sure it's compact, concise and there's one single focus.

Yesterday, we brought in representatives from all those field offices as well as other offices that had lead information to Washington and had an all day conference to make sure everyone understood exactly what our process was, what our focus was, and to make sure that all the investigators from the different offices were aware of what was going on in the other offices, as well as the forensic information available. We did this, again, to make sure that we continue to keep the investigation as sharply focused as we can, so that we can get results as quickly as possible.

The case is obviously joined with the investigation of the September 11th bombings as the most intensive investigations that we've had in the Bureau's history. Up to 7,000 plus individuals, and that fluctuates on a daily basis, depending on need, have been involved in the investigation. In my 22 years with the FBI, I've never seen anything this intense.

We have daily briefings with the Director. He wants to make sure he's totally engaged. And as incidents pop up during the day that he needs to be aware of, I've spent many a day, many an hour in his office to make sure he's fully aware and fully engaged.

One thing I would like to say and bring out is the fact that not only the FBI but State and local authorities are getting tremendously overwhelmed with the anthrax hoaxes that have cropped up since the initial information about the actual threats. On a routine basis, we'll handle approximately 250 threat analyses per year in the weapons of mass destruction arena. In the first 2 weeks of October, we handled over 2,000 of these. And that pace has not slowed down.

So it's not only the FBI resources, but we have local police departments, State authorities that have to respond in conjunction with what the Federal authorities are doing and all of them are being overwhelmed. I'm pleased to see that the Attorney General and the U.S. attorneys throughout the country have taken a very aggressive stance about prosecuting those who would perpetrate an anthrax hoax. The resources that are required to respond to those are indeterminable, and I don't think the individuals have a concept of not only the resources that they use, but the terror that they bring to the victims. They may think it's a joke, but if you're in receipt of a letter that powder comes out of, it is no joke.

I would like to say that there's been very, very close coordination with the Postal Service and with CDC. Dr. Cohen, from the inception of the investigation in Miami, has been literally living in my space at FBI headquarters. He's there on a daily basis and he has

been an absolute tremendous asset to us, to make sure that the FBI keeps focused on the health issues. As Representative Kucinich stated, the health issues are more important than the prosecutive issues at this point. Dr. Cohen has been just a great help, tremendously assistive.

We've also had Ray Smith from the U.S. Postal Service also working in our space, in on every briefing, in the meetings at a desk so that he can coordinate postal efforts with the FBI efforts, and that there's no information that we have or the Postal Service has that doesn't cross back and forth, so that we're all totally informed of all aspects of the investigation.

I would like to say that the system did work in the inception. It's designed that if a disease breaks, that the State and local health officials are first notified and then they follow on with CDC and then CDC will make that proper notification to the FBI of a potential criminal investigation. That's exactly what happened in the case. In the initial steps, we were there to support CDC as an assist to their efforts to determine the epidemiological problems that they had in Florida, and that gradually rolled into a criminal investigation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you very much.

Let me just start the questioning off by asking, what are the penalties for mail that is a hoax, where they put powder in it?

Mr. WEAVER. Those penalties can range up to the same penalties for mailing the agent itself. And some U.S. attorneys, I've heard, are charging people with the same seriousness of the crime as if they had mailed anthrax.

Mr. BURTON. So the penalty could be 5, 10——

Mr. WEAVER. It could be up to life in prison.

Mr. BURTON. I think that's a message that I hope everybody in the country hears. If you start sending something like that out as a joke, that you could end up in jail for a substantial period of time. It really isn't funny.

Yesterday the Attorney General, and I will ask this to Mr. Jarboe, the Attorney General issued an alert warning of a possible terrorist attack this next week. Let me just ask a couple of questions regarding that, and you can answer them at one time. What can the American people expect, if you can tell us that? What kind of information was this alert based upon, if you can tell us that? I understand there's classified material there.

Is there any intelligence about specific targets, or is this more of a general threat? What should the American public do in response to this alert? What should State and local law enforcement people do?

Mr. JARBOE. As you said, Mr. Chairman, it is non-specific. And I believe that's the message that the Attorney General put forward. The source of the information is classified, so I don't want to go into that source here in this open briefing.

What should the citizens do, what should State and local law enforcement do? And I know it's been said before, they have to be on even higher alert than is the normal. I know the Nation has been on very high alert ever since September 11th. If we had specific information about a specific target at a specific time, that informa-

tion certainly would be made known so that we could protect those targets.

One of the reasons we set forth or put forth the warning is to make sure that everything maintains an elevation at the highest peak of preparedness. If we can do that, then hopefully we can disrupt any plans that are in process. Unfortunately, we do not have specific information about what the targets may be.

Mr. BURTON. Does it appear that the anthrax that were in the three letters to Tom Brokaw, Senator Daschle and the New York Post, did they come from the same source? The information that we had was that the anthrax in a letter to Senator Daschle was finely milled, a very high grade, if you want to call it that, and the letter to Tom Brokaw was a more unrefined kind of anthrax spore. Do you believe these came from the same source, or are these different sources?

Mr. JARBOE. Your description of the two separate packages is correct. As of right now, the information we have is that the anthrax samples that we do have are indistinguishable from one another on a DNA analysis. There is continuing analysis being done to bring them down to the rudimentary elements and see exactly what we have. But again, as of this point, the information shows that they are indistinguishable.

Mr. BURTON. Why would they send a more refined form in one letter to Senator Daschle and not have the more refined form into Brokaw's office?

Mr. JARBOE. That's a question that we do not have the answer to yet, and part of the investigation will be to focus on that and why the two separate types.

Mr. BURTON. I see. I presume you're probably checking to see if different cells had different mechanisms for delivery and refinement.

Mr. JARBOE. We are checking everything that we can think of, yes, sir.

Mr. BURTON. This goes to Dr. Cohen. With respect to the contamination in the Brentwood facility here in Washington, I believe the original theory was that the anthrax escaped from the Daschle letter and contaminated other mail, is that correct?

Dr. COHEN. That's certainly one possible explanation.

Mr. BURTON. Well, there's more and more mailrooms in the Federal office buildings that are having positive tests. Does that lead you to believe that those mail rooms were infected with the same letter?

Dr. COHEN. There are other alternatives. A possibility would be that there are additional letters. The cases of disease, particularly inhalation disease, suggests that individuals were exposed to an aerosol, and that potential possibility would suggest that there may be more than one letter that had passed through the facilities.

Mr. BURTON. I presume that the FBI, I know there's a huge volume of mail that's over there being stored, are they going through that to see if there are any other letters that are containing anthrax spores?

Mr. JARBOE. Yes, sir, we are. We're making plans to go through that piece by piece.

Mr. BURTON. Let me ask one question of Inspector Weaver. A large volume of mail has been collected and sent to Ohio and other destinations to be sanitized using irradiation technology. Some mail is also being held for investigation purposes. Are these pieces of mail being checked for anthrax, and do you believe that there may be one or more letters out there containing anthrax that haven't been detected?

Mr. WEAVER. You're correct, we are sending that mail to be sanitized. Upon the return of that, as Mr. Jarboe indicated, we will thoroughly jointly go through that mail and look for characteristics that might be indicative of the mailings, prior mailings that were made.

Mr. BURTON. Does that answer the question?

Mr. JARBOE. Yes, sir.

Mr. BURTON. Mr. Waxman.

Mr. WAXMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I know that all of you had to deal with an unprecedented and difficult situation. But unfortunately, this may not be an unusual situation in this country when we have a terrorist attack in one form or another. So I'm going to ask you first of all, about the coordination, which of course leads to how the communications were handled with the public, whether there were inconsistent messages sent and whether there was a different standard for people that were exposed to anthrax.

First of all, Mr. Jarboe, one of the most common complaints was that the agency was not doing a good job coordinating with the other agencies. I want to ask you about this, particularly as it relates to the anthrax in the mail. After anthrax was discovered in Senator Daschle's office, the Capitol Police turned it over to the Army lab at Fort Dietrich.

My understanding is that the Army had the responsibility to inform the FBI of the test results, and then the FBI had the responsibility to inform the Centers for Disease Control. Is my understanding correct of the way it was supposed to be handled?

Mr. JARBOE. That's correct. They informed us and we work in conjunction with CDC, that's correct, sir.

Mr. WAXMAN. So on October 18th, we had newspaper articles quoting law enforcement sources as saying, the anthrax in Senator Daschle's office was weaponized. The article seemed to indicate the anthrax was made up of fine particles. The next day, the newspapers contained different information. Those articles said the anthrax was just run of the mill anthrax. Then on October 25th, the papers were again reporting that the anthrax was indeed made of fine particles that were easily suspended in the air.

When did the Army and the FBI determine the small size of the anthrax spores, and when did the Army and the FBI first suspect the small size of these anthrax spores?

Mr. JARBOE. The first information we had about the physical properties of the anthrax that was found in Senator Daschle's letter was the evening of October 15.

Mr. WAXMAN. Why was there so much confusion about it, whether it was a large spore or small spore or whether it was different than the other anthrax that we'd seen? Seems to me that it shouldn't be that difficult to determine the size of a spore.

Mr. JARBOE. I think the most confusion came in media reports, and that partial information or mis-information was given to the media and they reported it as they received it. Dr. Cohen was in our space the evening, I believe it was around 9 or 10 p.m., when we got the first reports in, indicating the preliminary analysis of size and composition. Again, that was a preliminary analysis and had to go on to subsequent tests to be confirmed.

Mr. WAXMAN. Let me go into the question of the confusion about communicating to the public. Jeffrey Copeland, the Director of the CDC, has said that his agency did not have any opportunity to examine the letter that went to Senator Daschle's office or its contents. According to the Washington Post, on October 26th, Copeland indicated CDC investigators were not shown the letter and had no idea of the condition of the envelope. Dr. Copeland has stated that his agency did not recognize that the anthrax in the Daschle letter consisted of tiny particles that could seep out through the pores in the envelope until it was too late to save the postal workers.

Why were the CDC investigators not shown the Daschle letter?

Mr. JARBOE. The letter was in the laboratory at USAMRIID.

Mr. WAXMAN. When was the information about the quality of anthrax spores, including the size and any additives, communicated to the CDC?

Mr. JARBOE. The evening of the 15th, when the initial reports came in, Dr. Cohen and CDC were made aware. Then once the scientists got together, after they had done a further analysis, and determined additional physical properties, a phone call was made to the Deputy Director of CDC with that information.

Mr. WAXMAN. So you maintain that he was informed immediately, then, on October 15th?

Mr. JARBOE. Again, we had preliminary information. What we were putting out is what the preliminary look-see was from the laboratory without any formal analysis.

Mr. WAXMAN. I don't want to rehash it all, but we have to learn from this experience how to deal with these problems in the future. I want to ask you one last question, because I know my time is about to expire. The FBI retains the custody of much of the mail that came to Capitol Hill along with the Daschle letter. There's a lot of anxiety about cross-contamination of mail with anthrax spores. Americans justifiably would like to know the risk of contracting anthrax in their homes from mail that might have come in contact with an anthrax laced letter.

One way to assess the risk of such cross contamination would be to test some of the mail that the FBI has in its custody. These letters were part of the same batches of the Daschle letter or subsequent batches.

Has the FBI tested the outside of these other envelopes for anthrax spores? Has the FBI tested whether anthrax spores stuck to these envelops have the capacity to aerosolize, and would the FBI consider conducting such tests if you haven't done so already?

Mr. JARBOE. They have not been conducted at this point. We have all the mail and we have recently located a physical location where we can go through the mail. We're going to go through it piece by piece to see if we can find any additional letters that may

have gone through the system and just not have been delivered at the same time that Senator Daschle received his letter and conduct any appropriate laboratory analysis at that point.

Mr. WAXMAN. Why has it taken so long to see whether there's a cross-contamination with other letters? Because these other letters could be delivering the anthrax from exposure to the letter to Senator Daschle. Why is it taking so long?

Mr. JARBOE. It's been going through in a very slow—I shouldn't say slow, that's the wrong word, a very specific procedural basis, so that we can make sure that we have it. We had to have a place to do it, and we had trouble getting a physical location to go to. This is a large volume of letters that we're talking about. Then we have to get the procedures in place to go through it to make sure that those who are reviewing it are not contaminated and we can make sure that when if we have something there, it is properly preserved and we can identify exactly what we do have.

Mr. WAXMAN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. Real quickly, was that mail sent out to Ohio to be decontaminated so you can examine it?

Mr. JARBOE. I don't believe—perhaps you can answer that, Mr. Weaver.

Mr. WEAVER. It's my understanding that was the process, that we were going to send it out and get it sanitized and bring it back.

Mr. BURTON. Has it been brought back?

Mr. WEAVER. We've just begun that process, I think the first trailer is coming back now.

Mr. BURTON. My colleague makes a very salient point here. If it takes a long time for that, a lot of these people who may have been touching some mail that was in close proximity to the Daschle letter, they could become infected and have inhalation anthrax and have a death sentence because of the time delay.

Mr. WEAVER. Bear in mind, we're capturing all that mail. None of it's going to be delivered for that particular location.

Mr. BURTON. So none of that mail was delivered, you're sure of that?

Mr. WEAVER. Right. That's correct.

Mr. BURTON. And none of the mail that was in close proximity to the Daschle letter was delivered?

Mr. WEAVER. That's the mail that we have captured that we want to send to Ohio to get sanitized and bring it back and then go through a methodical examination of that with the FBI.

Mr. BURTON. Dr. Weldon.

Dr. WELDON. Dr. Cohen, could you comment on the number of spores that an individual might have to inhale to become sick with inhalation anthrax?

Dr. COHEN. Yes. The various studies that were done suggest that one would need to inhale anywhere between 8,000 to 50,000 spores to get inhalational disease.

Dr. WELDON. What about a quantity of spores that would have to get on your skin to get the cutaneous form of anthrax?

Dr. COHEN. That's not as well known.

Dr. WELDON. My understanding is that it requires a break in the skin for the anthrax spores to cause infection. Is there any evidence that intact skin can be infected by anthrax?

Dr. COHEN. Historically, most of the cases of cutaneous anthrax were in people who had injuries who had exposure to animal sources which were contaminated with spores. We are seeing patients now who do not report having areas of skin that were damaged prior to developing a lesion. So there may be something that is different about this in our past experience, suggesting that disease could occur under those circumstances.

Dr. WELDON. The question of level of exposure is a question I'm getting asked a great deal. We have a situation in the Longworth Building here on Capitol Hill. In the case of one of the offices, it was a surveillance wipe that came up positive. The method that's used, as I understand, they take something resembling a four by four gauze pad and rub it on a series of desks and then they put it in a vial with some buffered solution, spin it down, extract a sample of fluid out and plate that.

As I understand it, in these offices they got very little growth. They got a few colonies on a plate. It is my opinion, my medical opinion, that a level of anthrax like that poses no threat for inhalation anthrax, and it only poses a threat for cutaneous anthrax if you had an open skin lesion and you happened to get the anthrax into that area.

Would you concur with that?

Dr. COHEN. Generally, yes, I would agree. I think that you're talking about fairly low levels of presence of spores. In addition, there were studies that were done in the 1950's that showed that these types of particles that fell out of an initial aerosol were generally heavier and were difficult to re-aerosolize, so that they would be in fact even less of a risk for inhalation disease.

I think the risk, as you suggest, perhaps, would be to cutaneous. Again, we have this unknown as to whether or not there may be some factor that might make normal skin susceptible. But I would agree with your assessment.

Dr. WELDON. Based on the fact that we have surveillance tests coming up positive on a lot of postal equipment, but we do not have reports of a letter with powder in them, it has been presumed that a lot of this is cross-contamination, and it's been reported that the particles in the letter to Senator Daschle's office was very, very fine and had the ability to get through an envelope.

Is it safe to say that some of this that is coming up positive, the anthrax, does not likely pose a threat of inhaled anthrax for the postal workers in those areas, but more a cutaneous threat?

Dr. COHEN. Again, I think that it would in part relate to how it got there. For example, if the letter was torn and some of the powder spilled out, if someone generated an aerosol with that by, say, using a high pressure hose or something, then you could potentially get particles into the air that could be a risk. If these were particles——

Dr. WELDON. And that's what happened at Brentwood, it's believed, they were using a compressed air gun to clean out sorting machines?

Dr. COHEN. Again, that's one of the hypotheses as to how an aerosol could be created.

Dr. WELDON. I'm out of time. Can I just ask you a question, though? What happened down in Florida? Was there a letter that

came through? Is there evidence of the letter down there? And have the postal facilities down there in Florida where the mail that went to that publishing company, have they all been screened with surveillance cultures down in Florida?

Dr. COHEN. Yes, there has been an extensive evaluation. It is assumed that there was at least one letter that was received by the company. None of them have been identified in part because of the interval from when it would have been received and when the investigation was actually begun.

Dr. WELDON. Was an attempt to go through their garbage processing facilities made at all to determine if a letter came through that had——

Dr. COHEN. The FBI would like to answer.

Mr. JARBOE. Yes, sir. Unfortunately, the material, waste material that goes from the company, AMI, in Florida, is incinerated. So we didn't have an opportunity to go through it and dig up any letters to find out where it came from.

Dr. WELDON. OK. I think my time has expired.

Mr. BURTON. Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Institutions other than Government buildings, as you might imagine here, where mostly anthrax has been found, are trying to be proactive and preventive. As I indicated in my own remarks, they saw the House close down before anything was found, based on something that was found in another building. So there is great confusion about how to take the appropriate preventive steps.

May I ask you whether you think the neighborhood post offices, the Friendship Heights post office and the southwest neighborhood post office, in light of the precedents that have been set for Government buildings, should be closed down? The Supreme Court was closed down when trace amounts were found. The House was closed down before any amounts were found. Now, of course, some trace amounts have been found.

Is the standard that when you suspect that there may be a problem, the institution itself should close, the building should close because we don't know enough at this point to guarantee the health of people? What would you suggest in light of what is happening in Government buildings that others do to protect their employees and their clients?

Mr. WEAVER. I'll take the first shot at that. I think there are some health considerations there too that I'm really not qualified to respond to.

Ms. NORTON. Yes, both of you need to answer that one.

Mr. WEAVER. But in the case of the Postal Service, and I'm sure you'll get a much fuller briefing when the Postmaster General comes in the next panel, but a lot of it depends on the facility and the square footage and the size of the facility we find it in.

Ms. NORTON. That's why I gave you two examples. These are two neighborhood post offices.

Mr. WEAVER. I think where it is confined and there is again an opportunity that it may be spread in a smaller location, that's probably more prone for closure at that time than if it were a massive facility where we could cordon off a specific area and deal with the

problem in that way. I'll defer to my expert in the health field to comment.

Dr. COHEN. I think it would have to be done really on a case by case basis. Because some of the variables that you're hearing come to play. The size, whether or not there was illness there which might suggest the difference in risk that people would have. I think that all of those things have to be looked at and a decision made on the level of contamination, disease and a variety of factors.

Ms. NORTON. I presume that there's not a great level of contamination in both of these neighborhood post offices, because as I understand, they are not closed down. Is that correct? These two neighborhood post offices are not closed down?

Mr. WEAVER. No, they are not. As far as I know, they are not.

Ms. NORTON. The case by case notion is one that I understand generically. Some of the factors you named might be important for people to understand the differences. There is terrible suspicion, most of it unfounded, I have to tell you, I believe it is entirely unfounded, that there was a class bias and certainly an official bias that officials of the Government who in fact are paid to take risks were willing to take none, and that low level people who have ordinary jobs, who are not paid to take risks.

So this difference simply has to be cleared up. It's not enough to tell us that it's done on a case by case basis, when all the cases that get closed down are uppity-up, and all the places that are left open are closer to the people. So we need you to spell out as soon as you can to the general public how, what size means. The people in New York don't have any reason to understand why Brentwood was closed down, and they were not, why a single trace has kept the Longworth closed for days, even though we're told that trace doesn't really signify danger.

These differences need to be explained, or we all are going to have the credibility problems we now have and deserve, and I'm not willing to stand behind the differences even though I understand, analytically, as I follow them, why they occurred.

I'd like to know this. Is it not true that——

Mr. SHAYS [assuming Chair]. I'm sorry, just let me allow the gentlelady to ask her question, get a response. We're in an awkward—even though the time is up. We're in an awkward situation. Mr. Jarboe, we are somewhat duty bound to let you leave at 1:30. It's my understanding you have a meeting at the White House and you need to leave now, is that correct?

Mr. JARBOE. Yes, sir, that's correct.

Mr. SHAYS. Is there anyone who can take your place?

Mr. JARBOE. No, sir.

Mr. SHAYS. So we need to let you go, regretfully.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Chairman, just a point of information here. I can appreciate that Mr. Jarboe has to go to a meeting at the White House. But since Mr. Jarboe knew he had to go to a meeting at the White House, it would have seemed appropriate if he had somebody else who would have been able to speak for the FBI. I just point that out on the record.

Mr. SHAYS. I think that's a mistake on the committee's part. We should have made that clear, regretfully. So you are free to go. This is something we'll try to make sure doesn't happen in the future.

And ask your question, please, if we could have a short answer and then we'll keep things moving.

Ms. NORTON. I'd like to know about, as best as I've been able to tell, the latest and most relevant experience with anthrax has been in the armed forces, where people in the Persian Gulf, of course, had vaccinations, the whole rest of it. How much of that experience has been shared with you? How much of that experience is factored into your work? What is the nature of your relationship with people in the armed forces that may have had greater experience than the rest of us in this country?

Dr. COHEN. We work very closely with the folks in the Department of Defense. The actual experience for anthrax disease, though, really dates to the last century in then United States. There have been, since the early 1950's, for example, a little over 250 cases. Most of those have been skin infections. There were only 18 cases of inhalational anthrax in the entire 20th century. So there has not been a great deal of experience with anthrax.

Ms. NORTON. And there was none in the Persian Gulf? No member of the armed forces in fact contracted anthrax in the Persian Gulf?

Dr. COHEN. I'm not aware of any cases.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman, is my time up?

Mr. SHAYS. Yes, your time has long passed. But given the location of your district, we wanted to give you a little extra time.

I would recognize Mr. Horn.

Mr. HORN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This is directed to you, Dr. Cohen, in your Director role for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in some of the sections. On October 5th, the Subcommittee on Government Efficiency, Financial Management and Intergovernmental Relations, which I chair, held a hearing on bioterrorism response preparedness. Dr. Scott Lilibridge, Secretary Thompson, Special Assistant for National Security Issues and Emergency Management, he testified before our subcommittee.

At that point, Federal officials knew that Bob Stevens had been diagnosed with inhalation of the anthrax in Florida. And they believed his case stemmed from natural causes.

At our hearing, Dr. Lilibridge said, "At this point, we are advised by the FBI that this does not seem to be a biological agent attack. We are not finding secondary cases. This person, Mr. Stevens, became ill nearly a week ago and by that time, we certainly should see additional cases if this was going to be a widespread problem." Even in the light of the limited amount of information available at that time, do you think Mr. Lilibridge's statement was either overly wrong or optimistic?

Dr. COHEN. I think at that point in time, all of us hoped that there was a natural explanation. As I pointed out before, most of the cases in the United States had explanations, so that it was possible that there might have been an exposure to an animal product by which he could have acquired the disease. So I think that all of us hoped there would be a natural explanation to it.

Mr. HORN. Well, at that time, news reports indicated that Mr. Stevens was originally believed to have meningitis. Is that correct?

Dr. COHEN. Yes, sir.

Mr. HORN. Preliminary tests on his co-worker, Ernesto Blanco, indicated Mr. Blanco did not have anthrax. Yet anthrax bacteria were later found in his nasal passages. Could anything have been done differently to obtain a more accurate diagnosis of this or other cases earlier?

Dr. COHEN. Well, there were additional studies conducted. Some of those studies require a length of time, for example, serologic tests require a length of time for the human body to make antibodies. That's one of the tests that we can do. There are some tests that are more rapid, for example, the PCR test. When Mr. Blanco actually developed a pleural effusion, one of those tests were done on the pleural fluid, indicating further evidence that he was likely infected with anthrax.

So there were a number of tests that were being employed to try to determine whether or not the illness that he had could have been anthrax. His initial presentation was not classical for anthrax. And I think as we've seen in several of the other patients, there are some differences in the way they are presenting at hospitals in contrast to what we've expected to see with inhalation anthrax.

Mr. HORN. In light of that situation you just talked about, the number of anthrax cases that have appeared since October 5th, a number of them, what lessons has the public health community learned from this disease, how is it contracted, and how can it be contained and treated, and to what degree is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention sending guidance to the hospitals of America and the doctors?

Dr. COHEN. One of the most critical things that we can do is educate health care providers that these are the symptoms and signs of these diseases, and to report them. In fact, with Mr. Stevens, I think this was an example that, where a physician recognized that this was something unusual and quickly notified the health department, which then commenced the investigation.

We have done a variety of other additional activities. We've been trying to educate health care providers through satellite conferences, other kinds of informational material. Surveillance is critical, because there is no guarantee that this or any other disease would be announced. So the people who will recognize it are the health care providers.

Mr. HORN. In New York, I believe, the doctor really didn't know what was before him, but he put the right, Cipro, the right medicine to help him. And when they finally discovered it, he was way ahead of everybody else.

Dr. COHEN. It was a good diagnostic choice.

Mr. HORN. Yes. Anything that you've done or are going to do in terms of hospitals and doctors? Have you got some method that you can do it across all the people in the United States?

Dr. COHEN. We're looking at as many opportunities as possible to try to educate physicians and other health care providers to make them aware about this and other diseases. As I said, we've worked with various groups, American Medical Association, through satellite conferences, Infectious Disease Society of America, there are many efforts to try to do this.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you. I'm going to be a little more strict on the 5-minute rule, because we need to get to the Postmaster eventually. Mrs. Maloney, you have 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY. Thank you very much. I'd like to thank both of you for your hard work here for the Nation and really in particular for New York. New York faces yet another crisis. In my district, at the Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital, a woman has come down with anthrax. She's in serious condition in the hospital. I'd like to know if you know anything about her condition and her case.

And second, I'd like to go back to the inconsistent responses. I represent many postal workers, and many of them are not going to work. They're concerned about their health. Their question to me is, why is our large sorting center where anthrax spores have been found open, yet here in Washington, buildings were closed that they just reviewed and they didn't even find anthrax. In fact, there have been at least four buildings and several mail facilities in D.C. that are closed, and in New York—and in New Jersey several postal facilities are closed.

But in New York, facilities known to be infected and contaminated with anthrax remain open. This is of tremendous concern and I request permission to put into the record a letter that I've written to the Postmaster General asking for clear guidance on this particular item.

Also there are questions on the treatment. Some people have been told to take Cipro, some people have been told to take Doxycycline. Does this mean that Cipro and Doxycycline are equally effective? And if you were exposed to anthrax, what medication would you take?

[The information referred to follows:]

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14TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

2430 RAYBURN BUILDING
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October 30, 2001

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Postmaster General John E. Potter
United States Postal Service
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Postmaster General Potter:

In these difficult times, I applaud the work that you and the postal workers are doing to keep the United States Postal Service (USPS) functioning. We are in uncharted territory never having experienced bioterrorism in our nation, I know that you and the management team at the USPS are trying to protect the workers while continuing an important national service that is vital to our economy.

However, legitimate questions are being asked about how this crisis is being handled. In some areas, anthrax detection has led to the immediate closure of buildings. Today at least four government buildings and several mail facilities are closed in the Washington D.C. area. But the Morgan Processing and Distribution Center in Midtown Manhattan, where anthrax spores have been discovered, remains open. Postal workers are suing, claiming there is a double standard, and that lives are being put at risk.

Please provide answers to the following questions to me in writing no later than close of business, November 5th, 2001.

- What is the distinction between the Brentwood facility in the District of Columbia and New York's Morgan Station facility?
- Who is making the decisions to close, or keep open, postal facilities? If the decisions are not centralized, why not?
- Do you have specific standards or criteria to determine these closures? If so, what are they? If not, are you formulating such protocol?
- Are you receiving all the resources you need to make these decisions and to meet the safety needs of the postal workers?

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Thank you for your service to our nation.

Sincerely,

CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress

cc: Dr. Jeffrey P. Koplan, Director, Centers for Disease Control
David L. Solomon, Vice President, Area Operations, New York Metro Area

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INDEPENDENT

October 30, 2001

Robert S. Mueller, III
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
J. Edgar Hoover Building
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

John E. Potter
Postmaster General
U.S. Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20260-3500

Jeffrey P. Koplan, M.D., M.P.H
Director
Centers for Disease Control
1600 Clifton Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Director Mueller, Postmaster General Potter, and Dr. Koplan:

Across the country, and especially in the Washington, D.C., and New York/New Jersey areas, Americans are worried that their mail may be contaminated with anthrax. The recent disclosure of possible anthrax infections in two individuals who have no known exposure in postal facilities is fueling these concerns. One possibility, which has yet to be proven, is that letters that come in contact with mail containing anthrax during handling may become cross-contaminated and potentially lethal. To assure confidence in the U.S. mail, it is essential to know whether such cross-contamination occurs, whether it poses serious health risks, and how those risks can be avoided or minimized.

Currently, we are learning about potential cross-contamination by investigating the

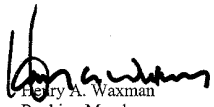
potential exposures of citizens who fall ill with symptoms of anthrax. But this approach is reactive and encourages fear. A pro-active approach would be to examine mail known to have had contact with the Daschle letter to determine: (1) the presence of anthrax spores; (2) the quantity of anthrax spores; (3) whether such spores have the capacity to re-aerosolize and cause inhalation anthrax. Such mail was collected at the time of the closing of the House and Senate Office Buildings on October 17, 2001, and placed in the custody of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

We have just learned, however, that testing of this mail has not even begun. Earlier today, at our hearing entitled "Oversight of the U.S. Postal Service: The Safety of Postal Employees and the Mail," James Jarboe of the FBI stated that the FBI has just located a suitable facility to examine the mail taken from Capitol Hill on October 17, 2001. This delay is very disturbing, as over two weeks have passed since the Daschle letter was opened. It is also a matter of concern that mail exposed to the Daschle letter will be sterilized before any testing takes place, thus potentially destroying the ability to test for cross-contamination.

Some believe that the deaths at the Brentwood Postal Facility may have occurred because the Postal Service and the CDC relied on an untested assumption that anthrax could not leak out of a sealed envelope. We hope that is not true. We are now currently relying on a similar untested assumption that the risk of cross-contamination is very small. This assumption may well be right, and we hope it is. Nevertheless, we have the opportunity to test this assumption, and we should do so immediately. We urge you to work together to expedite the testing of collateral mail to answer critical questions about cross-contamination. With attention to this matter, we can provide facts to counter the fear that is growing each day.

Sincerely,

Dan Burton
Chairman



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member

Dr. COHEN. Let me start off. Yes, Cipro and Doxy are equally effective in treating anthrax. So the strategy has been, since initially one did not know which antibiotics to which the bacteria was susceptible, that the most conservative choice was to use Cipro. But once that information was available, Doxycycline is a very effective drug. There are some issues about side effects, so that both drugs have a role and both drugs can be equally used.

The patient, I did not have an update from this morning, but my understanding was that the patient was quite ill and was on a respirator. But I do not know any further information.

With respect to the closing of facilities, in each instance we've tried to work with the various groups that are responsible for making those decisions and providing recommendations. In many instances there are different groups. So some of the different decisions may reflect the fact that there are different decisionmakers.

Mrs. MALONEY. We need to have a unified approach.

Dr. COHEN. Well, we are trying to work with, again, the concept of doing things on a case by cases basis is important, as well as that our knowledge is evolving in this as we go through it. We're getting more information to help us make those decisions.

But we do want to remain flexible, because we're getting input from a variety of different sources. So we're trying to approach something that is somewhat standard. But again, we want to maintain some degree of flexibility.

Mrs. MALONEY. Could you talk about the side effects of these antibiotics?

Dr. COHEN. There are various side effects that are associated with them. Some are skin rashes that may be associated with them, some may be other types of, different kinds of manifestations, neurologic manifestations, some that are more prominent in older people.

I think the important point is that there is a delicate balance in trying to make a decision about who you prophylax and who you don't prophylax. Because there are side effects that can occur.

Mrs. MALONEY. Can you explain the reasons why some postal workers were given a nasal swab test and others were not?

Dr. COHEN. Yes. The nasal swab is not diagnostic. We're not trying to determine if that person has an exposure to anthrax. It's helpful in the epidemiologic investigation. And in fact, we're more concerned that people would have a false sense of security because they would have a negative nasal swab. So it's important that we identify who is at risk for the exposure.

Now, the nasal swab can help us identify the areas where that's occurring, but not all the people who are in fact exposed and need treatment.

Mrs. MALONEY. If a nasal swab can't determine, is there research taking place now so that we can determine, tests that we can determine?

Dr. COHEN. At this point, one of the areas that we're beginning to think about is, are there rapid tests that we could use in people who present to the hospital that might be able to differentiate between anthrax and other diseases. So we've begun considering the possibility of those types of tests.

Mrs. MALONEY. My time is up.

Mr. BURTON [resuming Chair]. Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS OF VIRGINIA. Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to yield to you for a short question.

Mr. BURTON. OK, this will be a real short question.

We had hearings on the anthrax issue and the military and the vaccines. We understand there's about 28 different strains of anthrax. The only thing I'd like to ask you is, because the anthrax was a threat to the military, why didn't CDC and the Postal Service and the other agencies in our Government think about the possibility that there might be an attack on the population of the United States in addition to the military? And why wasn't something done about that beforehand? I'm not trying to blame anybody, I'm just wondering why they didn't think about that.

Dr. COHEN. There has been a number of activities that have been interdepartmental, where folks have tried to get together and discuss the types of activities needed to be done to prepare for any kind of an event like this. From CDC's perspective, one of the critical elements was trying to build and rebuild the public health infrastructure, so that we could really better detect these kinds of phenomena. And that's both epidemiologic and laboratory, developing a network of laboratories where one could get a good confirmation fairly rapidly.

So there are a number of activities that have gone on to try to detect. In addition, there have been efforts to stockpile various antimicrobial agents that would be necessary for the treatment of this and other diseases.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS OF VIRGINIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think I'm glad to hear that the traces of anthrax in Longworth is probably not threatening, and hopefully that means we can get back into our offices soon, because my staff would like to get back together.

The question I have, I'm not sure who it would be for, but it involves the Brentwood postal facility. Several of my constituents in my district are non-profit organizations. For the last 10 days they've not received their business reply mail. And when they call to get answers as to why they're not getting it, they are getting other mail, but not that. The organization depends on that, and we're getting to the point, they're going to have to start laying off some employees, possibly.

Can anyone give me any answer as to what the status of that type of mail is?

Mr. WEAVER. I can't give you a quick answer on it. We can certainly check on that and find out. But if that mail was entered into the system, they should be receiving it. We'll followup on that, ma'am, and find out.

Mrs. DAVIS OF VIRGINIA. If you could followup and let me know, I'd certainly appreciate it.

Mr. WEAVER. Sure.

Mrs. DAVIS OF VIRGINIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. You had no other questions?

Mrs. DAVIS OF VIRGINIA. No, sir, I just needed to get that one in for my constituents.

Mr. BURTON. The gentlelady yields back her time.

Mr. Kucinich.

Mr. KUCINICH. Dr. Cohen, we've heard my colleague from New York speak about the case where the Manhattan mail room employee contracted inhalational anthrax. Now, it's my understanding that this individual experienced preliminary symptoms 4 days before she was admitted. Are you aware of that?

Dr. COHEN. I do not have specific clinical information.

Mr. KUCINICH. I think it would be helpful for the CDC to look into that, to make a determination whether or not this case could have been prevented.

Now, what efforts, Dr. Cohen, has the CDC made to deliver clear public health messages to susceptible populations, namely postal workers and mail room employees?

Dr. COHEN. We've been working both with the U.S. Postal Service and with their workers. We're trying at this point in time to finalize some interim recommendations that would help prevent the exposure to this disease. We're working in addition to that with educational activities. We have also actually provided a full time liaison to the U.S. Postal Service who has an office there to try and facilitate the coordination of all of these materials and information.

Mr. KUCINICH. You say you're working with them, but do you already have in place such public health messages from the CDC to the postal workers and mailroom employees? Are they in place?

Dr. COHEN. We have actually been revising some of those, with discussions with the workers and the U.S. Postal Service.

Mr. KUCINICH. So you have them in place and you're revising them?

Dr. COHEN. Yes.

Mr. KUCINICH. OK. Now, could you comment on if and how the CDC is keeping track of postal employees who work in contaminated areas? Is there some sort of comprehensive system, or is the CDC only aware of employees who have actually sought out treatment or checked in to receive testing or antibiotics?

Dr. COHEN. Yes, the surveillance is being conducted by examining lists of employees who worked in affected areas, and actually doing active surveillance to determine their health status.

Mr. KUCINICH. So you're saying you're making sure that no postal employee would be experiencing preliminary symptoms of infection without ever having been in contact with the CDC or other health officials?

Dr. COHEN. We can't guarantee every single person. But those who have worked in those areas that are identified as high risk are certainly under intense surveillance.

Mr. KUCINICH. Do you feel it's the CDC's responsibility to facilitate preemptive action and early intervention during a public health crisis?

Dr. COHEN. We have traditionally tried to develop the best recommendations available based on the assessment of the scientific data, and provide those to the people who need to make those decisions.

Mr. KUCINICH. Do you feel that America's public health infrastructure has the capacity to deal with this anthrax crisis?

Dr. COHEN. I think it's been recognized for a number of years that there have been weaknesses in U.S. public health infrastruc-

ture. It's part of the reason why there's been an effort to try to rebuild the public health infrastructure. I think we need to continue to do that going forward.

Mr. KUCINICH. Has the CDC issued any statements with respect to public health structures having search capacity, being able to effectively treat any influx of cases that may arise as a result of our current situation?

Dr. COHEN. I believe part of the planning has been involving the issue of making sure that treatment is potentially available through the stockpile and through other mechanisms.

Mr. KUCINICH. What are you doing with respect to communicating with the Nation's physicians with respect to information about detection and treatment protocols for anthrax?

Dr. COHEN. We've used a number of educational approaches, including satellite conferences. Our weekly publication, the morbidity and mortality weekly report, is a source for many physicians on information about current problems and treatment choices.

Mr. KUCINICH. What's the communication between the FBI and the CDC with respect to the release of information to the public?

Dr. COHEN. We have been working very closely together. As Mr. Jarboe pointed out, I am the liaison between CDC and FBI. I have been there since October 8th trying to provide both the liaison function and perspective on the clinical and microbiologic aspects with respect to their investigation.

Mr. KUCINICH. Are you aware of any instances where the FBI held out information for the purposes of a criminal investigation and that delayed by even a day the communication of that information to public health authorities?

Dr. COHEN. As Mr. Jarboe pointed out, I was in the meeting on the night of October 15th when we had the preliminary description of the material that was being examined at Fort Dietrich. That information was rapidly transferred to CDC by a conference call within 1 to 2 hours and shared at that point.

Within the next day or so I was shown copies, detailed photomicrographs of the various envelopes and materials for further information.

Mr. KUCINICH. Thank you.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Kucinich. Mr. Shays.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Weaver, thank you for being here, and Dr. Cohen, both of you for being here.

Mr. Weaver, it's my understanding that the oldest law enforcement agency in the country happens to be your agency.

Mr. WEAVER. That's correct.

Mr. SHAYS. And you all have a fine tradition and obviously a very long history. I'm interested to know how the law that we recently passed and was signed into law dealing with wiretaps and the sharing of information is going to impact your job.

Mr. WEAVER. Well, certainly I think it gives law enforcement a little more flexibility to do their job. At the same time, of course, we've got to be careful on how we use that, that we protect people's rights also. But I think it's going to give us the flexibility to have more access to information, readily available information, some of that on the wiretap.

Of course, you were only allowed to go to a certain physical piece of equipment in the past. But now that has changed to where it's more or less going to follow the individual. So I think it is a benefit.

Mr. SHAYS. In your previous investigations, did you believe that you were sometimes involved with terrorist organizations or is terrorism kind of a new concept for your agency to be dealing with?

Mr. WEAVER. I think we're all learning that terrorism takes on many forms. Certainly September 11th was a terrorist act. And there have been many questions on whether the anthrax incidents are directly related to that.

Mr. SHAYS. I consider that almost an irrelevant issue. I mean, these are terrorist acts, aren't they?

Mr. WEAVER. Yes, I was going to make the point that regardless, this is still an act of terrorism, and we are treating it as such.

Mr. SHAYS. Yes, I can't think of anything even remotely suggesting it wouldn't be an act of terrorism.

Mr. WEAVER. Right.

Mr. SHAYS. These are acts against the general public, they are indiscriminate and they do exactly what terrorism is intended to do, they have paralyzed and shut down certain sectors of our activities. So you don't have any doubt in your mind that you're fighting terrorism, whether or not it comes from bin Laden or any other group?

Mr. WEAVER. Not at all.

Mr. SHAYS. The question I want to know, though, is I'd like to have a more concrete kind of example of how you will be able to utilize this law that can make me feel safer that because you have this law, you're going to be able to solve the crime more quickly. Is there anything in the past that you can draw on that said, my gosh, if we had this law, we might have been able to——

Mr. WEAVER. It doesn't jump right out at me, Congressman.

Mr. SHAYS. OK.

Mr. WEAVER. But let me think about it, and I would like to get back to you.

Mr. SHAYS. Are you in need of any additional resources that aren't available to you right now?

Mr. WEAVER. I think we're looking at that very closely. The whole environment's going to change from a security standpoint. We're looking at putting technology into our facilities to help us. I'm sure the Postmaster General will talk about that in the next panel.

Again, I think we have the resources we need to do the job. They're strained right now.

Mr. SHAYS. I don't understand, candidly, why you feel you have the resources. The only way I could suggest that you do is if you had too many resources in the past. Do you have an excess of resources?

Mr. WEAVER. No, not at all.

Mr. SHAYS. So aren't you being taxed a bit more than in the past?

Mr. WEAVER. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. So can I make a natural assumption that you need to assess, let me say it this way, can I make an assumption that

you need more resources? It's a question of what resources you need and how quickly you need them?

Mr. WEAVER. Well, the thing is, we've diverted resources. Again, some of those resources that may have been working other crimes are not working those right now. So you're exactly right, if we're to continue at the same level plus take on terrorism, and if it continues, yes, I would say we need more resources.

Mr. SHAYS. I'll just say, my concern would be that sometimes we in the legislative side don't do what we should do. But if you don't ask for them, then we're not going to be as aware of them. I would think that you will need to come forward with a tremendous amount of thoughtful requests. I realize this is all new. But I hope that you're having time, besides coming to testify, where you can do that.

Dr. Cohen, I fail to understand why we get in this debate if it's weaponized or not, if in fact whatever we're dealing with in anthrax is a weapon. So is some of this debate—you know what, my time is over. I know we need to move forward. So I'm going to withdraw the question.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Shays.

Let me just announce that the Postmaster has arrived. He's going to be with us until around 4 p.m. So we need to get him down here as quickly as possible. I don't want to cut anybody off, though. So, Mr. Cummings.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Cohen, I want to just go back to something the chairman was asking about, with regard to these anthrax vaccines. When we had testimony before this committee several months ago, one of the things that was very interesting, and it just kind of got some of us, I think, a bit alarmed, was that there were so many people who came before the committee who had an adverse reaction to the vaccine. What's the status of that with regard to vaccines for anthrax?

Dr. COHEN. Well, we're actually currently under a congressional mandate examining the side effects and new regimens for administering the current anthrax vaccine. Plus there is research going on in a variety of institutions, including National Institutes of Health, that are attempting to develop new and more hopefully effective vaccines.

Mr. CUMMINGS. When I visited the main post office in Baltimore, it was very interesting to see. I mean, this is a big post office. Lot of machinery going, and I think two or three floors of machinery going. I keep going back to the question Ms. Norton was asking about how do you determine when to close a facility.

Do you give advice to the post office as to when they should close a facility?

Dr. COHEN. We try to, whoever the partner is that's responsible for the——

Mr. CUMMINGS. Well, right now I'm talking about the postal system. Are you the key person, one of the key people from a health standpoint to give advice to them?

Dr. COHEN. Actually, the individuals who are in the particular geographic area who are part of the team would be the key people, because they have developed all the specific data. So they would work with them. Plus, as I said, we have a liaison now who is

working directly with the U.S. Postal Service and with the U.S. postal workers. That's a combination, then, of the people in the field as well as the liaison providing the technological and scientific support.

Mr. CUMMINGS. When I was in Baltimore, a number of the people who I met with, employees, said that they had been in the Brentwood facility but they had never gotten any kind of test. And they were kind of concerned, because they said, you know, it seems like if we had been, if we had visited that facility or picked up mail, whatever, a lot of these guys were drivers, these were all men, and they were drivers. They said, we don't understand, why aren't we being given a test. And they were very upset about that.

How is that determined, who gets the test?

Dr. COHEN. Well, the test is not used to determine whether a person has been exposed or is at risk for the disease. It's helpful in defining the area in which people may have worked, so that people who do go to that area, regardless of whether they have a test, whether they have positive test or not, are offered prophylaxis. So the test doesn't tell a person whether they're at risk or not, at risk for developing anthrax.

Mr. CUMMINGS. So a lot of the people who are now taking Cipro and the other medications may very well not have anthrax, is that right?

Dr. COHEN. Yes, that's correct, although they were potentially in an area of exposure, and therefore it indicated they receive prophylaxis.

Mr. CUMMINGS. One of the things that was also interesting in the Baltimore post office is that you had a number of people who had gloves, some had gloves and masks, others had gloves, others just had masks. I was wondering, and perhaps you, Mr. Weaver, might want to address that. What is the advice that you're giving them, and what good do the gloves or the masks do?

Mr. WEAVER. Well, we have made gloves and masks available to all employees. Again, it's been highly recommended that if they are in an area where they're handling mail, or around machinery, that they wear that equipment.

One thing I'd also like to mention on a prior comment you made, for those employees that visited the Brentwood facility on the workroom floor or in the back dock area, either dropping off mail or picking up mail. We have put the alert out that they should report in and get the medication.

Mr. CUMMINGS. OK, well, maybe that's happened since I met with them. That's good. I'm glad to know that.

What I want to go back to is the gloves and the masks. What advice did you base that on? In other words, the distribution of the gloves and the masks? Are you following me?

Mr. WEAVER. Yes. Early on, even when we got indications from Boca Raton that mail may be involved in the anthrax situation, the Postmaster General went out and made gloves and masks available. Initially there was some concern that, well, we can't wear gloves with the mechanization and it might present a problem. But they have since resolved that, and I know we've spent a lot of money getting the proper equipment, the proper types of masks, to lower the risks that employees might contract it.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Cummings. Mr. Otter.

Mr. OTTER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for being here with us today. Last night, we had another report of an anthrax by inhalation, in fact, the first one in New York City. That is the first one, isn't it?

Dr. COHEN. I believe so, yes.

Mr. OTTER. And it was also reported that this lady did not work directly in the mail room in handling the mail and that sort of thing. Is there any speculation, or maybe that's a dangerous word right now, but would you have any idea how she would have contracted that?

Dr. COHEN. I think that would be one of the major thrusts of the investigation, trying to determine if there's potential exposures.

Mr. OTTER. Also in the mail, in my mail last night at home, not here, I received a very informative card. It told me as it did, I'm sure, all patrons, what to do if they received some suspicious mail and what to look for and how to handle it, and what to do to protect themselves. I think that's very informative.

I'm wondering, sort of out loud now, there would a different treatment for anthrax as opposed to, say, some kind of a chemical agent, wouldn't there?

Dr. COHEN. Yes, there would be.

Mr. OTTER. Would the Post Office or would the CDC advise the post office to sort of get ahead of the game and say, in this, if a chemical agent is being transferred via the mail, this is the action that you ought to take and this is what you ought to look for? Perhaps Mr. Weaver would be better——

Mr. WEAVER. Yes, Congressman, and again, I think the advice we give out is many times very generic. No. 1, if you receive something in the mail that you don't expect, everybody kind of knows what kind of mail you receive at home. You look through it and you say, yes, I know what that is and that is. If you're not expecting it, if it doesn't have a return address on it, if the return address on it is fictitious or if it has markings on the mail that are unfamiliar to you, if there appears to be something bulky in the piece of mail, certainly if there's something emitting from it, whether it be a chemical or whether it be a powder.

So they're very similar, the types of messages that we send out. But every time we run into a situation like this, certainly we need to adjust.

Mr. OTTER. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. Mr. Davis.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Cohen, it's my understanding that both the CDC and private companies are doing testing for the presence of anthrax. Is that correct?

Dr. COHEN. Yes, that's correct.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. What's the CDC's role in making sure that these companies, if there is any, are actually equipped and able to determine whether or not there is the presence of anthrax? Did you assess the companies?

Dr. COHEN. We have had some of our laboratorians visit with the contractors and to go over some of the strategies that we use, some

of the methodologies, recommendations about quality control for those. So in many instances, we're an available resource and would have direct interactions as indicated.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. And you don't have any concerns about whether or not any of these actually have the qualifications that are necessary in order to do the work?

Dr. COHEN. I don't know exactly the extent of who has been contracted by all of the private facilities.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. Let me just ask, let's say I'm a postal worker. What is it that I need to know or need to understand or need to have heard about in a particular facility that I might work in to determine whether, I mean, I hear people saying that they don't feel comfortable going to work, or that absenteeism is up, and I assume that's the case, it's because individuals feel unsafe and insecure and feel that they might become contaminated.

What do I need to know, as an employee, to feel comfortable and secure that I can go to work and be protected?

Dr. COHEN. I think that's one of the major reasons why it's important for us to work with the Postal Service and the workers to develop an education program that answers those questions. Because I could talk about the low likelihood of risk because of the few spores. But that may not be the answers that they want or need. So that's why I think it's so critical for us to work together to find out the answers to those questions and provide it to them.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. So you're pretty much suggesting that there are no quick and easy solutions, that there are no absolute standards and outright conditions that we can guarantee, that yes, everything is fine.

Dr. COHEN. I think it would be very difficult to have any absolutes that would guarantee that no one would become exposed or become ill. There's a number of things that could be done to reduce the likelihood that people can become exposed and become sick. But I think it would be very hard to deal with absolutes, particularly since we're talking about an intentional act, that we do not have control over, as much as when we deal with a disease in a natural environment.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. And so the realities are that we simply have to continue to work, explore, generate the resources that are necessary if additional resources are needed in order to reach the point where we can in fact feel comfortable that people can go to work and not become contaminated, and will be fine?

Dr. COHEN. I think it's continuing to evolve, and we have to work together to try to get the answers to those questions to reduce the risks as much as feasible.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. I thank the gentleman. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Davis. Mrs. Mink.

Mrs. MINK. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. Excuse me just a minute, Mrs. Mink. Mr. Horn, you had something you wanted to submit for the record?

Mr. HORN. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to include in the record the following question. If I look through the testimony, the Postmaster General gave us two human beings. And when I asked my ques-

tion, I had a human being there. The rest of it is sort of very important and all that, how many we did this and that.

But I'd like to put in the record at this point how many have that, and unless they don't want privacy on it, and put them in here so that 4 months from now or something, where are we with real people. Machiavelli, the Italian theorist, he said if you really want people to forget all these things, put an individual in your concerns and not thousands of people, because they can't take it. So I'd like to see the people that were——

Mr. BURTON. We'll ask the agencies to give us a list of all those people for the record.

Mrs. Mink.

Mrs. MINK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have some very basic questions I want to ask Mr. Weaver, having to do with the receipt of the letter in Senator Daschle's office. What was the postmark on that letter?

Mr. WEAVER. The postmark was September 18th, from Trenton, NJ.

Mrs. MINK. So that would be the Trenton facility that was closed on October 18th, is that correct?

Mr. WEAVER. That's correct, yes.

Mrs. MINK. So that letter somehow was deposited in a mailbox and then went through the sorting devices in the Trenton facility and then where did it go? What was its next stop?

Mr. WEAVER. Then it would have been transported from Trenton down to the Brentwood facility.

Mrs. MINK. Now, at the Brentwood facility, it was sorted out and where would it have gone prior to its arrival at Mr. Daschle's office?

Mr. WEAVER. It would have gone into the Government mails section. We have a section that specifically works all Governmental mails.

Mrs. MINK. Where, at the Brentwood facility?

Mr. WEAVER. At the Brentwood facility, yes. Then it would have been transferred from there to the Senate mail room operation.

Mrs. MINK. Now, at the Brentwood facility, would it have gone through the general distribution system before it went to the Government sorting facility?

Mr. WEAVER. Yes, it would have.

Mrs. MINK. So once you closed the Brentwood facility on October 21st, following the closure of the Trenton facility on the 18th, how has the new mail coming from wherever, all parts of the country, where has that new mail gone to and why is it not reaching the constituents?

Mr. WEAVER. That mail has come in and what used to go into the Government mail section is now being held at the present time.

Mrs. MINK. I'm not talking about the Government facility. I'm talking about all the rest of the mail. Once that facility was closed, we hear that people are not getting their mail delivered.

Mr. WEAVER. I see. Yes, I believe the Postmaster General or the Chief Operating Officer, who will be here in the next panel, can give you some detailed explanation of where. But I believe the answer is, it is being processed in another facility in the Washington, DC, area.

Mrs. MINK. So all the mail that was supposed to have gone to Brentwood after the 21st is being diverted elsewhere?

Mr. WEAVER. Yes, that's correct.

Mrs. MINK. With the exception of the Government mail and by that I mean the Congress, the White House, State Department, etc.?

Mr. WEAVER. That's correct.

Mrs. MINK. So the contamination of the Supreme Court, the State Department, CIA and the Longworth and Ford, all occurred as a result of mail that was distributed prior to October 21st, is that correct?

Mr. WEAVER. We don't know. And I don't think we can speculate.

Mrs. MINK. Well, the mail facility was closed after the 21st. So nothing went out.

Mr. WEAVER. Well, the options there are that there was cross-contamination because of that. Again, I'd ask Dr. Cohen to comment on the possibility of that. Or there may be another piece of mail somewhere.

Mrs. MINK. No, my question is mail that would have gone through the Brentwood facility but did not because that facility was closed on the 21st, and it was diverted elsewhere. Are you saying now that mail might also be contaminated?

Mr. WEAVER. Well, I don't know at this point. And I'm not speculating on that. I don't know if I'm missing something here.

Mrs. MINK. Well, I just wanted to know what's happening to the mail that would have gone to Brentwood but did not, because it's now closed.

Mr. WEAVER. I would suggest maybe the next panel may enlighten you a little further.

Mrs. MINK. Is that not part of your Inspector General's inquiry right now?

Mr. WEAVER. Well, I'm not the Inspector General. I'm the law enforcement side of the Postal Service.

Mrs. MINK. That law enforcement side of the Postal Service is not making an inquiry as to what is happening?

Mr. WEAVER. Yes, we are. We're working with the FBI on the investigation and pursuing all those leads.

Mrs. MINK. My question to Dr. Cohen has to do with the anthrax vaccine and its use for the Persian Gulf incident. Do you have any statistics with respect to the number of individuals given the vaccine at that time who became ill and had serious side effects?

Dr. COHEN. No, I have none with that information.

Mrs. MINK. There's no one that has that information?

Dr. COHEN. I would assume that the Department of Defense would have some information about adverse events.

Mrs. MINK. What would be the efficacy of the use of the anthrax vaccine now, given the circumstances of the threat on the health of the postal workers?

Dr. COHEN. The vaccine was most extensively studied in people who worked in the fiber industries back in the 1950's and 1960's. That's where the efficacy was shown. I believe there would still be a comparable level of efficacy. But with any vaccine, the size of the infectious dose may impact how effective the vaccine is.

Mr. BURTON. The gentlelady's time has expired.

The one thing I'd like to have you address before you conclude, though, is, I've been told there are 28 strains of anthrax. Would that vaccine be effective against all those strains?

Dr. COHEN. I don't know to what extent there have been studies examining each of the strains. The vaccine is prepared to protect against a particular antigen that's present in these strains. So all the strains that cause disease that have this antigen would be protected against. I would assume that would be most of those that you describe.

Mr. BURTON. Ms. Watson, do you have any questions?

Ms. WATSON. We had a hearing in Los Angeles and we had all of your counterparts there. The question that has been on my mind, and I'm sure on the minds of lots of others, is how do we identify the powder? We have gotten calls into our offices about people who thought that the white powder on the floor of the restroom might have been anthrax.

They have called and it appears that it's the color of cinnamon, maybe, amber to brown. I raised this question yesterday and they said they really didn't want to describe the way it looked, they'd rather investigate to see. Can you clarify, Dr. Cohen, for me, what it is we would look for in the bins at the Postal Service, what it is we would look for in our own offices when the mail would come?

Dr. COHEN. Well, I'm not certain that you could feel with a high degree of comfort that a particular material did not represent anthrax unless it was appropriately examined by the laboratory. Again, we deal with the potential here that this is something that's being done with intent. So I think that again, although people are concerned, that they must be alert and cautious.

Ms. WATSON. What we're trying to do is cut down on the anxiety and the calls and of course, fire services, police services, the FBI and so on, are out there investigating. Is there any information that we can give the public in terms of what it is they suspect, and what a description might be so it would reduce the number of false alerts and calls and so on? Is there anything to look for, or should we just call when we see a suspicious looking powder?

Dr. COHEN. I think the issue is primarily the recommendations that have been provided about what is a suspicious letter. I think we have information there.

Ms. WATSON. I think they've gotten that down pretty well.

Dr. COHEN. OK. When you talk about a powder, I think it's very hard to provide any information that would be that helpful. The various law enforcement groups have ways of responding to the different calls.

Ms. WATSON. So they should continue to call the police?

Dr. COHEN. I think that would be most prudent.

Ms. WATSON. Thank you.

Mr. BURTON. Ms. Schakowsky.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Weaver, I want to thank you on behalf of myself and my staff, because in the last 2 weeks, two letters that were destined for my district office were flagged by the Postal Service because they were suspicious. And in each case, the Postal Service called my office to make us aware of the situation and confirmed whether

or not we were expecting the correspondence and then took extra steps to guarantee the safety of those parcels and ourselves.

But what it made me think was, both of those letters came from overseas. If we track the mail from its origin to wherever it finally ends up, some of that is on airplanes. And I'm wondering if any of the mail thus far that was contaminated or if other mail has spearheaded any kind of an investigation of those cases where the mail may be, if we're going back further?

Mr. WEAVER. We're not ruling anything out. But bear in mind, we've got three pieces of mail right now.

Mr. Chairman, if I could, I'd like to correct a statement I made earlier. I believe the Congresslady asked me the date on the Daschle mailing, and it was October 9th, not September 18th. But as far as whether, in all presumption, this mail entered the mail stream in the Trenton area and was processed in that facility and would have traveled to Washington via highway. So right now, although we're not ruling out any possibility of the substances flying or that may be in the air, I don't think that was the case here.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I guess what I'm concerned about is, if we're trying to be proactive and prevent a problem, if we have taken under consideration the possibility that some of this may travel in different ways, and tracking those places in a more careful way.

Mr. WEAVER. I think what we are going to try to do is get ahead of the curve a little bit through technology and make sure that mail that we are not comfortable with, that we do screen that, even through technology, and make sure that if there is any bacteria in that mail, it's killed.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. The mail of ordinary citizens, are ordinary citizens as safe from their mail, potential hazards, as Members of Congress? Are other people in my district being called that a letter was flagged? Or is that a special consideration for Members?

Mr. WEAVER. Not necessarily. We're screening at different locations, we are taking a hard look at it piece by piece. And I won't divulge exactly what we look for or where it's at. But we are doing some of that.

But as far as the American people, I would like to say that I know this has been a tragic time and there is a lot of fear out there by the American people. It's understandable. We've had three letters go through our system, and I think even the chairman commented on the number of pieces that we've processed, and it's probably up to about 25 billion pieces. So the chances of the average customer receiving any of this are very remote. But one's too many.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Thank you.

Dr. Cohen, what do we know about the source of the anthrax? It seems like there's been some conflicting reports on whether or not it contained an additive that was only made in Iraq, and first it didn't and then it does. Have we been able to determine anything to narrow the source?

Dr. COHEN. In our laboratories, what we have primarily done is looked at the organisms. The tests we have done really tell us that the organisms are indistinguishable. It's unfortunate that the FBI couldn't comment more on the characteristics of the material. So the information that we have primarily deals with the organisms themselves rather than the powder.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Let me ask one final question. An epidemiologist who is familiar with a good deal of what we're trying to handle right now called and was concerned. Is the American public being told everything by the CDC? I certainly don't think we want to terrify people, but is there information being withheld, or as suspicions are aroused or as cases are being identified, do we know everything?

Dr. COHEN. We're trying to share information as rapidly as possible that is important for the public health and the public to know and be educated. I think that early on, that there was a number of opportunities for us to perhaps talk more. But we were involved in the investigations, and I think now we're trying to use as much opportunity as possible to educate people and to let them know what we're doing.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. What he said was, in war there are times when you want to keep information from the public, because we have strategic reasons. But when public health is involved, the more people know, the better.

Dr. COHEN. I would agree.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Thank you.

Mr. BURTON. The gentlelady's time has expired. Mr. Turner.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Weaver, you mentioned there are three letters now that we're dealing with that we know of, the Daschle letter, the Brokaw letter, and——

Mr. WEAVER. The New York Post.

Mr. TURNER [continuing]. The New York Post. We have other instances of contamination that may or may not be related to a specific letter. Name those for me.

Mr. WEAVER. I don't think I can, Congressman. I don't know. We've got other cases where people have contracted cutaneous anthrax, and again, I think it's speculation where they got that and whether it was off a cross-contamination or not. But I don't have the exact number.

Mr. TURNER. So the media company in Florida, you're not ready to say that's related to a letter?

Mr. WEAVER. We suspect it was, but we do not have the actual document or the letter.

Mr. TURNER. And I guess you'd say the same about the situation in Dan Rather's office in New York?

Mr. WEAVER. That's correct. We do not have a physical document.

Mr. TURNER. And also the incident of the lady in New York at the hospital who was just discovered to be infected just yesterday?

Mr. WEAVER. Yes. That's under investigation and we're trying to get to the bottom of that right now.

Mr. TURNER. Are there others that I have not mentioned that might be possible?

Mr. WEAVER. Yes. The one that comes to mind is the State Department. There was an employee working the State Department mail room that is suspected of contracting anthrax. So that would be another case that I'm aware of.

Mr. TURNER. The letter that was postmarked, that came into Senator Daschle's office was postmarked October 9th?

Mr. WEAVER. That's correct.

Mr. TURNER. What was the postmark on the other letters that we're aware of?

Mr. WEAVER. They were both September 18th.

Mr. TURNER. September 18th. I want to ask Dr. Cohen, I want us to gain a little bit of fundamental education here, while we have the opportunity, about this disease. For example, the Daschle letter postmarked October 9th came through the Brentwood post office, and we find a postal worker contracted inhalation anthrax and was hospitalized on October 21st. Are those dates consistent with the evolution of that disease, and the infection that would come?

Dr. COHEN. Actually, I believe the patient started reporting symptoms earlier in that time period, and that there was a consistent period of exposure to when the person actually became ill. So that would be consistent with what we know about anthrax.

Mr. TURNER. So give me just the time table of the initial exposure, the first sign of symptoms would occur how many days later?

Dr. COHEN. Well, it could be, what's been reported is 1 to 7 days, is generally the timeframe from when exposure to illness occurs. Some of the cases may have been shorter time period. So I think that's actually a fairly good range. Often the early symptoms are relatively non-specific. You could have fever muscle aches and pains. What poses one of the diagnostic dilemmas is that when patients are seen by a physician, it's difficult to recognize that this represents something other than a common infection.

Mr. TURNER. At what point do you have clear symptoms? What are those symptoms that would be identifiable?

Dr. COHEN. Traditionally, it's been described that the illness may, the non-specific illness may somewhat improve and then dramatically worsen, where the person becomes very ill, appear to have a serious illness that would be consistent with having bacteria circulating in your bloodstream and the toxins that are produced by those bacteria making you ill. So that can occur fairly rapid. Historically, the death rates from inhalational anthrax were very, very high. It was thought to be almost uniformly fatal.

Mr. TURNER. So you would say that if an individual has these preliminary symptoms, fever, flu-like symptoms, that they could go away for a few days then come back even more severely, and then result in respiratory problems?

Dr. COHEN. Well, it could be. There were just, they may have respiratory problems, they could have shock. They could have a variety of clinical findings and signs that we see, such as the swollen lymph nodes that are present in the chest that are referred to as a widened mediastinum that you see in the chest x-ray.

Whereas in the first patient's case, the organism can get into the central nervous system and cause meningitis. So the person could have that kind of a presentation. So there's various possible ways that people can present.

Mr. BURTON. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. Mr. Tierney.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Chairman, I'm satisfied to let these witnesses go as soon as we can and bring on the others.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Tierney. Well, we want to thank you very much. Excuse me, did you have any questions? Thank you very much gentlemen.

We'll now go to our next panel. We want to thank the Postmaster General for his patience as well as David Fineman, the vice chairman of the U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors, and Thomas Day, the vice president of Engineering for the U.S. Postal Service, and the Chief Operating Officer, Pat Donohoe.

I know you've had a busy day, gentlemen, because you've been over at the Senate side. So we appreciate your being here.

It's our custom to swear in all the witnesses, so would you please stand and raise your right hands.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. BURTON. Thank you. Be seated.

Mr. Postmaster General, I think what we'll do is start with you. If any of you have opening statements, we'll be happy to hear them. We'll start with you. And if not, we'll get to questions just as soon as possible.

Mr. POTTER. We have one opening statement. I'll read the opening statement.

STATEMENTS OF JOHN E. POTTER, POSTMASTER GENERAL OF THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE, ACCOMPANIED BY PATRICK DONOHOE; S. DAVID FINEMAN, VICE CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF GOVERNORS, U.S. POSTAL SERVICE; AND THOMAS G. DAY, VICE PRESIDENT, ENGINEERING

Mr. POTTER. Good afternoon, Chairman Burton and members of the committee. I've submitted a detailed written statement which I would ask be entered into the record.

Mr. BURTON. Without objection.

Mr. POTTER. Under normal circumstances, I would be here by myself. But with the situation changing daily, I've asked Patrick Donohoe, our chief operating officer, to my left, and on my right, vice chairman of the Board of Governors, David Fineman. Governor Fineman, who is from Philadelphia, is one of the nine Presidentially appointed Governors of the Postal Service. To Governor Fineman's right is Tom Day, our vice president for Engineering.

Each is part of the team that's focusing on this crisis, and they will be able to add value to our discussion.

Mr. Chairman, this is a sad time for us. The Postal Service has lost two members of its family, two of our employees, Joseph Curseen and Thomas Morris, to the anthrax attacks. Three others remain hospitalized, and four have been sickened and are recovering. None of them thought when they came to work in the post office that they would be on the front line of a war.

But they were, and thousands of other employees are as well. In fact, this is a war against all of our citizens. From the very outset, my overriding concern was for the safety of our employees and the public. We sought out the best information and the best experts to help us understand exactly what we were dealing with.

Early on, when there was confusion about how and when anthrax got to American Media in Boca Raton, we saw no direct connection to the Postal Service and the system that delivers the mail. Nevertheless, on Tuesday, October 9th, as a precaution, we pro-

vided supervisors and employees with updated information on what to do if they suspected biohazards in the mail.

Then on Friday, October 12th, the postal landscape changed dramatically. An NBC news employee in New York City was diagnosed with cutaneous anthrax. It became clear that the bioagent had arrived through the mail. Looking back, it's hard to believe all that has transpired in the last 18 days. We took a proactive stance in terms of educating our employees and the public.

I cautioned employees, the public and companies and organizations, that they needed to handle their mail carefully. If they found something out of the ordinary, they needed to respond appropriately to law enforcement agencies.

Based on the information we had, I stressed that this was a time when common sense and caution was needed, and that the incidence of anthrax-laden letters appeared very targeted and few in number. On Monday October 15th, the Chief Postal Inspector was already working with the FBI. I asked Chief Inspector Weaver to put together a Washington based task force that included our union and management association leaders. On a daily basis, we shared and discussed the latest information, what steps we should take, what were the right things to do.

Our labor leaders comments were valuable and carried equal weight with everyone else around that table. But the facts were sketchy. To that point, the only confirmed anthrax had been in Florida and at NBC in New York. On that day, Monday the 15th, employees in Senator Daschle's office opened a letter that had been laced with anthrax.

Then things began to accelerate almost by the hour. It was clear that the Daschle letter went through our Brentwood facility in Washington. On Wednesday, testing of 28 Capitol Hill employees came back positive. We were consulting and seeking the best experts we could find. But it was also clear that the mail and the Nation were facing a threat that it had never encountered before.

We continued to operate under the theory that what had been sent was transiting our system in well sealed envelopes. All along, the Postal Service operated on the principle of open disclosure. I knew that would be critical in protecting our employees and the public and in developing solutions.

Knowing that the Daschle letter came through our Brentwood facility, and after consulting with our unions, we decided to test the Brentwood facility as a precaution. The preliminary test on Thursday, October 18th, came back negative. We felt good about that, although a secondary, more comprehensive laboratory examination would take another 48 to 72 hours. To that time, we had no indication that Brentwood was contaminated.

Also on Thursday, October 18th, we joined with the Justice Department to ask the American people for help by offering a $1 million reward. It was on the 18th that one of our letter carriers in Trenton was diagnosed with cutaneous anthrax. The Trenton and West Trenton facilities were closed for testing, and CDC and the FBI moved in.

We had discussed with CDC whether or not our employees should be tested in Brentwood. But all indications and the best experts said, no need. Unfortunately, and how I and others wish we

had known, it was Friday, October 19th, when our first Washington employee would be hospitalized with flu-like symptoms. Two days later, on Sunday afternoon, the 21st, we learned of the first case of an employee with inhalation anthrax. Brentwood was immediately closed. As a precaution, we also closed the BWI processing facilities.

We were operating in good faith, trying to make the right decisions, based on the facts at hand and the advice we were receiving from experts. In fact, out of those discussions, local health authorities began screening employees and providing them with antibiotics that weekend. By Monday, we were making every effort to track down all our Brentwood employees, even those on vacation.

Last week I said, this is not a time for finger pointing. I underscore that again. The mail and the Nation have never experienced anything like this.

Where are we today? First of all, the situation remains fluid. Late yesterday afternoon we learned that two additional facilities in Washington, DC, were contaminated. And we closed them, pending remediation.

In addition, trace amounts of anthrax have been found in our plant in West Palm Beach. The remediation is occurring right now.

For 18 days we have been working to enhance the safety of our employees and their workplaces. At the same time, we want to keep mail moving to the Nation's businesses and households. Let me share some of the actions that we have taken. We have scheduled 200 facilities nationwide to be tested. That's in addition to those facilities in the immediate area of the anthrax attacks where we've had testing underway already. We purchased 4.8 million masks, 88 million gloves for our employees. We changed operational maintenance practices to reduce the chance of bio-agents being blown around the workplace. We are using new cleaning products that kill anthrax bacteria.

We have redoubled efforts to communicate to employees through stand-up talks, videos and postcards directed to their homes to reinforce their awareness of our message. We also had medical doctors speak to our employees at the work site on the precautions they need to take concerning anthrax, and offered employees nationwide counseling services.

During the last week, we mobilized every resource to get employees screened, tested, and antibiotics distributed. We are purchasing machines and technology to sanitize mail. Unfortunately, we cannot deploy all the machines tomorrow. In the interim, we are using existing machines and private sector companies to sanitize targeted mail. The anthrax attacks were targeted, and we are responding in a targeted way.

We are increasing our education efforts with the public. Postcards alerting every address in America were delivered last week. In all our dealings with our customers, we stress the need for vigilance. We modified our Web site to provide the latest information on anthrax. In sum, we are focused on getting the message out.

I might also add that the cooperation and coordination between and among the Federal agencies involved has gotten increasingly stronger as each day goes by. Governor Ridge has been instrumental in building bridges and making this happen. He also has been

working to assure that all Federal agencies work in a focused way to ensure that the equipment and technology we plan to use is effective. These attacks on our employees, the Nation and the mail are unprecedented. They have hurt us financially. The economic slowdown in 2001 already had an impact. Then the tragedy of the attack on September 11th again stunned the economy. The results have been reflected in reduced revenue and mail volumes.

Although we are still assessing the economic impact of the anthrax attack, I can tell you, it is sizable. We will provide information to the committee when we have a tally.

As I am sure you will agree, protecting America's freedom by ensuring the safety and integrity of the mail is at the core of the Postal Service's mission. Our 800,000 postal employees are using everything they've learned and doing everything humanly possible to keep the mail safe and moving. I cannot say enough how proud I am of the cooperation and spirit I have seen in our employees and in postal customers. They recognize that terrorist have launched an attack on one of America's fundamental institutions, the Nation's post offices. We are determined not to let the terrorists stop us.

This concludes my prepared statement, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Potter follows:]

STATEMENT OF
POSTMASTER GENERAL/CEO JOHN E. POTTER
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
OCTOBER 30, 2001

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee.

Just over a week ago, a vicious and premeditated act of evil killed two dedicated Postal Service employees. They were family men. Men active in their communities. Men who had made it their life's work to serve the people of America by keeping the mail moving. Yet, by simply doing their jobs, they became innocent casualties in a war unlike any the nation has ever experienced.

The ultimate sacrifice paid by Thomas Morris and Joseph Curseen has made one thing absolutely clear – the men and women of the Postal Service have been thrust onto the front lines of a conflict that few could have imagined. As we mourn for those we lost, we continue to fulfill our mission with pride, courage, and dedication. I am proud of the tremendous job the employees of the Postal Service are doing during this challenging time.

By its very nature bio-terrorism gives no warning. It creates fear. Fear, that if not dealt with in an honest, forthright manner – with information – can cripple an organization or a nation.

This is an extremely painful time for those of us in the Postal Service. A welcome and ordinary daily visit by our letter carriers to the homes and businesses of America has become, sadly, a cause of concern for some.

Mr. Chairman, over a 23-year career, my expertise has been managing various elements of the nation's huge and complex postal system. It has been my job to protect our employees, to maintain effective and efficient mail service, and to serve the needs of our customers.

I do not have all the answers in this case. I do not believe any single person or organization does. But I can tell you what I do know. Three letters confirmed as containing anthrax moved through the postal system. They were sent to NBC News, Senator Tom Daschle, and the New York Post.

Along with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Surgeon General, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other federal, state and local medical authorities, the Postal Service continues to monitor closely infection, potential infection, and the presence of anthrax. As we have since the first case was reported, we have taken aggressive action on our own and sought out the recommendations of the medical community. We believed that this was the right thing to do.

Through our experience in following the trail of anthrax-contaminated letters, the infections of postal employees and others, and the discovery of anthrax at postal and other facilities, we developed a four-track response: investigation, education, intervention, and prevention.

Our Postal Inspection Service has been actively involved with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other law enforcement agencies in investigating these crimes. They are responding to all reports and information being received. And they are dealing sternly with hoaxes and threats that divert needed resources from the investigation.

With the FBI, the Postal Service has offered a $1 million reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for placing anthrax in the mail. We want to engage the public in helping us bring the guilty to justice.

Before we knew that the mailstream was a conduit for letters containing anthrax, we educated our employees and the American public on safe mail-handling procedures. Postcards were mailed to all of our employees and to postal customers at every address in America. The 145 million postcards contain information about how to identify and safely handle suspicious mail.

We have continued to use every opportunity to educate our employees, our customers, and those in the mailing community so they can protect themselves from possible harm when dealing with the mail.

Internally, we have widely expanded our employee communication efforts throughout the last three weeks. Through mandatory safety talks and other communications – printed, electronic and video – they have received information about the safe handling of mail, including the use of personal protective equipment. One video broadcast on our internal television network features two medical experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We have had medical doctors visit our major facilities to speak to our employees about anthrax and the necessary safety precautions. We have also made counseling available to all of our employees to help them through this difficult time.

Our educational efforts have also been focused on America's businesses and consumers. We have prepared and distributed thousands of posters and videos to assist mailrooms across the nation in identifying and safely handling suspicious mail. We are continuing our efforts through the media to share similar information with all Americans. This information can also be obtained on the Postal Service's web site, www.usps.com.

We have also taken steps prevent exposure and sanitize the mail. Early on, we also authorized the wearing of protective gloves and face masks for our employees. We have now secured four million N-95 face masks that are effective in filtering 95 percent of microbes, including anthrax spores, from the air, and 86 million pairs of hypoallergenic vinyl and Nitrile gloves.

When we learned that our employees had actually been exposed to anthrax, we took aggressive steps to safeguard them. Over the last two weeks, more than 15,000 employees have begun receiving antibiotic treatment. Some 9,000 have been tested. To date, nine of our 800,000 employees have contracted anthrax. This is nine too many.

We asked all postal employees to provide us with update emergency contact information as well as their current telephone numbers and residential addresses. Our field units are establishing special telephone numbers for employees to call if they are hospitalized. We have also urged employees under medical care to advise the treating physician or hospital that they are Postal Service employees.

In addition to testing and treatment of employees, we also began environmental testing of 30 major processing facilities along the east coast. We are expanding that to 200 processing facilities nationwide as a precautionary measure. As necessary, based on the results of these tests, we will do further testing of our operations downstream from the mail processing facilities. The Army Corps of Engineers is assisting in our testing efforts.

To date, 128 postal facilities have been tested or are in the process of being tested. Approximately 100 downstream offices that receive mail from Trenton and Brentwood are being tested with the help of the Army Corps of Engineers. In addition, with the assistance of the CDC, 260 mailrooms at businesses and government agencies in the Washington area are being tested.

We have also addressed operational changes aimed at better safeguarding our employees and our customers. We have modified our equipment cleaning procedures to minimize the spread of dust and debris. For routine facility cleaning, we are now using products that are effective in killing anthrax and a number of other bacterial agents.

On Friday, we awarded a contract for the purchase of electron beam systems to sanitize mail as it enters our processing system, with options to purchase more. This equipment has been successfully used in the food and medical industries. In addition, an Ohio firm is now sanitizing targeted mail from our Washington, DC processing facility.

We have performed environmental testing at facilities in Washington, Florida, New Jersey and New York. Where necessary, they have been closed for decontamination. At this time, two New Jersey postal employees have contracted cutaneous anthrax, with two others found to have inhalation anthrax. Two Washington employees remain hospitalized for inhalation anthrax. No employees in Florida or New York have been found to be infected.

Since October 15, when it was established, a Mail Security Task Force has contributed in all of these efforts. Members include the Postal Inspection Service, the Office of Inspector General, medical and safety professionals from the Postal Service, operations managers, representatives of our employee organizations and mailers. This has been a positive and constructive forum. Members are active, they participate, and they listen. They also learn from the information provided to them by guest experts, such as CDC representatives, who have attended meetings.

This mobilization occurred rapidly, just as rapidly as events unfolded over the last three weeks. Here is what we know.

Three letters confirmed as containing anthrax moved through the postal system. To put this into context, since the time the first letters were postmarked on September 18, the Postal Service has delivered more than 25 billion pieces of mail.

In Washington, at the facility where the Senate letter was processed before delivery, two postal employees have died and another two have been hospitalized – all as a result of inhalation anthrax. In New Jersey, where the letters were mailed, two postal employees contracted cutaneous anthrax and two suffer from inhalation anthrax. Fortunately, there is no indication that postal employees have been infected in Florida or in New York.

Among the targets of the three letters, NBC News, the New York Post and the office of Senator Daschle, two individuals have contracted cutaneous anthrax.

The Postal Service, the CDC, the medical community and the nation are in uncharted territory. Yet we are aggressively seeking answers as we work thorough this fluid and dynamic situation. We have worked closely with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the President's Office of Science and Technology, and state and local health departments. Their knowledge has helped to guide us in our medical and operational responses to the exposure of our employees, our customers and our facilities.

Let me start at the beginning. Like the entire nation, we learned of a possible link between anthrax and the mail late on October 8 when news reports indicated a possible connection in the Florida case. The Postal Inspection Service immediately began to assist the FBI in its investigation. And during that week, we provided all of our employees with information about safe mail-handling procedures and how to identify symptoms of anthrax infection.

On October 12 we learned that an employee of NBC News had contracted cutaneous anthrax. The following day, we learned for the first time that it was linked to a letter that came through the mail. This was the first affirmative between anthrax and the mail. On the same day, we issued additional communications to our employees about safe mail handling, including an advisory about using gloves and masks when handling mail. We were advised that there was no special risk to our employees but, in dealing with an unknown situation, we felt it best to take these precautions.

The following day, since we had learned of a link with the mail in the NBC case, we began testing Boca Raton employees for anthrax exposure. All results were negative. However, as a precaution, 30 of that facility's 109 employees began taking antibiotics. Health authorities advised that there was no threat to the other 79 employees but they, too, were offered antibiotics. Environmental testing found trace results of anthrax at the facility. It was decontaminated. On Saturday, October 27, employees at the West Palm Beach facility began receiving medication. To date, there have been no recorded cases of anthrax infection among Florida postal employees.

In the Florida case, as in virtually all other medical and environmental actions we have taken, we acted after receiving the advice of federal, state and local health authorities.

At the same time, unknown to us, an anthrax-tainted letter to Senator Daschle was moving through our system. On October 15, we learned through the media that letter had been received and opened in the Senator's office.

During this period, we redoubled our internal communications efforts so that all postal employees had additional knowledge about protecting themselves from anthrax and other harmful material that might be in the mail. These included stand-up safety talks, a special program on our internal television network featuring two medical experts from CDC. At the same time, we revised our policy for cleaning dust and debris from mail processing equipment.

Senator Daschle's office, which had received and opened a letter containing anthrax, was contaminated. Testing revealed contamination in other locations of the Hart Senate Office Building.

Testing of Senate employees for anthrax exposure began Monday, October 15. By Wednesday, October 17, we learned that Senate staffers had tested positive for exposure. We contacted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to determine if similar activities were necessary for employees of our Brentwood Processing and Distribution Center. We were advised that because the Senate letter was well sealed, our employees were not at risk and no action was necessary.

The next day, October 18, we held a press conference at Brentwood to announce the $1 million reward. This site was selected because, based on medical information, we understood that there were no problems at that location. We felt it was important to let employees, the public and the media know that we were taking the appropriate steps to keep the mail, and those who were in contact with it, safe.

We had also independently arranged for environmental testing of the Brentwood facility as a precautionary measure. Initial field test results were negative but, laboratory test results, which we received on October 22 showed that areas of the building were contaminated with anthrax. However, we had closed the facility as a precaution on October 21, after learned that two facility employees were ill with inhalation anthrax. CDC environmental tests, which began on October 22, later confirmed the contamination.

Because the duties of one of the hospitalized Brentwood employees involved visits to the Air Mail Facility at Baltimore Washington International Airport, that facility was also closed, as a precautionary measure, on October 21. Medical testing of Brentwood and BWI employees began on October 21 and they were placed on antibiotics.

On the same day, we learned that the worst had happened – a Brentwood employee, not previously identified as being infected, died. The following day, this tragic event was followed by similar news that another employee, also not known to be infected, died. In both cases, the employees had contracted inhalation anthrax.

Meanwhile, we had learned that two New Jersey employees had contracted cutaneous anthrax. We learned only this week from CDC officials that two others have confirmed cases of inhalation anthrax. Environmental tests disclosed spores at our offices in Hamilton Township and West Trenton, and they were closed for decontamination on October 19. Through both CDC and state health authorities, employees at the affected facilities were tested and received antibiotics. As a precaution, we are also testing other Trenton-area facilities.

All of these actions will have a dramatic impact on our finances. We must recoup the expenses incurred with bio-terrorism. We must pay for testing, masks, gloves and sanitization equipment and services. We did not anticipate the expenses connected with the anthrax attacks on top of an already bleak financial outlook. This outlook had already been clouded by revenue loss associated with all of the events that began with the September 11 attacks.

Against this backdrop, we are grateful that the White House has committed $175 million to help the Postal Service pay for the supplies and equipment we are initially obtaining to protect the safety of our employees, our customers, and the mail. We are extremely grateful for this funding. It is an important step in our long range efforts to protect the mail.

Management and the national leadership of the four principal employee unions and the three organizations that represent postmasters, supervisors and management employees are working extremely closely on this issue. The advice, suggestions and support of our employee representatives are critical to our ability to take a productive and unified approach to protecting all of our employees, both craft and management. We continue to meet daily and consult and plan together as we implement and expand our efforts.

We have learned a great deal through this experience. Initially, we did experience communication problems, sometimes receiving critical information through the media, not from other agencies. The different focuses of various law enforcement and health organizations occasionally resulted in parties speaking different "languages." And, absent an established protocol, lines of authority could occasionally be unclear. With the establishment of the Office of Homeland Security under the leadership of Governor Tom Ridge, we have experienced a significant improvement in this area.

We have learned that there is no effective and quick method to test facilities for anthrax. With this in mind, we have implemented a structured expansion of our facility testing to 30 sites. The distribution of a 10-day supply of antibiotics to employees during the testing period reflects the inability to test quickly.

However, we have learned much. Our employees and the public are far better informed that they have ever been on this issue. We have implemented better

operational procedures that can help minimize anthrax transmission. And we have also improved our maintenance processes. We have come extremely far in so short a period.

I have described a great many actions. But we will not stop there. We cannot. As the entire nation has been reminded through this crisis, the mail is a critical part of our national infrastructure – it is not an option. It is a major element of our personal and business communications, and it will remain so. That is why we will continue our efforts – whatever it takes and as long as it takes – to defeat the enemy we are facing today. It will take the contributions of many people and many organizations working closely together toward this single goal if we are to prevail. And I believe we will.

I want to assure you that we are not underestimating in any way the challenge of protecting a system that is so vast. We will find the right balance between protecting our employees and customers and delivering on our historic mission of operating an effective and efficient Postal Service that remains both safe and accessible.

In closing, I would like to recognize the men and women of the Postal Service. They have demonstrated an incredible commitment to public service during this challenging period. I am proud of each and every one of them.

Thank you.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Postmaster General.

I was watching television the other night, and one of the postal employees in New York said that a couple of the machines that were being used to process the mail, where the anthrax had gone through, were just ringed with some kind of yellow tape and that the employees were working in close proximity to that. Can you clarify that for us?

Mr. POTTER. It's my understanding, Mr. Chairman, that we had four machines where we found traces of anthrax. We sealed that area off. The area that was sealed off was some 150,000 square feet of space. We brought in clean-up crews to remediate that area.

One thing has to be understand about the Morgan Station, it's a 1.8 million square foot facility. It's multi-story, we brought in CDC, NIOSH, the city health department and we showed them what we had. They were aware of what we had. They advised that we could seal off that area, and remediate that area without doing any harm to anyone else in the building. We were assured that the ventilation system in that building had no anthrax spore contamination.

So the decision was made to seal off an area and remediate that area again, working closely with the medical authorities to determine a safe and proper procedure for handling the contamination in that building.

Mr. BURTON. So you're pretty confident that's a safe working area right now?

Mr. POTTER. As confident as one can be getting advice from all the experts, yes.

Mr. BURTON. The Controller General, 6 months ago, told us that the Postal Service was operating in a very—it was one of the financial crisis areas. I've talked to you and met with the Board of Governors on a number of occasions. I think Mr. Waxman has as well.

You're up against your $15 billion ceiling. And you were going to run, I think, somewhere around a $2 billion to $3 billion shortfall this year before all this stuff started to happen, these tragedies. Can you give us a rough idea, and you said you would get us figures as quickly as possible, but can you give us a rough idea of what needs to be done to help the post office through this crisis without them going bankrupt?

Do you need additional revenues for these irradiation machines from the Federal Government? If so, how much? How much will it take total? And also, we've talked about postal reform for some time. Is it something that we ought to be looking at right now that would help you through this crisis as well.

Mr. POTTER. Well, first let me deal with the financial situation. We had anticipated that in fiscal year 2002, we would lose somewhere on the order of $1.4 billion. That's after us taking a lot of aggressive steps to consolidate operations and to reduce overhead in some of our staffing.

What's occurred now is that as a result of September 11th, for our first accounting period in the first month of this fiscal year, our revenues were some $300 million short of expectations. Our volumes were down 6 percent. And that was a result of the September 11th attack.

Now we have this anthrax attack which is compounding the situation. We hope that Americans continue to mail, we hope that Americans continue to have confidence in the mail. The best thing that people can do around America, of course, is to put a stamp on an envelope and get it in the mail, continue to use their catalogs. We have not and cannot accurately predict what might happen as a result of the anthrax attacks. And we're going to continue to monitor that situation.

However, it's not farfetched to imagine that this situation could end up hurting us to the tune of several billion dollars. But again, it will be a function of consumer behavior, business behavior in terms of how they use the mail.

In addition to that, we're looking to put in processes and equipment that would sanitize the mail. We have worked with the Defense Department and others to identify equipment that would sanitize mail and eliminate any bacteria that might be found in mail. The mail that we're looking to sanitize is that mail where people have open access to, to place mail into the system. So it's from collection boxes, lobby drops that we might have in post offices, or lobby drops in major buildings.

Our initial estimate on the costs associated with putting that type of equipment into our centers is on the order of $2.5 billion. So there we have several billion in costs.

In addition to that, we have costs that we didn't anticipate for masks, gloves, and we're going to change our operational procedures such that we protect our employees. Initially, I think you're aware that the administration made $175 million available to the Postal Service. It was for the initial buy of sanitizing equipment. And the initial buys of gloves and masks, and costs associated with medical treatment for our employees.

So beyond that initial $175 million, we anticipate that costs continue on. Our hope is that we catch the people who perpetrated this act. But until that time, we have to do what we can to shore up our vulnerabilities, either vulnerabilities to entering mail into the mail stream or vulnerabilities of our employees.

Mr. BURTON. Let me just ask one more question. You didn't address how these costs will be paid for. Will you need a direct appropriation from the Federal Government in addition to possible stamp price increases to meet the costs of these irradiation machines, these cleansing machines? And will that be in conjunction with a postal rate increase, or will that necessitate that? And also the postal reform issue.

Mr. POTTER. OK, I'll answer the first part and I'll ask Governor Fineman to followup with my response on the reform issue.

We definitely are going to ask for an appropriation, particularly for the economic costs associated with this. We view a lot of the costs that we're going to bear as part of homeland security. We don't feel that the ratepayers should bear the burden of these costs.

We had filed in late September for a rate increase. We anticipated that rate increase may impact the volumes of mail that we have. We don't think that the ratepayers can bear an additional burden. So we are going to seek an appropriation to help us with that.

We're delighted that you've taken on postal reform as one of your key issues. We are working and will work closely with you on postal reform. We believe that there is a need to change to allow us to operate in a more businesslike manner. An area that I'm excited to get into is the area of negotiated service agreements, so we can work with big, volume mailers, such that we can offer them price packages that would allow them to increase the volume of mail moving through the system and help to finance, in the long run, the Nation's mail.

I'll turn it over to Governor Fineman to add to that.

Mr. FINEMAN. Mr. Chairman, as you know, and Ranking Member Waxman, I've met with both of you and met with other members of this committee who have been working on postal reform. I've spoken passionately about it, the absolute necessity to have postal reform, prior to the incidents with anthrax.

I can only tell you the frustration that I feel today as a member of the Board of Governors. Both myself and my colleagues, sit on boards of privately held companies. And if you had a major catastrophe, the management would come to the board of directors with a whole bunch of things that you might do.

In today's world, the way the Postal Service law was written in 1970, we don't have the luxury of doing much. That is particularly true in the area of pricing. Assume today that we wanted to get our volumes up. Assume that we could go to some of our major suppliers, that is some of our major customers. We could say to them, it's absolutely necessary to keep people having confidence in the mail. What we'd like to do is lower the price for you, right now, for the next month. We'd like to maybe lower the price a little bit and see if we can increase volumes.

We can't do that. There's a law that prohibits it. What we have to do is file a rate case, and I've testified here before, as you know, that it will take 16, sometimes 20 months from the time when we start preparing a rate case to get it finally finished. It doesn't work in a modern society. The law just doesn't work. And I would say to you that the situation with anthrax is a frustrating situation for us on the board, because we feel like our hands are tied, that there aren't that many things we can do in regard to the financial viability of the Postal Service.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you. Mr. Waxman.

Mr. WAXMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I appreciate your testimony. Mr. Potter, as I understand, the cornerstone of the approach that the Postal Service is planning in response to this anthrax possibility in the mail is to try to sanitize the mail, so consumers will know when they receive mail that it won't have anthrax and it won't have any other harmful biological agent in it, isn't that correct?

Mr. POTTER. Yes.

Mr. WAXMAN. And you're looking at asking the taxpayers to come up with $2.5 billion to help pay for this new technological innovation. I support helping the Postal Service. But I want to be sure that we're doing it in the right possible way.

As I understand it, there are two types of technology. One is what's called e-beams and the other is x-rays. These technologies are both effective. But there are strengths and weaknesses. For ex-

ample, they both use radiation to kill bacteria and viruses, and they've both been proven to be safe for use on food and medical equipment.

But if you look at the e-beam technology, my understanding is that the Postal Service wants to use this to sanitize letters by directing a stream of electrons at mail that passes on a conveyor belt. My staff contacted private sector experts in e-beam technology and were told that e-beam has promise in sanitizing large amounts of mail. According to these experts, the advantages of this approach are that sterilization can occur quickly and efficiently.

But they also told us that using e-beam technology to sanitize the mail poses large engineering problems. E-beam technology has been used for homogenous kinds of products, like sterilizing medical syringes or whatever, that are basically the same thing. Therefore, the engineers can adjust the technology to assure that the right dose is administered.

But in the mail, it's very different. We have different size packages, we could have not only the variations in weight, but the composition can be different. And I want you to answer this question, but I'm limited in time. One of the things I want you to answer for the record is the assurances about being able to overcome these engineering problems and adapting e-beam technology to something as complex as the mail stream. So that's one thing we're going to need an answer for.

But I want to get to the second point. The other is to look at x-ray technology. The problem with e-beam technology is it won't penetrate solid matter very far. But even dense letters may not be sanitized, as I understand it, with e-beams. But x-ray can sterilize far deeper than e-beams, can be used for sterilization of large packages. However, according to experts I've consulted, x-rays are far less efficient, far more time consuming, potentially far more costly than e-beams. So I have a lot of questions about this technology.

But I also want to ask you, why aren't we doing something common sense, like, obviously you're not going to put everything through a screening. You indicated if it were in a mailing house, there's no need to screen it. So what we're looking at is mail that goes into a collection box or a lobby drop. That's mail that terrorists can use in a way that keeps then anonymous. Isn't that maybe the problem we're looking at?

Mr. POTTER. That is the problem we're looking at. And again, we don't want to take away a freedom that we have in America to have open access to the mail stream. So we're trying to balance that with technology.

Now, regarding the technology, I'm obviously not an expert. My expertise is moving mail around the country. But we are going to use e-beam x-ray technology. Anticipating that I might get a question on that, I brought our vice president of Engineering, Tom Day, who is working with the best people in the field on this. Let me turn it over to him.

Mr. WAXMAN. Before you do, e-beam technology and x-ray technology can be different. They can be referred to as the same, but they are different technologies, as I understand it. But let's look at, before you even use the high tech, high priced technology that has

pluses and minuses, why not take away some of the freedom that people have to go in anonymously and send packages?

Why not have people be required to come in personally and have some identification before they start mailing some kinds of letters or packages that might be harmful? Why can't there be some kind of analysis, the way you do with airline screening, where you make an assessment of somebody face to face, whether they are possibly someone you want to watch carefully because of the demeanor they have or the way they approach the mail?

Why not some of that less expensive way to deal with narrowing the amount of mail that we have to go through, either e-beam or x-ray technology?

Mr. POTTER. I have a couple of responses to that. One is that, in my opinion, it would be more expensive to do that. We have some 50 billion pieces of mail that come in through collection boxes over the course of the year. So it would be a recurring expense as well. It would be an inconvenience to the American public. And so the introduction of technology is something that we feel would be the most cost effective means of dealing with this problem for the American public as a whole.

Mr. WAXMAN. Of course, packages, they still have to come in face to face and take it to a post office.

Mr. POTTER. Packages beyond a certain size, yes, Congressman.

Mr. WAXMAN. Do you think that's kept people from using the Postal Service for their packages?

Mr. POTTER. No, I don't. But I do believe that if we had everybody come into the Postal Service with their letters that would be inconvenient to many Americans. They may look to use other technologies to get their bills and payments done.

Mr. WAXMAN. That may happen anyway.

My time is up. I just want to conclude this round or this opportunity, because I'm going to further request answers to some questions in writing for the record. I would hope you would consider trying to figure out low-tech, low-cost ways to narrow the amount of mail that has to go through the high tech, high priced screening, especially since there are pluses and minuses in the technology, the technologies you're considering. I would just hate to see us spend billions of dollars on high priced technology that may not work and probably won't be available for a very long period of time. Isn't that correct? We're looking at years, or at least a year or two before you can sanitize the mail and assure everybody that every piece of mail is secure.

Mr. POTTER. We're looking today at manual screening of mail in targeted areas to try and identify pieces of mail that may be tainted and moving through the mail stream. Again, expensive to do, it will be a recurring cost. And I'm not sure, should we have Mr. Day respond or would you like that done for the record, Congressman?

Mr. WAXMAN. If the gentleman would just give it for the record——

Dr. WELDON [assuming Chair]. Go ahead and respond.

Mr. WAXMAN. It's OK for him to respond?

Dr. WELDON. Yes, I want to hear the response to the question.

Mr. WAXMAN. Well, then, Mr. Chairman, I hope I'll have a chance at a followup question.

Mr. DAY. Congressman, you've pretty well summarized the pluses and minuses on the two technologies. We have not done this on our own. I've worked with the President's Office of Science and Technology. Dr. Marburger has been very gracious to help us coordinate with the various Federal agencies to get the right specifications for the equipment we need.

I can tell you in discussions we've had on two separate occasions with various other Federal agencies that the belief was that our long term solution with technology should be the x-ray. Because as you correctly pointed out, the issue of penetration.

E-beam is our interim solution. We're limiting the product we send through there in a way that ensures that it's properly irradiated and any biohazard could be eliminated. That took a bit of discussion amongst the agencies, and it's interesting, because no one ever thought of this technology for the mail. But it involved both the FDA as well as some work by the Department of Defense to come up with some agreement about what, and the term used is dosing levels, to ensure that you've achieved the kill rate on the biohazard. And we've set it exceptionally high, with very stringent quality controls, to make sure that it works.

But you're correct, the long term, to ensure you've got penetration, is the x-ray solution.

Mr. WAXMAN. Just so we understand, that's the direction you're taking. We're going to need to know the cost of x-raying a single piece of mail, how long it will take to sterilize a typical package with x-ray, how much energy we're going to have to use for these x-rays to sanitize the mail, and how much radiation needs to be used to kill a collection of anthrax spores.

I know other members have questions, but we're going to need to get those answers at some point in the legislative process before we appropriate the money.

Dr. WELDON. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. WAXMAN. I'd ask unanimous consent to put in the record congressional testimony of the U.S. Postal Service Safety and Security, Charles Moser, president of the National Association of Postmasters.

Dr. WELDON. Without objection.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Moser follows:]

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE SAFETY AND SECURITY

CHARLES MOSER, PRESIDENT
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POSTMASTERS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

OCTOBER 30, 2001

On behalf of the 42,000 members of the National Association of Postmasters of the United States (NAPUS), I am honored to share my thoughts with the Committee regarding the tragic events that have impacted the U.S. Postal Service and its employees.

Today, the House of Representatives is deliberating over a commission to study how best to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Benjamin Franklin's birth. Our first Postmaster General, Benjamin Franklin, must be turning in his grave over the damage suffered by the Postal Service as the result of these attacks. The historic mission that the Postal Service provides can be jeopardized act if we do not act decisively to restore confidence in our nation's mail system. Our founding fathers charged the post office to "bind the nation together." We must recommit ourselves to this goal. Moreover, and just as important, we must look out for the safety of our postal workforce and customers throughout the nation.

Postmaster General Potter has been handed a situation for which he could not have planned. Yet, I believe he has ably spearheaded efforts to protect the integrity of our postal system. Nonetheless, two of our own, postal employees, who hailed from the Washington, D.C. Brentwood Mail Facility, have lost their lives to mailed anthrax. Postal workers in New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, and possibly other areas may have been exposed to this biohazard. Nationwide, the Centers for Disease Control have claimed that we currently have thirteen confirmed cases of this disease. Postal customers, including Senator Daschle's office and other congressional offices, have been exposed to the infected mail. These events are intolerable and need to be addressed.

On behalf of country's 28,000 active postmasters, I commend the degree of cooperation that our employees have exhibited, and their desire not to be intimidated by terrorists whose moral compass is nonexistent. The safety of our more than 800,000 postal employees cannot be sacrificed. Consistent, rationale, and effective criteria for protecting our workers must be employed. Accurate information needs to be disseminated to postal managers in order that everyone is reading off the same playbook. We must adequately protect our workers and customers who use the mail.

The commerce of our nation's democracy relies upon a secure and universal Postal Service. Constituent correspondence to congressional offices is currently being quarantined. This necessary precaution may hamper the

ability of American citizens to communicate with you. Now, it's extremely difficult for your constituents to share their thoughts with you about legislation that may impact their daily lives. Bioterrorists have exploited the most ubiquitous symbol of our government – its postal facilities and its mail – to provide the means to deliver their deadly cargo.

Clerks, letter carriers, mail handlers, supervisors, and postmasters have been thrust into the frontlines of a very dangerous battle. This is a battle over the very essence of our democracy, the free-flow of information. It is imperative that the Postal Service arm itself with the essential weapons to protect its employees, preserve the sanctity of the mail, and guarantee continued universal mail service. Our country's postmasters pledge to you that we will fight vigorously to safely ensure that the lines of communication among the mailing public, business mailers, and government institutions are not jeopardized. A strong and aggressive Postal Inspection Service is a necessary prerequisite to investigate and bring to justice those who have committed these crimes against the mailing public and postal employees.

NAPUS commends Congress and the White House for their desire to assist the Postal Service in waging a successful battle to protect our country's delivery network, processing plants, and post offices. As I am sure you understand, the necessary equipment to accomplish this goal will not be cheap. Nonetheless, its acquisition should be a government priority. Consequently, NAPUS urges you to push for appropriate funding to ensure the continued sanctity of the mail and universal postal services.

Postal employees, the mailing community, the American public, Congress, the President, and the Postal Service itself must work together if we are to succeed.

Thank you.

Dr. WELDON. I also ask unanimous consent to include in the record an article by Alan Robinson, Direct Communications Group, Could the USPS be the first major business casualty of the war on terrorism. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information referred to follows:]

DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

COULD THE USPS BE THE FIRST MAJOR BUSINESS CASUALTY OF THE WAR ON TERRORISM?

BY ALAN M. ROBINSON

OCTOBER 23, 2001

Terrorists have now struck the United States Postal Service with a second punch while it is still reeling from the effects of acts of September 11. The terrorist acts in New York, Washington DC and Pennsylvania caused revenue to shrink by $300 to 400 million and raised operating costs by $60 million. Now, the distribution of anthrax in letters has raised questions about the safety of the mail and has caused recipients to place holds on their incoming mail. The Arizona Daily Star has gone so far as to stop accepting letters to the editor and other newspaper departments sent as regular mail. The Postal Service also faces substantial costs of closing and cleaning facilities through which the tainted letters passed and ensuring employee safety. This second punch may be sufficient to take a Postal Service that was already on the financial ropes and put it down for the count.

Till now, the economic effects of terrorism have resulted in the closure of few businesses of consequence. The destruction of the World Trade Center closed the sandwich shops and other small businesses at ground zero when their places of business were destroyed or placed off limit to customers. Two small airlines, Midway and National that were already in bankruptcy have shuttered. For firms on the brink of bankruptcy, the intensification of the economic slowdown has made turnaround plans look less promising and liquidation more attractive to creditors

The Postal Service's core financial problem is no different than many businesses writing turnaround plans with a goal of avoiding bankruptcy or liquidation. These problems were all evident before September 11. First, the Postal Service's liabilities far outstrip its assets. Second, the business does not generate sufficient cash to prevent service deterioration. Third, the business generates substantial operating losses. Fourth, the Postal Service's borrowing needs pushes its annual and total debt toward statutory limits.

. The Postal Service faces substantial unfunded liabilities to cover the pension and retirement costs of its employees. The known liability for civil service pensions exceeds $32 billion and does not include liabilities to be added in future years. The liability for retiree healthcare benefits approaches $40 billion. The Postal Service has no hard assets to cover these liabilities. Instead, the Postal Service and accounting conventions allow future postal revenues to be considered as an asset equal to the unfunded

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liability because rates set in a regulatory process are expected to recover all costs. Future postal volumes and revenues are now substantially less certain than before the terrorist attacks. As such the accounting convention granting the Postal Service a clean balance sheet may no longer hold.

The Postal Service's cash situation is equally precarious. The Postal Service must generate over $4 billion in cash above operating expenses to cover unfunded annuitant liabilities. In fiscal year 2000, nearly 80 percent of all operating cash went to cover these expenses. The limited cash reserves, and large annuitant payments, have caused the Postal Service this year to freeze capital spending through 2003. The only exceptions are cases of emergency or unsafe working conditions. The tainted letters will introduce clean up and security costs that the Postal Service had not anticipated when the freeze was announced. The cash shortage means that the new spending necessary to respond to the attacks will close out capital spending further into the future and may require deeper budgetary cuts than previously planned. In this tight cash environment, projects such as New York's Penn Station redevelopment and new post offices in areas experiencing population growth are impossible for the foreseeable future. Without the cash necessary to expand its network into high population growth areas, the Postal Service effectively retreats from providing retail services to customers in many parts of the country.

The Postal Service could generate the necessary cash if it could generate positive net income. However since Postal reorganization in 1970, the Postal Service's losses have totaled at least $5 billion. Prior to September 11, the losses expected for the current fiscal year were $1.35 billion. This forecast will worsen as the Postal Service incurs increases in security, labor, workers compensation, and environmental costs and decreases in mail volume due to the economic slowdown, delays in mail delivery within corporate mailrooms, and refusal of some recipients to accept certain types of mail.

All of these financial problems are complicated by the Postal Services debt problems and statutory debt limits. The Postal Service has covered its operating losses and some of its capital needs through borrowing. Its long-term debt nearly equals its cumulative losses. The Postal Service's total debt will reach about $11 billion at the beginning of this fiscal year. If the terrorist attacks substantially worsen operations or increase capital spending needs to counter the impact of anthrax, the Postal Service could hit its annual $3 billion statutory borrowing limit and still not have sufficient cash pay its annuitant and other bills that come due a year from now. If the terrorist attacks have systemic impact on the use of mail services, the Postal Service could hit the limits to its total borrowing authority by the end of its 2003 fiscal year.

In addition to making the Postal Services existing financial troubles more difficult, the terrorist attacks have added two new burdens to the Postal Service's load. First, the Postal Service now has to restore the belief of its employees that their work environment is safe and that their employer is doing everything possible to ensure their safety. Second, the Postal Service has to restore the confidence in its brand. Recipients now have to be convinced that it is safe to open their mail. Without that confidence, senders will not send mail that recipients will not open. Restoring brand confidence under these circumstances would be difficult. The challenge is made even more difficult as it must be done while the Postal Service implements substantial rate increases in a sluggish economy.

This double challenge is equivalent to what faced Value Jet and Air Florida after air crashes and neither carrier survived. The American economy can not afford for the Postal Service to suffer the same fate. The "mail" economy is an $871 billion industry and employs nearly nine million workers.

Restoring the confidence of the Postal Service's employees and customers will be an expensive proposition. The Postal Service Board of Governors has authorized expenditure of $1 billion to improve security and safety without identifying the cash source to cover the unexpected costs. This is on top of the nearly $1 billion that the Postal Service asked for in a budget submitted prior to the

terrorist attacks. Losses in mail revenue and additional operating costs will likely increase the Postal Service's requests towards a range of $5 to $8 billion.

Once the immediate crisis passes, a long-term strategy is needed to ensure that the Postal Service can continue to provide service in a radically changed environment and that its obligations to employees, annuitants, and bondholders are paid. Proposals developed by the Postal Service, the mailing community, and Congress all need to be rethought in light of the new challenges that the Postal Service now faces and the additional financial burdens that these challenges bring.

Dr. WELDON. The Chair now yields himself 5 minutes for questioning. I want to thank you, Mr. Potter, for coming and testifying, and all the people you brought with you. The eyes of the Nation are really focused very intensely on this. Let me just start out by asking you, what would you say to the average American who goes down to his mailbox in the afternoon to get his mail?

Mr. POTTER. My message to the average American is that the mail is safe, that they need to take the proper precautions and have awareness about what's in their mailbox, to assure that it's safe. I would suggest to them that they read the postcard we sent them. That would make them aware of things that might be out of the ordinary in their mailbox and advise them on what to do in the event they come across something that's out of the ordinary.

But we deliver to 137 million addresses every day. And we've had a handful of letters that have moved through the system and have caused obviously death and have caused disease. But in terms of the average mailbox, the knowledge that people have of what's in their mailbox, greeting cards, packages they might have ordered from a catalog, or their bills, or letters from loved ones, that mail is safe.

Dr. WELDON. Would you say that those items you were just mentioning, catalogs and mail say from a utility company, a bill, those items are to be viewed as safe, that it's other pieces of mail that perhaps meet the description as has been outlined in the press that is more of a concern?

Mr. POTTER. Yes, Congressman.

Dr. WELDON. OK. Now, this may be a question for Mr. Day. I just want to followup a little bit on the line of questioning the ranking member was pursuing. There are very few companies that make this radiation equipment. So even if we gave you an appropriation, it's going to take, I understand, months to years to get all this equipment in place, is that correct?

Mr. DAY. Congressman, in a general sense you're correct. One of the things we quickly realized is that it is a very limited industry. Previous uses were generally food processing, as well as medical equipment sterilization, a few industrial uses as well. So a very limited industry.

We've already begun discussions, one of the things quickly determined is that the industry depends upon a couple of key suppliers for key components to make the system. We've already begun the discussion to see what it would take to ramp up those key suppliers as well as try to get some of the bigger companies that we deal with for postal technology potentially to help with the manufacturing, to ramp up the manufacturing of this product as well.

You're correct, it is very limited source currently. But we have begun the discussion to see what it would take to speed up the production of the equipment.

Dr. WELDON. I've heard the discussion of how you will make some sort of distinction between high risk and low risk mail. I can understand if you're taking a bulk delivery from, say, Sears Roebuck or Land's End, catalogs from a printing company, that constitutes a lower risk mail product for you. But how are you going to protect the postal workers that are collecting the mail from the drop boxes? It's fine if you have an irradiation machine and you're

taking it to the irradiation machine and it gets irradiated and then it comes to my house and I know it's been sanitized and I'm safe. But what about the postal worker who is going to those drop boxes and collecting the mail?

Mr. POTTER. We have a separate group from the engineering group working on the process, the collection box process, to assure that those employees that might remove mail from a collection box are not put in harm's way. Today they're doing that via mask and gloves. But we believe that there are processes that we can put in place to prevent them from coming into harmful contact with that mail. We're working on those as we speak.

Dr. WELDON. Is there any discussion of vaccinating the work force for anthrax and/or other biological agents?

Mr. POTTER. The Surgeon General did make that statement, and we're going to rely on the medical community to give us that advice. We're not medical experts.

Dr. WELDON. Just a couple of additional questions—well, I see my time has expired. Let me just ask one quick one. I understand the FAA is not allowing USPS parcels on passenger flights any more. Is that true?

Mr. POTTER. The FAA has restrictions regarding the transport of packages above a certain weight on domestic passenger airlines.

Dr. WELDON. Has that impacted your operations at all, the restrictions on mail that's traveling on passenger airlines?

Mr. POTTER. Yes, it has. We've had to expand the surface reach for packages, as well as move those packages onto cargo carriers as opposed to passenger carrier planes.

Dr. WELDON. My time has expired. I thank you. And the Chair now yields to the gentlelady from the District of Columbia, Ms. Norton, for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Potter and all of your colleagues, for your testimony today. You may know that I was a town meeting last night, among many, over 500 residents came. There were a fair number of postal workers. Not surprisingly, there is still some disconcerted response there. Many of them are still dislocated, because you're decontaminating the Brentwood facility. You had something of a labor relations problem before anthrax. Obviously you're going to have a problem afterwards.

This is a tough workplace. It is a tough workplace without disease. It's become a much tougher one. But frankly, I'm not interested in recrimination. I am interested in whether or not the Postal Service is prepared to save lives and to give the appropriate assurances going forward. Apparently, the only contingency plan the Postal Service had was one that would allow the mail to be delivered in the case of interruption, such as planes not going up and the rest, but nothing related to hazardous substances.

I'd like to ask you a question about Brentwood in particular. These workers have been out of the workplace at Brentwood now, I don't know, what is it, a week? Some contamination job must really be going on. They've been out for a long time. I assume now that a great deal of planning is going on in the Postal Service to stay ahead of the crisis and of disease. Can you assure us that

after the facility is decontaminated that only sanitized mail will be processed through the Brentwood postal station?

Mr. POTTER. We will be able to assure that once we have the equipment in place to sanitize mail.

Ms. NORTON. Well, the reason I ask is, the workers are out of there a week or more, and if in fact anything other than sanitized mail goes in, how is anyone to know that the process of contamination is not going to be repeated?

Mr. POTTER. That is a dilemma that we all are facing right now.

Ms. NORTON. It's a terrible dilemma, given the deaths at Brentwood. Is there a planning group trying to look ahead in ways like this? What good will it do to tell people to come back if they don't know if the next letter coming in has anthrax in it, and everybody might be out of Brentwood all over again?

Mr. POTTER. We are working as diligently as we can to identify targeted mail and screen it early in the process to keep it out of our mail systems.

Ms. NORTON. I would just ask, and I understand the dilemma you're under, this is a brand new situation. Nobody's ever had to think this through before. But I do believe that it would be important for your work force, important for the people who live here and important for the Federal presence if the mail going through Brentwood in particular, even if not sanitized by the new technology, could go through some process that would give everybody some assurance, even if it was low tech, even if it was something like the ranking member was discussing, that would say to people, this mail has not come in blind. Something has happened that makes it different from before. There is a before and after here for all mail, or else I think you're going to have a crisis of confidence that continues.

Mr. POTTER. We are looking at a number of things in the Brentwood facility. Obviously, the mail that was targeted initially in this case was Government mail. We're considering not moving Government mail back into that facility, keep that isolated and make sure that's appropriately sanitized before our employees there touch it.

Until we have sanitizing equipment in place, the best thing we can do for our employees is offer them protection, protection in the form of gloves, protection in the form of masks. It's not the ultimate solution. We don't want our employees walking around feeling that they're in an unsafe environment. But in the interim, that is the short term solution that we can find, in addition to targeted screening of mail as it's collected in places of concern.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Potter, on page 2 of your testimony you describe how the—and the Postal Inspector was here earlier—how your Postal Inspection Services is "actively involved with the Federal Bureau of Investigation." I'd like to know exactly how they operate. There's the FBI on the one hand, there's a Postal Inspector on the other. Let me give you the model that often is used in D.C. In D.C., the FBI sits in D.C. police headquarters, so that if a matter local or Federal rises to a certain level, you can't tell the difference between the FBI and the D.C. police because they work like that.

I want to know how the Postal Inspector operates, operationally, how is he related or she related to the FBI?

Mr. POTTER. On individual cases, and obviously we have an investigation going on here, they work as a joint team working on all of these matters. Today, they're not only investigating to try and determine who the perpetrator of the crime of putting anthrax in the mail was, but they're working closely together with the FBI and local law enforcement to track down all of the hoaxes that we have. Because the hoaxes are as big a problem in terms of the psyche of the American public as the actual anthrax. Because we don't have anthrax in California, but we do have a number of hoaxes that have been perpetrated out there.

So there's an entire law enforcement effort working very diligently on this whole matter. And in each of these cases, it's a matter of a team working together. I think it's transparent, as you described, in D.C., as to who is who. It's just a matter of working as a team, putting our resources against it, and following up to find the terrorists, because this is a terrorist who is putting anthrax in the mail, and to get after those folks that are committing hoaxes. We're happy that there have been 18 arrests around the country regarding hoaxes, and we anticipate more.

Dr. WELDON. The gentlelady's time has expired.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Horn, for 5 minutes.

Mr. HORN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I was very interested in some of the dialog and the policies on this. I want to say, Mr. Postmaster General, in my town, and in this building, I've never seen a clerk that did not have a smile on his face, and I've never seen a letter carrier in Long Beach, CA, that I've seen anything but a smile on their face. They're out in the sun and it's a tough job. I took one time a big cake with the seal of the Post Office to each of the post offices. One person broke down. He said, you're the first person that's ever thanked me. It's a tough job.

But I've got some concerns about your predecessors, Mr. Runyan, in particular, if he put this policy in. One day I had 100 individuals, Federal workers, that were eligible for Federal worker compensation. About 60 of the 100 were postal. I said, I want you to tell me, how does this system work. One said, well, you know, the vice president in the region and the manager, they wouldn't even let him give me the form.

Now, that's a real problem, and I realize when you're at the top of the heap, you can't be everywhere. But I would hope, now that you're in office, that you could turn some of those attitudes around. Because there's a real feeling out there, and I have read several hundred of these before they've gone to the Department of Labor. I've got real bones with them. They aren't doing much, and they aren't treating people as human beings.

I said earlier, before you came here, you put two human beings in your speech and I put one in my question. And nobody else really went for it. So it looks like you're a pretty humane guy, and I would hope that you would look at that whole operation, where there the executives get money for not having health forms out, it seems to me. That bothers me. And I'm told your predecessor once removed, Mr. Runyan, had a $100,000 retirement party. I don't know if that's true or not, but if it is, it's stupid, especially when

everybody else gets a new penny on their stamp. I think you'd agree with that.

Mr. POTTER. I'm not planning one. But I'd like to say that—and that wasn't meant to be a joke. But I'd like to say that this effort, when we were faced with this challenge of anthrax, the first thing we did, and it was part of my statement, was put together a task force. On that task force we have our four largest unions, the presidents are there, we have three management associations there. Part of the reason that they're there is because yes, I'm at the top and it's a very large organization, and I can get feedback through my managers, but I also need to get feedback from those who represent the employee groups.

So if we find out that a stand-up talk wasn't given in an appropriate manner, we're able to direct that. We also have an opportunity by working closely with the unions to get their input up front. So we can understand and they can understand why we're doing things, and why we're making changes, get input from them on changes that they would recommend. And working collaboratively, we're going to have to attack the terrorists in the same manner that they're attacking us. We're going to have to get after this problem. I know that we cannot do that independently. It's going to take all 800,000 employees, and we need to mobilize all 800,000 employees. The best way to do that is to work with the leadership of those employee groups.

Mr. HORN. Thank you.

Dr. WELDON. The gentleman yields back. The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from New York, Mrs. Maloney.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Chairman, I am reading this article in the Economist. It begins by saying, few Americans want to be postal workers at this moment, fewer would like to be John Potter. I'd just like to say, it goes on and it describes all the challenges that you confront and the dangers in the post office. When you come forward with your list of concerns, I certainly want to be part of the team working to help the postal workers and the post office.

The last thing that we want to do during this economic downturn is to put these costs on the backs of postal customers. High mailing costs have contributed to the demise of several high profile magazines in the district that I represent recently. And five have closed in my district, Mademoiselle, and Industry Standard, to name a few. We can't just keep passing along costs to customers, because then they can't compete and then they go out of business.

I am really supportive that the administration has already come forward with $173 million to help the Postal Service. I know that I'll be one supporting other efforts to help the Postal Service. But don't you think the Postal Service should likewise help the mailing community out as well during this very tough economic time? And shouldn't you or the postal office delay implementation of any rate increase until January 2003 or even later? Magazines tell me that the rate increases that they confront are over 24 percent in the past 2 years. I'd like to know where you stand on rate increases. Will they put off, as other things have been put off?

Mr. POTTER. The decision about what we do with the rate increase will certainly be determined by what transpires in the next several months. We entered into a rates process in September.

That would take 10 months, normally take 10 months. We're very grateful that the Rate Commission has decided to try to expedite that case, not expedite the rate increase, but just expedite the whole process to negotiate rates.

We will be better postured, and we've told our mailers that we will be better postured to make a decision about when we can implement rates or when we should implement rates next summer. And it's still our intent to do that. We, like you, agree that mailers should not bear the full burden of these terrorist attacks. This is a homeland security issue. This is a service that's provided by the Federal Government that's paid for by the ratepayers. But we have a very, very unusual circumstance here, and that's why we would move ahead to seek appropriation, to avoid the type of economic impact on our magazine publishers and others who use the mail.

Mrs. MALONEY. I represent New York City and I've received numerous phone calls from postal workers who cannot understand why New York's Morgan Station facility is opened while New Jersey, the postal areas in Washington were closed, along with four congressional office buildings. Some of the office buildings closed for Congress did not even find anthrax, there wasn't even—there was just a suspicion.

So I'd like to know, who is making the decisions to close or keep open postal facilities? Who makes that decision? Does a different person make a decision in different areas, or in different States?

Mr. POTTER. The decision is made initially on the local level, with input from the medical officials that we have on board, the CDC. In the case of New York City, CDC, NIOSH, and the city health department were in Morgan. They analyzed the data that they had. And they made a decision that we could seal off the area on that working floor and that we could successfully remediate the area. Again, it was traces of anthrax found on four machines.

Now, Bill Burrus, who is in the front row, who's the president elect of the American Postal Workers Union, he and I met at a funeral on Friday. He expressed concerns and we discussed what options we have. What we did in the case of Morgan in response to the concerns of the employees there was, we had those medical officials go in and give talks to all the employees to explain to them exactly what it was that was found, explain to them how we were remediating it, explain to them what threat if any there was to them. And we gave those employees the option of staying at the facility or moving to another location right across the street in our general post office.

So we took the advice of the local medical officials. However, throughout this process, people had the ability to raise their concerns. That's one of the benefits of having this task force. The employees raised their concerns through the American Postal Workers Union. We were able to get together, discuss the issue and come up with options that we believe were fair to the employees, or I believe were fair to the employees. I don't want to speak for Bill.

Mrs. MALONEY. Do you think these decisions should be centralized? Now they're basically local decisions, and different people making decisions, as I understand it, at different facilities. So it appears to me that possibly it should be centralized with centralized standards and criteria, to determine, so that there is a consistent,

clear method that all of us can understand and all the workers can understand.

I know my time is up, but very briefly, why has this decision not been centralized? Are you going to move to centralized standards and procedures?

Mr. POTTER. Let me say briefly that all these situations have individual circumstances. We're finding different things in Florida than we found in New York than we found in Brentwood than we're finding in Trenton, NJ. We are working to establish a consistent protocol.

However, we're not getting consistent advice in each of these locations. It's kind of comparable to what medications is somebody on. At one point, it's Cipro, the next point it's Doxycycline. So we're in a very fluid situation and want to respond to the people locally. We do seek the advice of people at a national level, beyond the Postal Service, the CDC and others. So it's an evolving situation and we are looking to develop a clear set of protocols. But again, the situation is so dynamic and so fluid we haven't been able to get to that yet.

Mrs. MALONEY. Well, thank you very much. I sent you a letter earlier on this, what we've been talking about, clear standards and protocols. Thank you very much.

Mr. POTTER. Thank you.

Mr. BURTON [resuming Chair]. The gentlelady's time has expired. Mr. LaTourette.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Postmaster General, just an introductory comment. As with your predecessor in the previous administration, I want you to know that when I watch television, when Deputy Postmaster Wilhite gets on the television screen, she's very reassuring to the American public. I think she's a good presence for the Service, as are you.

You created a little bit of a stir this week in Ohio, as trucks rolled through Ohio, to Lima, OH. That is, my understanding, the plant that you have two contracts with for 6 months to use their facilities. I want to followup from where Mr. Waxman was, because I saw interviews with the gentleman that owns the facility and listened to what he had to say relative to his technology.

I don't have the same understanding that Mr. Waxman did. What this gentleman is explaining, and maybe you can tell us, is that the mail is taken from the Brentwood facility and other places in Washington, DC, put in a sanitized bag, put in another sanitized bag, put in a box. The box is then carried on a FedEx hazmat truck, delivered to the facility, put on conveyor belts and then goes under this conveyor belt with the electronic beams.

The gentleman did not express any concern that, I heard Mr. Waxman talking about thicknesses and maybe you can't do a fat package or a dense package. He was pretty much, I know it's his business and he's proud of his business, but he was pretty sure that what they were doing in Lima, OH, was going to sanitize this mail to everybody's satisfaction. Is that your understanding as well?

Mr. POTTER. Congressman, what you described is very accurate. The discussion that my staff has had, again, with Dr. Marburger's

assistance, is talking to both the Department of Defense. The base that we're comparing this to is research done by the Armed Forces Radio Biology Research Institute that assessed this technology on a variety of biohazards and established dosing levels that would safely achieve kill rates to ensure that you have a safe product.

The other source of information is the Federal Drug Administration, who is regulating this process for food processing. What we came to a conclusion is from a study done by the Department of Defense that there was a safe level. However, as was described by Congressman Waxman, there's a level of homogeneity, same product, being run through. So the question became as with mail, which can be very different from one mail piece to the next, how do you determine the dose level that's appropriate.

Well, the dose level that we've established is twice what the research would have indicated and beyond. To further evaluate that it's being done properly, there's a device called the dosimeter that actually measures, did you get the dose you thought. That's placed inside the product. So we're running that quality assurance.

And to assure that the product truly gets scanned properly, it's run through, does 180 degree turn, and then run through in the opposite direction. We're just trying to apply every measure of certainty that what we're doing here is applying the correct dose and sanitizing the mail.

I would finally comment that we're also limiting the product that we're making that claim on. When you start dealing with packages, you really can't assure that somebody could have screened so that the dose couldn't be applied. We will have a separate process, and there are some packages that are making their way into Ohio. That's fine, it doesn't do any damage. But what we're saying should be safe is the letters and what we call flats, the larger business size envelopes, will be properly dosed. So we're working closely with the other Federal agencies that have normally dealt with this kind of technology.

Mr. LATOURETTE. The other observation is, and you don't have to comment on this, but also there's been some published reports that this process damages credit cards. I understand that it does not damage credit cards, is that correct?

Mr. POTTER. There are some very preliminary tests done by the company we're using in Ohio, whose parent company is Titan Industries, they specifically tested credit cards and it does not damage the card. I also very specifically asked Dr. Marburger, who has some expertise in this field. He did not believe that the type of dose we're talking here, the electronic beam and the magnetic medium that would be on the back of a credit card, that there should be a problem.

Same question has been asked about checks that go through the mail. Because that industry also uses a magnetic ink to sort. We also believe that there will be no harm to that product as well.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Thank you. And in general, just before my time expires, there have been some observations made, and you talked about them, the Governor has talked about them, about postal reform, negotiated settlement agreements and so forth and so on. Just speaking as one member of this panel who has worked with postal reform in the past, I think most realize that the disas-

ter that struck the Postal Service on September 11th, it's continued to strike with the anthrax scare.

But to tie in some issues that have been rather contentious relative to negotiated service agreements and an attempt to solve the anthrax problem would be, in my opinion, I say this, a mistake. I hope we don't use the events that have occurred as a result of terrorist activity to put newspapers, magazines and other mailers out of business.

I would just indicate that some of us are still scratching our heads about the contract that your predecessor had entered into with Federal Express, which left a lot of questions. So I hope we solve your anthrax problems, give you plenty of money to make the mail safe. But I hope we don't go down the path, let's tag that on too, because I think that would be a mistake.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. The sentiments that the gentleman just expressed are not consistent with the chairman's.

Who is next? Mr. Kucinich.

Mr. KUCINICH. Thank you very much.

Mr. Postmaster General, thank you for your service to this country. I know this has been a tough time for you and your staff. I know our committee is very concerned about people who are making the decisions, that they get support in trying to do their job. I think this committee has been very supportive.

I have some questions about this plan to use irradiation equipment. Have there been any studies done on the impact it could have on the workers who are using the equipment, to make sure we're not creating more of a problem here?

Mr. POTTER. Again, I'll defer to Thomas Day.

Mr. DAY. Congressman, this is a proven technology, again, that has been used in food processing.

Mr. KUCINICH. Has it ever been used for mail before?

Mr. DAY. It has not been used for mail. The technology is such, there is substantial shielding that is built around the actual equipment. That's where the irradiation actually takes place. There is no radiated byproduct that comes out with it. We are confident that again, and I'm going to rely on the experts in the field, I do not claim to be a physicist, that the guidance they have given us on how to send mail through this type of technology will not cause harm.

The only harm that can occur is if you're physically in the room where this takes place. That is a very secure, controlled environment with shielding. Again, an industry that has been around for a while, tightly regulated and tightly controlled, to ensure the safety of the workers who are around it.

Mr. KUCINICH. I think that's going to be essential. We're here in part because of workplace safety issues that were not addressed in a timely manner. And I think that the American people ought to make sure that anyone using this equipment is not going to be adversely affected, because if the equipment is powerful enough to kill anthrax spores, I would imagine at the doses that are being recommended for this process, there might be some question about it posing any hazard to other, to humans and other living organisms.

I wanted to ask Mr. Potter, how many letters, communication to the Government, all these letters that you have that are being boxed up and shipped out to Lima, OH, about how many pieces of mail are there?

Mr. POTTER. Congressman, right now we're looking, it's probably around a million pieces of mail.

Mr. KUCINICH. And that's for——

Mr. POTTER. That's for the—I'm sorry?

Mr. KUCINICH. What are the dates involved?

Mr. POTTER. Some of that mail goes back to whenever the House and the Senate shut down their post offices, back when the original Daschle letter came through.

Mr. KUCINICH. Members of Congress understand that the ability of our constituents to communicate with us through the mail is an essential part of our job.

Mr. POTTER. Yes.

Mr. KUCINICH. The phrase, "write your Congressman or Congresswoman," has an entire law about it in terms of its importance to Government, that we can keep this Government of the people functioning. So how long would you say it might be before we'll be able to get this information, these letters, back into our offices?

Mr. POTTER. Let me tell you exactly what we've done. On Friday of last week, we asked all of the Government mail managers, all the offices, the Congress, through the White House, all the agencies came in. Tom Day and a number of people went through a number of safety procedures around what to look for, with the Inspection Service, Tom explained the irradiation. We also provided these managers some of the tips that we were using in the entire Postal Service as well as masks and gloves.

We really tried to bring up to speed exactly what each of the Government agencies should be doing in their mail room. We have started delivering mail. On Monday we began delivering mail. We will continue this process as we get the irradiated mail back from Ohio. It has started to come back and by Thursday, some of the personal correspondence will be back in your system.

Mr. KUCINICH. So people will be able to communicate with their representatives through the mail now. Do you have a system set up so it's not going through this equipment, but it is coming into the House and Senate?

Mr. POTTER. It will come, but it's still going to go through the equipment. It will be a little bit slower, but we're looking, again, for safety first. There will be some delays at this point.

Mr. KUCINICH. And the mail that's being irradiated, if, let's say, we're in the Longworth building, which isn't open yet, is that mail then going to be set aside and then given to us when the Longworth building is open? What are you doing in the Senate?

Mr. POTTER. We deliver all the mail to the House post office. They would sort and then hold mail for any buildings that would be closed. We deliver all the mail——

Mr. KUCINICH. Any individuals that would have a chance to go get their own mail? I mean, how can we do this?

Mr. POTTER. Let me back up a second. We deliver the mail to the Congress in bulk. The Congress hires folks who work the mail

room. So we're going to continue to deliver to wherever you tell us. Your contractor will sort the mail and make it available to you.

Mr. KUCINICH. So you'll be delivering that—you're saying that the irradiated mail, all of it will be back in Washington by?

Mr. POTTER. It's an ongoing process. As you heard Mr. Day explain, we're taking the mail out, it gets irradiated, comes back, is sorted in our Government mail facility and then we distribute it to the Government offices, including the Congress.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Chairman, I think it would be, I think all of us would like to know, and I think our constituents would want to know, how much more the letters they're sending us are going to be delayed. If we have another internal step here that we have to look at, I think it would be interesting for the Chair and the ranking member to inquire about it.

Mr. POTTER. Congressman, we just began this process. We are learning as we speak in terms of the throughput and the capability of this facility. We're also looking to move mail into other private facilities. We are quickly moving ahead with, and we signed a contract last Friday, to purchase our own electron beam technology. We anticipate deployment of that shortly. So we will provide that for the record.

Mr. KUCINICH. Thank you.

Mr. BURTON. The gentleman's time has expired. Let me just say that I'm sure that the Postmaster General will keep the Congress informed on all of this so that we can disseminate it to all the Members of Congress as quickly as possible.

In the interim, I'll tell you, one thing that we have done is, any correspondence we're sending out to constituents, we say that if you sent a letter and you haven't had a response yet, write us again because it may or may not get to us for a while.

Mr. Souder.

Mr. SOUDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I want to apologize that I missed the first part of the hearing. I was actually chairing two hearings up on the Canadian border looking at border security. I did hear Mr. Potter's testimony on the radio, in addition to having read all the testimony that's been given.

Let me first comment along the lines of Mr. LaTourette. This is not an opportunity to use the current crisis to fix things that we've been debating where we have something in policy. I've read the next panel's testimony as well and I know it's going to come up again. But let me assure you that we understand that there is a crisis in the mail system, we're gridlocked and somehow we have to resolve this. We have to have real resolution and we're not going to be steamrollered by a crisis that may not directly relate to that.

That said, there are going to be additional costs to the post office because of the crisis that regardless of our opinion on the broader postal reform that we understand we are dependent on the mail in this country for all forms of communication. It is a central American principle that we want to try to protect, not on that you're likely to get more conflict if you push too hard in this period, because we're having all sorts of industries come into Washington saying, often with problems they had before they came, before September 11th, to come to us. It's going to get old real fast.

Also, there is a difference, quite frankly, in the post office from a pure private sector. We regulate prices in the energy sector, anybody who has a Government monopoly is subject, even if you're quasi-independent, to more regulations. And you always will be, as long as you have assets that were invested by the general taxpayers, and as long as, quite frankly, some of the management reforms that you might undertake as a business, such as Saturday delivery, closing certain regional post offices, having different rates in first class, probably Congress would react if you started doing certain of those types of things.

So you're always going to be kind of a quasi-independent agency that we have to work together, even though the goal has been more for independence.

I also wanted to make a brief comment. I know one of my colleagues asked about vaccinations. This committee has had numerous hearings on anthrax vaccinations, and problems therein, regarding the Guard and others. It is not a slam dunk. What we do know is, we know that there is a minimal but small risk to people who take the vaccination. We know that the company shut down. We know that their supplies have never been FDA cleared.

But what we also know is that it doesn't treat most strains of anthrax. And there's a lot of publicity in this country about how the vaccination, even if we had the supply, even if it was untainted, and even if it was FDA cleared, does not appear to work for the strains that are common in Iraq and some that we're looking at. So it isn't a silver bullet for the post office or for the armed services or for American citizens. It's kind of gotten lost in this national concern about anthrax.

I also, just being in general contrary, want to raise one other point and would like you to particularly comment on this point, and if you'd like to comment on any of the others. Unlike many there's a general concern in the public that we in Washington aren't being treated the same and our offices and staff aren't being treated the same as the average postal worker who is clearly more at risk than any of us. That whether it comes to our offices here, whether it comes to our district offices, or whether it comes to our home, the first exposure is going to be to the people who are bringing it to us.

We've seen that, because they've died, and we don't even have anybody sick. Part of our concern here, and this isn't just a House question, it's a Senate question, when it occurred immediately in the Senate building, floors have been shut down for weeks where there wasn't even a trace of anthrax in the Senate Hart building. In the Longworth building, floors are shut down where there's not even a trace of anthrax, and there's a question whether they're going to fumigate the whole building before anybody even comes into any of those floors.

Now, I know that they're being prudent and that you can have disagreements over the health policies that you've suggested about prudence. But it is bothering Americans that there seems to be a higher level of prudence for people in power than there seems to be prudence for people who don't have power. Even though it puts the mail at tremendous risk. I'd like you to comment on that ques-

tion without criticizing anybody in particular, because it can go both ways. But this inconsistency is bothering the American public.

Mr. POTTER. When I reflect back on the situation and what happened, it's obvious to me that people acted based on the science that was available at the time. At the time that action was taken in that Senate building, there was an envelope, there was confirmed anthrax in that envelope.

Regarding the postal facility at Brentwood, there was a linkage there, because we knew that the envelope had passed through Brentwood. But the assumption was that these envelopes were sealed, heavily taped, that whoever sent them was trying to do harm to the recipient of the mail and protect those along the way by heavily sealing them.

What we found out later, a week later, was that the size of the anthrax spore was so small that it could actually penetrate the paper. Now, that was something that we were not aware of. That's something that we learned by working backward from the opening of the letter in Senator Daschle's office. So we began a process of working back.

Once it became clear that we had a case of anthrax, although we did not have any confirmation, as I said, we did a quick test on that Thursday that said there was no anthrax found in Brentwood, once it was clear that we had an employee with anthrax, we took immediate action, shut that facility, had people tested, had people treated. And so again, it was what was the information we were working with at the time.

Mr. SOUDER. I wasn't even necessarily, although in retrospect you can do all sorts of management. Right now, a New York building is open, whereas the Senate Hart, where they didn't find traces on those floors, and the Longworth House and the Ford building where they didn't find traces, are closed. And it's not just a historical question, it's a question that we're looking at right now. The general public would like to see some consistency. Because on the one hand, you say your postal employees are safe. But if the political leaders and the State Department shut all their floors, or HHS does, or Congress does, it's not surprising that you're going to have dissension.

Or it may be that we're over-reacting. But the American public is disturbed and can't get a consistent health message when we're not behaving the same way on floors in the same buildings that do not have traces.

Mr. BURTON. The gentleman's time has expired. Do you want to respond?

Mr. POTTER. We believe we're reacting with the information that we have at hand, with the best advice that we can get in the world, so that we can safely remediate our buildings and not put our people in harm's way.

Mr. BURTON. Mrs. Mink.

Mrs. MINK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I had asked the first panel a question that they declined to answer and they passed it over to you, Mr. Potter.

Mr. POTTER. Who did that? [Laughter.]

Mrs. MINK. I won't name the individual. But the question that still persists in my mind is the tracking of the mail from Daschle's

office to the Brentwood facility and then the stopping of the mail deliveries to the House of Representatives on October 12th.

From October 12th until the Brentwood facility was closed on the 21st, we assumed that the mail was held there and embargoed because of the possible presence of anthrax on the outside of the envelopes. From your testimony, I understand now that the mail that had been held in Brentwood from the 12th to the 21st is being sent to Ohio to be sanitized by this e-ray machine that irradiates.

My question is, once Brentwood was closed on the 21st, what happened to our mail, and is that also going to the Ohio facility?

Mr. POTTER. The answer to that question is that the mail that originates in Washington, DC, is moved to facilities in suburban Maryland and northern Virginia to be processed and dispatched throughout the country. In addition to that, mail coming from around the country was moved to these facilities. And mail is being sorted there on a daily basis and prepared for delivery in Washington, DC. The mail where we have an assumption that there's a threat, that mail is being isolated and will be sanitized.

Mrs. MINK. So the reason we haven't gotten any mail since October 12th is that we still constitute a target group and the mail is not being delivered to us, but is being delivered to other people in the city. Is that correct?

Mr. POTTER. Correct.

Mrs. MINK. And so we can expect that all of the mail that has been sent to us from October 12th will go to this Ohio facility and eventually come back to us, is that correct?

Mr. POTTER. Yes, that's correct.

Mrs. MINK. That's very comforting, because we get asked this question all the time, what happens to our mail, are we eventually going to get it. And we have been responding thus far that ultimately we will see the mail.

But there's some question of what happened to the mail after Brentwood was closed, why weren't we getting that. And the answer is, that too is being sanitized in Ohio, is that correct?

Mr. POTTER. Correct.

Mrs. MINK. So then the constituencies that are waiting for responses can be told roughly what, another week?

Mr. POTTER. It may be several weeks.

Mrs. MINK. Several weeks. Are you taking it in the sequence in which they arrived at Brentwood, or are you taking it wherever it happens to be?

Mr. POTTER. We're trying to move the oldest mail that we have through the system to direct it back to your offices, and to other Federal agencies.

Mrs. MINK. I see. Thank you very much.

Mr. WAXMAN. Would the gentlelady yield?

Mrs. MINK. I yield to the ranking member.

Mr. WAXMAN. What concerns me is that, we're taking all this mail that might have anthrax in it, and isolating it. But we've seen a couple of people get sick, and it's not from this mail, because it's isolated. So the question is how these people got sick, and it could well be, one possibility is that they had a cross-contamination from some letter or mail that had anthrax on it.

When the previous panel testified, we asked whether they had done any of the investigation to see whether there is this cross-contamination in the mail. We were told they haven't even begun to evaluate where the cross-contamination can take place. The chairman and I have prepared a letter, we're sending it to Mr. Mueller and to Dr. Copeland, and to you, expressing our concern about the fact that one proactive thing we could do would be to take the mail that was at the same time delivered to Senator Daschle's office and see if that mail was cross-contaminated. That would give us some indication if cross-contamination actually takes place. We were told that process hasn't even started.

So we want to urge you, in our letter to you, which we'll make available to you, rather than mail to you, we'll hand it to you.

Mr. POTTER. I'd like one in the mail, too. I need the revenue. [Laughter.]

Mr. WAXMAN. Well, if it comes in the mail, you can sanitize it or check for cross-contamination and make sure you don't have any anthrax. But we think that study ought to go on immediately so we can test this hypothesis as a possibility for those two people who did unfortunately get sick.

Mr. POTTER. We are doing an analysis and we're theorizing. We have a model of that facility, we're looking at mail. We have the ability to track individual pieces of mail across multiple pieces of equipment. I don't want to go into a lot of detail on it. But we are building a model that would track that piece of mail and also enable us to do the type of analysis that the Congressman is suggesting.

Mr. WAXMAN. That's theorizing. Here you can do a real world test, if you just simply get some of the mail that was part of the package of mail delivered to Senator Daschle.

Mr. POTTER. Right. And we're going to be able to identify the letters to be tested, using the systems that we have.

Mr. BURTON. Mrs. Morella.

Mrs. MORELLA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for scheduling this very important hearing. And I thank the ranking member also.

Congratulations, Mr. Postmaster General. Little did you know the kinds of challenges you would be facing as you took on the new responsibility.

Mr. POTTER. It's been a long 4 months.

Mr. BURTON. Excuse me, the gentlelady, he had black hair when he started. [Laughter.]

Mr. POTTER. Yes. And I was skinny, too. [Laughter.]

Mrs. MORELLA. I believe it.

Just before I arrived at this meeting, I was in my county, in Montgomery County with the President at a high school, looking at Veterans Day, Wooten High School. It's appropriate that their logo has to do with the patriots, they're called the Patriots. I say that because I really believe the U.S. postal system, they have been patriots. The letter carriers, the administration, the postmasters. I truly mean that.

And indeed, at this time, some of them feel like they're real veterans of a war. And they have all been very patriotic, and I just

think you need to know that from the top all the way out. So I salute them.

I have also been very much aware of the kind of tension that they have felt. And I have particularly felt badly thinking that they perceived that Members of Congress are being treated better than they are with regard to education, communication, remediation. I know that you've been trying to get communication together. I wondered if, well, first of all, let me be provincial. What is the status of the suburban distribution facility in Shady Grove, MD, after your scheduled inspection last weekend?

Mr. POTTER. We did not get the test results back, but we did schedule the suburban Maryland and northern Virginia facilities and some of the surrounding facilities here in the metropolitan area, the surrounding facilities in Trenton, New York and Florida. We hope to be getting those results back shortly.

Mrs. MORELLA. What are you doing to bring everybody together to communicate?

Mr. POTTER. On a daily basis at 10 o'clock, since October 15th on a daily basis at 10 o'clock, we meet with the presidents of the labor unions, the heads of the management associations and we discuss the topics of the day, the issues surrounding this anthrax situation. We hear back from them on whether or not the stand-up talks we have asked to be given to our employees actually have been given. We've been out there and communicating as aggressively as we possibly can.

We have videos out, we have masks out, we have stand-up talks. We are trying to message to our employees, it's not a perfect system. We have 800,000 people. This is like an aircraft carrier, trying to get everybody moving in the right direction does take time. But we're mobilizing, not only our internal resources through management channels, but we're also working with the unions and management associations to use those channels to get messages to our employees.

Mrs. MORELLA. I commend you on that, and I know that you will continue it. I feel that this terrible tragedy may well have brought us together in a closer partnership than there has been before. So I commend you on meeting with the unions, meeting with the postmasters, bringing everybody together, because we are all in it together.

It would also be good if you assess how the employees, feel, too. In other words, listen to what they're saying in terms of the scuttlebutt, the concerns they may have. Are they assigned, like at the Shady Grove distribution center, are they assigned gloves and masks?

Mr. POTTER. Yes.

Mrs. MORELLA. Do they do it voluntarily?

Mr. POTTER. Yes. We've purchased over 4 million masks for our 800,000 employees. We've bought some 88 million pairs of gloves. And they're being messaged, there are videos out there and they're being trained on how to appropriately use this equipment. So again, we're doing everything that we can to help them feel safe in the work environment.

We also have counseling available to all our employees. We've also contracted for doctors to come onsite and talk to our employees

around the clock and explain to them what anthrax is, what they should be looking for on their personal bodies, in the form of lesions, what they should be concerned about concerning their health and what appropriate precautions that they should take.

Now, again, you're going to find somebody in America who might have been off on that day or where it wasn't done properly, and we're trying to shore that up and make sure everybody's getting a common message.

Mrs. MORELLA. With regard to the irradiation or the electronic beam technology, are you prioritizing what centers are going to get it before others? Do you have kind a level of——

Mr. POTTER. Well, certainly we'll listen to the law enforcement authorities and allow them to help us in terms of prioritization. It's not something that we would tell the world, obviously. Because people then could circumvent what measures we put in place.

Mrs. MORELLA. But you will have, priority will be established and it will be done on the basis of the greatest need as perceived?

Mr. POTTER. Greatest threat, yes.

Mrs. MORELLA. By those people who are experts. Well, I just want to thank you for the kind of work you all have been doing and tell you that I look forward to continuing to hearing from you about what needs to be done, particularly with regard to dispensing Cipro and antibiotics and whatever other situation is absolutely necessary. I thank you, as I say, for what you're doing. And I hope that you will continue to be a partnership with all the other elements, including the unions, postmasters, etc.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. The gentlelady's time has expired. Mr. Davis.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Potter. Let me apologize for missing part of the testimony. I was engaged in something else at the time.

But it sounds to me like you're expressing a level of confidence and comfortability in terms of having policies that are either in place or that can be immediately put into place to not necessarily guarantee but to feel that the health and safety issues of employees are being addressed adequately.

Mr. POTTER. Yes, sir, we are, Congressman. We are working very closely with everybody, as I said, the unions, management associations, health experts, to determine what are the best measures that we could take to create a safe and secure workplace and with the law enforcement authorities to make the mail secure.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. As we do that, and as we know that the Service was being taxed in some way already, relative to its financial condition, or at least that's information that had been brought back and forth, how much additional pressure is this putting on the Postal Service in terms of its ability to be financially secure and able to continue with its work and meet the challenge of the bioterrorism?

Mr. POTTER. It's putting a tremendous burden on the Postal Service. The measures that we're taking to screen mail are costly. The measures that we are taking to assure that we have a safe work environment, whether that's masks, gloves, all of the medical costs associated with this situation, we have some 15,000 employ-

ees who are on medication. All of those situations are costing us money.

We were very happy that the administration allocated some $175 million for the Postal Service to help us with a 30 day period worth of cost. However, beyond that, the cost of modifying our operations, such that we can sanitize mail or do some other type of intervention, are going to cost several billions of dollars.

In addition to that, the September 11th attack caused our revenues to be approximately $300 million below expectations, and we went into the year with a very conservative estimate of what our revenues would be. This anthrax attack could further compound that, depending on the confidence that the American public has in the mail.

So we could be looking at several billion dollars worth of impact from a revenue standpoint. Obviously, as time goes on, we'll be better able to quantify that. And we are working feverishly to try and provide what is an accurate estimate of what those costs would be.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. So you're saying that any way you cut it, but no matter how you look at it you're going to need to be able to generate either some additional revenue or find some way to reduce the cost of operating, and certainly it doesn't look as though that would be possible in this climate. There were conversations earlier already about certain reform elements and movement. Does this heighten the need for reform that was already being discussed and on the table?

Mr. POTTER. It certainly illustrates the tools that the Postal Service has to address these types of situations. One tool that we have not used in years was to seek an appropriation. And we're going to seek an appropriation, because we are going to have one time costs associated with the modification of our facilities, one time costs associated with this loss in revenue. And we view this as a homeland security issue. These terrorists have done harm to the postal system.

There have been comments before you came into the room regarding whether or not this was an appropriate time to discuss reform. We at the Postal Service have been discussing that for the last 5 years, and discussing the types of tools that we have as managers and that the board has available to them to react to situations such as this. And I would ask that Governor Fineman perhaps would want to make a comment.

Mr. FINEMAN. I feel somewhat reluctant, Congressman. I would say there's no part of me that wants to limit, that can in any way limit the debate that this committee is going to have about postal reform. But on the other hand, it's clear to me that this crisis just heightens the awareness of postal reform. And maybe we do have to separate the issues.

But it is an issue for us, the Governors, probably two of the most important things we do, one of which is to hire the Postmaster General. In this case, we hired the right man. We hired somebody who understands how the Postal Service operates, and he's guiding us through what is clearly a crisis in operation and a crisis in management.

On the other hand, we do set rates in conjunction with the Postal Rate Commission. What we don't want to do, and we've spoken to

the chairman, to Congressman Davis, to others, and I heard the Congresswoman talk about the magazines in New York, we don't want to in essence limit the amount of mail that's going to come through the postal system by raising rates so high that we're going to find other means of communication. And as the Postmaster General indicated, for this one time, we're probably going to come back to Congress, and we're going to say, we need some help here, because this is a homeland security problem.

On the other hand, at the same time that we're going to be asking for funds, it looks pretty clear to me that the volume of mail is going to decrease for some period of time. And I just say to you, we can talk about how to do it. But right now, we have very, very limited tools.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. I know that my time is up, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate the indulgence. Could I just ask if they'd answer, are you saying that you really feel that you don't have any choice except to come and ask for an appropriation?

Mr. POTTER. Given the economic circumstances of the Postal Service, the answer is a resounding yes.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. The Postal Service, as you know, and Danny Davis and I worked on this, they've been right up against that debt ceiling for some time. I'm sure with this tragedy they're probably going to surpass it. That means Congress is going to probably have to do something else to get them over the hump.

Mr. Turner.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Potter, I was looking at your prepared statement. I know we have over 800,000 postal employees. You stated that over the last 2 weeks more than 15,000 employees have begun receiving antibiotic treatment and that some 9,000 have been tested to date.

When I looked at those numbers, I realized that in many ways, you attempted to do the best that you can, even though I do agree with I think many who think that it would have been better had those antibiotics been administered immediately upon discovery of contamination in the postal facility. But it does seem to me that a number have been tested. Have any of those who have been tested have tested positive?

Mr. POTTER. We don't have any results from the bulk of those tests. We have 30 tests in Florida, they were all negative. Beyond those, we have not received the results of those tests.

Mr. TURNER. If today you were to discover additional contamination in any postal facility in this country, or if you discovered that mail was contaminated, that had gone through any postal facility in this country, would you immediately suggest to those postal workers that they take antibiotics if they were in those facilities?

Mr. POTTER. I would immediately consult with the medical experts and being a layman, I would suggest and urgently suggest that they consider putting people on antibiotics. But I'm not a medical person, I can't prescribe them myself.

Mr. TURNER. Well, I recognize there's always medical uncertainty here. But because of the criticism that you've been previously met with, it perhaps would be a good policy to simply say that if in the future any postal facility is discovered to be contaminated, or if a

piece of mail is discovered that is contaminated, then the postal facility through which that mail traveled, those workers should be given the immediate option for antibiotics.

I'm wondering, the mail that you have sent away to be sanitized, is that Government mail that we're talking about that's being sanitized?

Mr. POTTER. It's Government mail and any mail that was in that Brentwood facility when we discovered that the facility was contaminated.

Mr. TURNER. The Daschle letter was postmarked October 9th, Trenton, NJ. I assume it takes a couple of days for it to reach the Brentwood facility, would that be roughly correct?

Mr. POTTER. Yes. It was scheduled for delivery on Monday and it was delivered on Monday.

Mr. TURNER. So if we believe there is the possibility of cross-contamination, it certainly appears to be possible, we have three offices in the Longworth building that have been shown to have presence of anthrax, and there's no letter to which that could relate, is it then not possible that cross-contamination occurred in some of the mail that was delivered after approximately October 11th until the mail ceased to be delivered from Brentwood that contamination could have occurred in other locations in the district that is served by the Brentwood facility, other than the Government offices?

Mr. POTTER. Yes, that's certainly possible.

Mr. TURNER. And has there been any effort to publicize which areas of the district that would be?

Mr. POTTER. There's been an effort to identify mail that was processed on machines with the Daschle mail. The vast majority of that mail, I'm talking about over 95 percent of that mail, was Government mail. So that's the mail that, again, we embargoed, held onto and are seeking to sanitize.

Mr. TURNER. This Government has just been, it's been suggested that our Government and our agencies have perhaps had a double standard with regard to the treatment of postal workers. It would seem to me prudent not to find ourselves in the position where we also are accused of a double standard with respect to recipients of mail who may be non-Government recipients. Perhaps it would be wise to at least advise the public as to which portions of the District may possibly have received other contaminated, cross-contaminated mail.

Mr. POTTER. We're thoroughly looking through our systems to try to identify not only what pieces there might have been and what sections, but actual addresses.

Mr. TURNER. I wanted to ask Mr. Day if he would comment. You've suggested that you need $2.5 billion to install the necessary equipment to begin sanitizing the mail on a routine basis. I'd like to have some feel for what that $2.5 billion will purchase. Because I have a sense that the Congress and the American public may not have fully yet appreciated the tremendous cost that will be associated with protecting the public health and safety, not only within the Postal Service but the myriad of other activities that are now threatened by terrorist acts.

So could you give us a feel for how many machines, what kind of coverage you will have if you are able to secure that $2.5 billion?

Mr. DAY. Congressman, if I could, in terms of the full deployment, and how we plan to do that and the costs associated with it, quite honestly, if we could do that off line, because there's some security information as part of that. I'm actually doing a briefing on Friday for both some House and Senate staff members. I'd gladly do that if you'd like me to.

Mr. TURNER. Well, would you describe that $2.5 billion is total comprehensive coverage of the U.S. mail, or is this an effort to secure certain or sanitize certain mail facilities to the exclusion of perhaps a whole lot of others?

Mr. DAY. Without getting specific, and I can do that off line, in the broadest sense, we're trying to provide for the security of the mail for the entire public.

Mr. BURTON. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Day.

Mr. BURTON. We may have some more information for you that we can get to you, Mr. Turner.

Mr. Kanjorski.

Mr. KANJORSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Potter, I have a few questions. I'm trying to speak for the average citizen and the average postal worker. I don't want to say this to embarrass you or attack you, but there's an attitude starting to build in the country, it hasn't come to a crisis stage, but that we seem to be an hour late and a dollar short. Our logic and our reasoning are always behind the cycle.

Something that struck me that as soon as Mr. Stevens was infected with inhalation anthrax, it is axiomatic that the spores had to be 1 to 5 microns in order to penetrate the depths of the lungs that caused that disease. Then logic must have followed after that somebody should have had the question, "What is the pore size of paper?" As I understand it, the average envelope can be penetrated by 30 micron material. So it would have been very conclusive that what had infected Mr. Stevens could pass through paper and envelopes.

Yet there was a period of 14 or 18 days that there was no backup study of the exposure of the post offices and the processing of the mail. That's not to blame anyone. What bothers me is that there doesn't seem to be logical thinking, analysis, time when people are stepping back and analyzing what can happen.

I pose another question, and I'm sure you don't have the answer to this. I did ask it of the homeland security director's office the other day. We've now had four deaths from inhalation anthrax, the first time since 1978, to my knowledge, that anyone in this country has died that way. My question was, as I understand from microbiologists, in every drop of blood, when a person expires from anthrax, inhalation anthrax, there are 2 billion bacterium. Bodies have to be processed after death.

I wanted to find out what is being done with these four bodies. Are they properly being processed to make sure that we're not turning over an inventory or a factory of anthrax, either in a grave or in a funeral home or its location? The answer was, well, no one had thought of that. I haven't received a full answer yet, but that shakes my confidence in the system.

You had mentioned earlier that you were buying 400,000 masks. Do those masks withhold particles of 1 to 5 microns? Most masks that I know of that you can buy only withhold 30 micron material. Other than that, you have to have a closed system of oxygen. I could be wrong. I'm not an expert in the area. But are you certain that these masks you're buying are able to filter out material lower than 30 microns?

Mr. POTTER. They're able to filter out down to three-tenths microns.

Mr. KANJORSKI. Excellent. I'm glad somebody asked the question.

Now, the final question I come up with, I know your department has done a study recently on consolidation of postal centers and postal handling material. That was done pre-September 11th. It seems to me that this should point up to the Postal Service the concentration of mail out of single bulk houses covering regions, maybe a State in size, or multi-States, may not be the best psychology in the world. Decentralization may be much better.

I'll give you a perfect example. In Pennsylvania, we're going to be merging two centers. That means rather than a million people that have their mail, if they're merged in with another million or 2 million, if there is a biological attack, it affects the mail to 3 million people rather than 1 million people. It could have a tremendous economic impact, your theory of concentration and centralization.

Now, I understand in pre-bioterrorism that may have been good business. I'm not certain that total centralization is not something that should be re-examined, restudied and perhaps doesn't lend itself to the best judgment at this time, not only considering anthrax, but any other biological problem or any problem that we may have in the future.

I would hope that you, as the leader of the Postal Service, would re-examine that study. I wish I could give you the name, maybe you're aware of it. It is contemplating the consolidation of 25 centers in the country.

Mr. POTTER. The area mail processing studies that are underway, I'm very much aware of that.

Mr. KANJORSKI. Well, that's right on track to be implemented, and it may be contradictory to the decentralization theory of being able to contain the exposure and contain the effect of something like this.

Mr. POTTER. We're also looking at it as being consistent with the concept of sanitizing mail because of the expense of the equipment and the type of shielding that this equipment requires. You want to limit the amount of sites that you have that type of equipment in.

Mr. KANJORSKI. I would assume, aren't you going to sanitize the mail upon receipt as opposed to pre-delivery?

Mr. POTTER. We're going to sanitize the mail, we're going to develop procedures for handling of mail out of collection boxes, and moving the mail to——

Mr. KANJORSKI. At the collection site, not necessarily the distribution site?

Mr. POTTER. The sanitizing will occur at a distribution center.

Mr. KANJORSKI. Then you're going to expose all the postal workers to anthrax.

Mr. POTTER. No, we're not. We're developing procedures to assure that mail is handled safely.

Mr. KANJORSKI. I just want to leave you with the idea, something that's disturbed me over these last several weeks, and I haven't publicly spoken up, but I'm going to say it today. I've heard this expression, "we were totally surprised, we were shocked." That was the fact that two airplanes could be used as missiles to hit the World Trade Center. And I wasn't. I read it in a book by Mr. Clancy several years ago where a plane struck the Capitol.

So it sort of shakes me up that some of the people in Government that are thinking of what can happen, may happen or will happen did not, they don't seem to be thinking out of the box. That was the example of what I gave you when I talked about Mr. Stevens all the way to Senator Daschle's office, the fact that you almost wait until there's a diagnosed case. You get the idea it may have something to do with that letter, as opposed to—not being an expert myself, but I know these spores can only penetrate the lungs if they're 1 to 5 microns. All the microbiologists have said that.

I know that paper allows 30 micron material to go through. So I wouldn't be shocked if 1 to 5 micron material were put in 30 micron hole paper and it escapes. And yet it took CDC and whoever was working on this 2 or 3 weeks to come to that conclusion, instead of going back very quickly and anticipating that we have to look at the sorting systems, the delivery systems, etc.

I'm just worried that—these are all new things that are happening to us. But I think what the American people expect us to do is think out of the box and not just think in numbers. $3 billion is a pretty big bill, but I'm sure the American people will pay for that bill. But they will only pay for that bill if they have a high degree of certainty that they are going to be less at risk, and certainly that the 800,000 workers in the post offices are less at risk. These people aren't guinea pigs. I don't want to think that we use them that way, and I don't think that we did. I think it was legitimate not thinking of what the ramifications of this could be. But now we've thought of it.

I hope also you will take your good offices to find out these people that have died from anthrax, what was the control of those bodies and the material in them? And have we thought of the potential of using the material that was produced in those bodies that could be remanufactured or re-milled into much more greater supply of this material than we have yet faced? Someone in the administration has to ask that question.

Mr. POTTER. I personally know that the CDC contacted the widows regarding that, because I discussed it with one of the widows.

Mr. KANJORSKI. Can you say with some certainty that actions were taken that no one has to worry about it?

Mr. POTTER. Again, I think that's a private matter for the families, not for me to discuss. But I know that those families were contacted on that issue.

Mr. BURTON. The gentleman's time has expired.

Let me just say to the panel, and in particular to you, General Potter, I appreciate your sticking with us as long as you have. I

know you were going to try to be out of here at 3 o'clock and I apologize for the delay. But it's very important for the American people and in particular, the Congress, to have answers to these questions. So we really appreciate your being here and staying with us. We have some other questions we'd like to submit for the record, and we'll get those to you.

Mr. POTTER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON. Excuse me, Mr. Shays, real quickly.

Mr. SHAYS. I just want the record to show that I had an opportunity to speak to Mr. Potter beforehand. I'm sorry I wasn't here for the hearing part, but I appreciated his response to my questions.

Mr. BURTON. Did you have further questions?

Mr. SHAYS. No, I don't.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you very much, gentlemen.

We will now have our next panel come up, Mr. William Burrus, president-elect of the American Postal Workers Union; William Young, the vice president of the National Association of Letter Carriers; Gus Baffa, president of the National Rural Letters Carriers Association; and William Quinn, president of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union.

George, it's good seeing you here today, too.

Before you sit down, we'll just ask all of you to stand and raise your right hands.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. BURTON. Be seated. I guess if you have opening statements, we'll be glad to receive them at this time. I think we'll start with Mr. Burrus.

STATEMENTS OF WILLIAM BURRUS, PRESIDENT-ELECT, AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL–CIO; MO BILLER; WILLIAM YOUNG, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS; GUS BAFFA, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL RURAL LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION; AND WILLIAM H. QUINN, NATIONAL PRESIDENT, NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

Mr. BURRUS. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. And thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify today.

Accompanying me today is Mo Biller, the president of the American Postal Workers Union. I've been elected as the next president of the American Postal Workers Union, but today and forever, Mo Biller will hold the title of president of our union. He has served an illustrious career, having served humankind as well as all postal employees for an extended period of time. We in the labor movement honor all of his contributions to our country and certainly to our union. We will be ever grateful for his contribution to us.

I have had the opportunity over the past 21 years of serving as the vice president under Mo's leadership. I've asked him over the past several weeks, I would certainly be pleased if he would extend his term by at least another 6 to 8 months so we can get through this anthrax scare. He has an illustrious career and never had a challenge as I'm facing as I assume office.

The American Postal Workers Union represents approximately 380,000 employees of the U.S. Postal Service. Our members work in every State and territory of the United States. The fact that these men and women have continued to work in the post office since anthrax was first discovered in the mail has been nothing short of heroic. I am proud and humbled to be representing them before you today. In the face of unknown and potentially deadly danger, they have been determined and steadfast in the performance of their duties.

I have submitted written testimony for the record and have an additional statement to make to you this afternoon. I've heard several questions from the panel comparing the discovery of anthrax in the House, the Senate and some of the other mailrooms throughout the country. I think it's extremely dangerous to compare the U.S. Postal Service to any other organization. We processed and delivered 680 million pieces of mail today. While one can close the House, the Senate or one of the smaller mail rooms, and have an impact upon whoever they serve, you close the U.S. Postal Service, you have an impact upon the entire country and perhaps other parts of the world as well.

It's really no real comparison to say, why don't we apply the same standards that they apply in some other units to the U.S. Postal Service. Because the result and impact is drastically different.

There have been a number of questions raised about the decisions made in New York, Morgan Station. As Postmaster General Potter explained, he and I did have a discussion about New York. And our policy is strict. We have agreed to a policy that if anthrax is discovered in any postal facility, it shall be closed. That's our strict policy. When Morgan was discovered to be contaminated, M. Potter discussed that with me. And we agreed that Morgan, representing one of the key points, the busiest city in our country, perhaps it was not in the interest of the American public to completely close that facility.

We were in Washington, DC, and CDC and health authorities were in New York City. They were advising us by phone that it did not represent a clear danger to the employees on other floors. And CDC recommended that they close off the floor where contamination was found, but it would be safe for the employees to continue working on other floors.

Notwithstanding the fact that our clear policy was that if anthrax was discovered, we would close the building, not a floor. Mr. Potter and I discussed it, and I agreed, as representative of the employees, to let CDC and the medical authorities in New York explain that to the employees and the local union. Convince them that it's safe and leave it to the individuals on those floors whether or not they wish to work on the other floors in Morgan or leave the facility.

They did that. Obviously some of the employees in Morgan Station elected to continue working in the building. But what I've since learned is, having traveled to Capitol Heights here in the District yesterday to visit with my constituents, there is a lot of animosity when employees come from a tainted facility into what is perceived to be a clean facility. The average employee believes that

they can contract anthrax by mere contact with another person who possibly could have been exposed to anthrax. So taking the employees in Morgan and dispersing them to other facilities in New York would have set up that type of situation. You would have had other employees in the other facility resenting the fact and afraid of those employees' presence in their facilities.

So I thought at the time, and I don't want to extend this, and I've talked to Mr. Potter, in between our testimony, that we're not going to make the exception the rule. While we agreed to make an exception in Morgan Station and today in Palm Beach, FL, it too is an exception, CDC made the same recommendation, but I informed him and Mr. Donohoe that these are exceptions and will not become the rule. That if we have agreed to close any facility that is tainted by anthrax, we must follow through with that commitment.

So if there is a future site identified as having been contaminated, I do expect that our agreement to close the facility will apply, and we will in fact close those facilities.

I want to emphasize that despite the deaths and injuries that have occurred, the American Postal Workers Union and the U.S. Postal Service have approached these challenges and tragedies together. Even though we have had a historic adversarial relationship, we find that this is common cause, and there are no differences between us as we address the real dangers of the anthrax scare.

In fact, just prior to the earlier discovery of anthrax in Florida, postal management had issued instructions to employees to recognizing dangerous material. It initiated what we refer to as the shake test, that if an employee found a parcel or a letter that appeared to be dangerous or contain some hazmat related material, the employee was to raise it to eye level and shake it.

This was before we knew anything about anthrax. My union initially objected very strenuously to the shake test. We thought that it just didn't make common sense to take something potentially explosive, take it up to eye level and shake it, perhaps combining two chemicals that when combined create an explosion and perhaps seriously injure a postal worker or a customer.

But just as we entered the anthrax situation, after meeting with management, they agreed to eliminate the shake test. That was our first agenda item. We had to eliminate the shake test. Since then, we've gone on together in trying to address anthrax situations.

The APWU sees this as a situation where we and the Postal Service must confront a common enemy for the good of the Service and the good of the country. I've tried to focus our members on the real culprit in this situation. It's not the CDC, it's not the U.S. Postal Service or the local health authorities, although perhaps looking backward with perfect vision, perhaps some mistakes were made, retroactive mistakes, mistakes knowing what we know today applying to the knowledge they had at the time decisions were made.

But I find it serves little purpose for me to impress upon my membership that their national union is in major disagreement with their employer because those employees go to work every day

being psychologically challenged, wondering, is this the day, do I contract anthrax today. And I believe that anything that moves them off that fine line perhaps may lead to the closing of the U.S. Postal Service. Because some day, if they find any fuel for that uncertainty, employees will not voluntarily work in fear for the balance of their lives.

The employer has a moral and legal obligation to provide a safe and secure workplace. In this crisis, we have sought always to do the best that could be done to safeguard the lives of postal workers. We have set aside our labor management differences and worked together to protect lives, both postal and the American communities that we serve.

We cannot bring life back to our brothers who are now deceased. All we can do, and we are doing all that we can, is to work with postal management and other postal labor unions and management associations to try to make sure that we will never again be required to attend the funeral of a postal employee whose life has been taken through a terrorist act.

This has been our approach and we will continue to work with management to safeguard lives.

Let me be clear to the committee, Mr. Chairman. You've heard the testimony of CDC, U.S. Postal Service and the high level officials working for the Postmaster General. From day to day, we don't know if postal employees are safe. Much of what we're acting upon is speculation. A clear indication of that was yesterday, as I attended the 10 o'clock meeting. I asked the representative from CDC who attends our meetings that I intended to go into the Capitol Heights facility. I have members of my union that work in that facility. In addition, some of the employees from Brentwood had been reassigned to that facility.

These are men and women that are working there every day, going to work, not sure of the product in which they earn their living. Every letter has the potential to be deadly dangerous. Every parcel has the possibility of killing them.

I had to bring the presence of our national union in their midst to give them the confidence that if they can work in that facility 8½ hours every day, certainly their union leadership can show a presence in the facility where they work. So at our 10 o'clock meeting I asked the representative from CDC, Postal Service officials, all of the top level officials that testified before you today, I'm going into the Capitol Heights facility, I'm not going to wear a mask, I'm not going to don gloves, what are my risks? What would you say to me? I'm a member of you, I live in an ivory tower, what are my risks in that facility, knowing that my risks are no greater or no worse than the employees that work in that facility.

After 20 minutes of heeing and hawing, nobody gave me an answer. It's because nobody knows. We provide masks and gloves to those hundreds of thousands of employees to serve perhaps some psychological needs as much as it does their physical needs. When they discover anthrax contamination, those who come into the facility that time do not have on masks and gloves. They are covered from head to foot, breathing pure air, not air through an M–100 mask that may be compromised by one who wears facial hair or perhaps some other reason it does not have the perfect fit. They

don't come in with the gloves that we're distributing to those employees. They have hazmat equipment to clean up that spill.

And you can imagine the consternation of the employees I represent to be working in that facility with normal attire, gloves and a small mask on their face, looking up to see these individuals coming in with these moon suits on. Knowing that they're protected and they have all this material on them, how can the employee be protected?

So despite our assurances to you, the assurances to our employees, the assurances to the public, we're learning every day. We don't know how the mail is being contaminated. We don't know if the Daschle and other letters are the only ones that are transmitted through U.S. Postal Service. We don't know whether or not one is being put in the mail as we speak. And the employees I represent are working in those facilities with that uncertainty on their mind.

And as postal management publicly expresses its sorrow and concern for deceased postal workers and their families, they are simultaneously attempting to cut the wages and health benefits of these very employees, using the impact of anthrax as justification for these reductions. Now, nothing could be more cynical than that. This is institutional hypocrisy. Postal workers have been without a contract since November 2000. Management has refused to negotiate a new labor agreement and now are seeking to impose cuts in wages and health benefits. And not just a simple cut, cuts every year for 4 years, successive cuts every year for a 4-year period for individuals that are putting their life on the line every day to serve the American public.

These are proposals management has advanced in bargaining before. But this time they seem to hope that the anthrax crisis will give them an opportunity to achieve them.

Mr. BURTON. Excuse me, Mr. Burrus. Let me say that your statement is very powerful and we do appreciate it. Would it be possible for you to summarize it?

Mr. BURRUS. I am. I'm just about finished.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, sir.

Mr. BURRUS. The APWU will not tolerate or accept this attempt to exploit this tragic situation to achieve this long sought goal. This is not the time or place for me to go into these issues in any detail. I have called an emergency meeting of our executive board to prepare a response and have scheduled a press conference. The focus of today's hearing should be and is safety of postal employees. This is our first and primary concern.

Thank you for your attention.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Burrus follows:]

TESTIMONY OF
WILLIAM BURRUS, PRESIDENT-ELECT

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO

ON

"OVERSIGHT OF THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE:
ENSURING THE SAFETY OF POSTAL EMPLOYEES
AND THE MAIL"

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 30, 2001

Hello, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. Thank you very much for providing this forum to discuss the enormous crisis faced by this country and, in particular, by the United States Postal Service. As you know, this matter is a matter of life or death for postal workers.

The American Postal Workers Union represents approximately 380,000 employees of the United States Postal Service. Our members work in every State and Territory of the United States. The fact that these men and women have continued to work in the Post Office since anthrax was first discovered in the mail has been nothing short of heroic. I am proud, and humbled, to be representing them before you today. In the face of unknown and potentially deadly danger, they have been determined and steadfast in the performance of their duties.

The September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon was unspeakably horrible, and it has changed our country in ways that are very profound. The subsequent attack on our country by the use of anthrax – and that is what is, an attack on our

country – is also likely to have a profound effect on our country. Certainly, its effect on postal workers, the American Postal Workers Union, and the United States Postal Service, has already been profound. The deaths of two postal workers and the hospitalization of numbers of others has tested the commitment of postal workers to their work, and to the mission of the Postal Service. It also has tested the commitment of the Postal Service to the welfare of its workers.

I want to emphasize that, despite the deaths and injuries that have occurred, the American Postal Workers Union and the United States Postal Service have approached these tragedies and these challenges together. We are not blaming anyone for the harm done to postal employees and the Postal Service except those terrorists or other criminals who intended to cause death and serious bodily harm by sending anthrax through the mail.

The United States Postal Service accounts for approximately eight percent of Gross Domestic Product, and it delivers messages and packages to every home in America. For 200 years, it has bound

this country together by providing universal service at a uniform and affordable price. It is the best, the most efficient, and the least expensive Postal Service in the world. In short, it is an institution that has enormous, in fact incalculable, value to this country. That value is measured not only in economic terms, but in social terms. Despite the power and sophistication of the Internet, it is still only the United States Postal Service that touches every life in America. As an article in the Wall Street Journal recently stated, "Even a temporary disruption in the distribution of letters and packages due to the anthrax scare could be yet another blow at a time when recession seems at hand."

Immediately when anthrax was discovered in postal facilities, postal officials consulted promptly, and at length, with officials from the Center for Disease Control and other specialists to determine how to protect postal employees. Unfortunately, our base of knowledge about this disease and the threat posed by anthrax was not sufficient to save the lives of two of our fellow workers. I want to reemphasize that I am not saying that anyone was negligent, or that anyone failed to try hard

to protect people. Tragically, two people died and others were injured.

I have been asked how the APWU first learned that anthrax had been discovered in a postal facility. We learned through the news media. After we learned, I met with Postmaster General Potter. At my suggestion, Mr. Potter and other top officials of the Postal Service, began meeting on a daily basis with the presidents of the postal unions and the heads of organizations representing non-union postal employees. This group has sought the best and most sophisticated medical, scientific and engineering information available to meet this threat. We have been reviewing procedures and protections constantly, seeking any available means to protect employees and the public. To their credit, Postmaster General Potter and the Postal Service have exerted every effort to assure and protect the lives of postal workers.

The employer has a legal and a moral obligation to ensure its workers a safe and secure workplace. That obligation is most

important when the issue is one of life or death. The APWU insists that postal facilities be made secure and that the mail be made safe through any necessary means.

The APWU has reached an agreement with the Postal Service that postal facilities where anthrax is found will be closed. In other facilities, even where there is no known anthrax, postal employees are to be issued protective equipment, including respirators and gloves; and environmental testing is to be pursued aggressively. No postal employee will be asked to work in a facility known to be contaminated.

This understanding about how to respond to the discovery of anthrax in a postal facility has been severely tested by the discovery of traces of anthrax in the Morgan Station facility in New York City. Based on advice from scientists, the Postal Service determined that it would close the floor in Morgan Station where the anthrax was found and continue to operate on other floors of that facility. I want to emphasize that the discovery in Morgan station was of traces of anthrax. The Center for Disease Control has expressed the opinion

that these traces are so small as not to pose a health threat to workers in other parts of the Morgan Station facility. This issue was resolved and the parties have renewed their commitment that, if contamination exists, facilities will be closed.

I also have been asked to describe the efforts by the APWU to keep its members informed during this crisis. We have an e-mail list that reaches 1700 locals of the APWU. We try to make the information available to that list as current as possible. We also have set up an 800 number that provides the same information. In addition, I have held two nationwide teleconferences. The first reached approximately 360 sites, at which multiple workers were able to participate in the call, and the second teleconference reached more than 500 sites. In the teleconferences, we provide the members an update, and respond to their questions. Each call lasted approximately two and one-half hours.

The dedication and commitment of postal workers who have continued to work under these conditions is heroic. Notwithstanding

the fact that we have assurances from the best experts on this subject, there can be no guarantee of safety under the circumstances. Postal workers in Morgan Station, and for that matter in every other postal facility in this country, are meeting the true definition of courage: despite their fear and concern, they are performing their duties. I hope and pray that the experts are right, and that no more tragic deaths are suffered.

It remains the policy of the American Postal Workers Union that buildings where anthrax is found must be closed until they are decontaminated. In our view, any amount of anthrax presumptively requires closure. We do, however, remain available to work with postal officials and officials of the Center for Disease Control in an effort to continue providing vital services to the American public.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Burrus. And as I said, that was a very, very powerful statement.

Mr. Young. And if we could, gentlemen, I'm going to allow you extra time, because I understand you've got an awful lot that you want to get off your chest. But if we could stay close to the 5-minute limit, we'd appreciate it.

Mr. YOUNG. Thank you, sir. My name is William Young. I'm the executive vice president of the National Association of Letter carriers. I'd like to thank you for holding this important hearing today. I know that you and the members of the committee will understand if I say that I really wish this hearing was not taking place. But given the current situation, we at the NALC appreciate your concern.

The expressions of support that we have received over the last week and a half have been heartening. To every American, the site of their letter carrier is a symbol for national community. It is as familiar as virtually any image of our country. When the perpetrators embarked on this heinous attack, they could not have possibly imagined the strength and compassion of the American public.

I brought with me today and I'd like to ask that it be entered into the record, Mr. Chairman, something that was hung on the board in the lobby of the Brooklyn post office just this week. It's very short and I'll read it. "To our postal workers, we salute your courage, we salute your services. You are the newest soldiers in the war against terror. We sympathize with and pray for your stricken and fallen colleagues. Stay the course." A Brooklyn family.

It's those kinds of expressions, sir, that make it so easy for the members that I represent to be out on the street every day.

Mr. BURTON. We will put that in the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

FROM : BRANCH 41 NALC PHONE NO. : 718 373 5326

To our Postal Workers

We salute your courage.
We need your services.
You are the newest soldiers
in the war
against terror.
We sympathize with and pray for
your stricken and fallen colleagues.

Stay the course.

--A Brooklyn family

Mr. YOUNG. Thank you very much.

Congress has expressed, and I won't get into any detail with this, but several of the members of the committee today, while I was sitting back listening, have expressed the importance of their mail because it keeps you in touch with the constituents that you represent. We understand that, sir, and that's why the members of my union and the members of Bill's union and the other brothers represented here are working so hard to try to keep the mail flow up and running, even in these very challenging times.

But when we're confronted with the challenge of this magnitude, that is wholly removed from anything we've seen before, the learning curve is pretty steep. The Postal Service and all the employee organizations have been able to disseminate timely information as it becomes available to us. It is no secret that our union has not always seen eye to eye with the Postal Service, but this unprecedented attack has been met with equally unprecedented levels of cooperation.

Our national agreement, article 14, section 1, says it is the responsibility of management to provide safe working conditions in all present and future installations, and to develop a safe working force. From my point of view, sir, and from the point of view of the leadership of our union, the U.S. Postal Service is doing everything they can to meet that commitment.

We have been forced to rethink the way we move mail. Serving more than 130 million delivery points 6 days a week requires a massive and extensive infrastructure, an infrastructure that will largely have to be revamped in the coming months. Our members have learned the hard way that they have to look for these new threats, and that the country is relying on them for protection.

I have great admiration for all of our members, especially those at the Brentwood facility here in Washington and in west Trenton. I'm extremely proud of the letter carriers there for the way that they have responded during this crisis. The New Jersey carriers are casing their mail in tents next to the building where they normally work, and I have another thing that I'd like to ask to be entered into the record. It's a picture of those tents with our letter carriers in them, performing that work. It was taken very recently.

Mr. BURTON. Without objection.

[The information referred to follows:]

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U.S. MAIL
U.S. MAIL

Mr. YOUNG. Every day for the last 2 weeks, we have gathered with other postal employee organizations and the Postmaster General at Postal Service headquarters here to obtain and share the latest developments. We've heard from the CDC, law enforcement and executive branch agencies in our efforts to understand the full magnitude of this situation. In addition to the video tape and other materials that have been distributed from postal headquarters, we at Letter Carriers have been working diligently to disseminate information to our membership. We've been regularly updating our Web site with the latest information, our NALC bulletin is posted and distributed in 13,000 postal facilities, and we have been communicating almost on a daily basis with our 15 national business agents through our intranet system of computers.

Last week our national president, Vince Sombrotto, had the high privilege to meet in the Oval Office with President Bush, Governor Ridge and Postmaster General Potter. The White House committed $175 million to deal with the immediate response, such as testing and distribution of antibiotics, the masks and the gloves. The Postal Service is also using $200 million from its own security fund.

However, there are still enormous expenses to be met, and the Postal Service will be seeking billions of dollars necessary to obtain and install equipment to sanitize the mail. These are funds that would otherwise go toward the purchase of machines through which mail at all processing facilities would be passed and would be cleansed of all biological agents. This would prevent the transmission of anthrax, smallpox or other infections through the mail. In addition to the actual expense of the purchase of these machines, each facility will need to be retrofitted to accommodate the new equipment and to ensure that employees are trained to operate them safely.

It is important to note that the Postal Service is a self-funded entity and does not receive an appropriation. However, remember, Congress does owe the Postal Service $957 million under the Revenue Foregone Act of 1993. Rather than being paid $29 million a year over the next 42 years, as it is currently written in the act, the Postal Service needs that full amount now.

Even that amount represents only a portion of the revenue lost as a result of recent events. These last couple of weeks have extracted a toll on our members and the Postal Service itself. Restoring the confidence of postal employees and the American people is of the utmost importance, not just for our national psyche, but because the Postal Service is an integral part of this country's economic infrastructure.

Individuals and businesses rely on the Postal Service to receive and pay bills, and securely send original documents. Keeping that system up and running is absolutely essential. Going days without mail extracts an extraordinary price. For example, one utility company in the D.C. area has reported they normally receive 30,000 payments through the mail each day. Just one isolated example of what mail means to our economy.

It is incumbent upon us to do whatever extent possible to make sure that such economic disruption is not visited upon other areas of the country.

We also need some level of perspective on the situation. Thus far, we have been relatively fortunate that the tragic events of the last few weeks seem to have been limited to a relatively small geographic area. We also need to be vigilant, because if the evil doers spread their poison elsewhere in the country, the result could be worse than it's been to this point.

I would also like to note, Mr. Chairman, that this disaster has further highlighted the shortcomings in the 30 year old law governing the Postal Service. Simply put, Postal Service needs greater flexibility not just when disaster strikes, but on a daily basis. I commend you, sir, because I know you've been studying this issue and I know you're right on top of the needs here.

Each year the NALC honors our heroes of the year. The letter carriers never cease to amaze me by demonstrating what they're capable of doing when confronted with adverse situations. Now every letter carrier must display that same type of heroism. They are the first line of protection for a large segment of the American population. I know they're up to the task, but they also have to know that they have the tools to take on this new challenge.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank you and the members of this committee for your concern during this difficult time. Too often the work that we do goes unnoticed. In many ways, that serves as a silent tribute to the members of the NALC. Now that times have called for a more vocal expression of support, I'm glad that we're all speaking up. Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sombrotto follows:]

Testimony of
Vincent R. Sombrotto
President of the National Association of Letter Carriers
Before the
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Government Reform
October 30, 2001

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the 320,000 members of the National Association of Letter Carriers and myself, I'd like to thank you for holding this important hearing today. I know that you and the members of this committee will understand if I say that I really wish that this hearing was not taking place, but given the current situation we at the the NALC appreciate your concern.

The outpouring of support that we have received over the last week and half has been heartening. To every American, the sight of their letter carrier is a symbol of our national community. It is as familiar as virtually any image of our country. When the perpetrators embarked on this heinous attack they could not possibly have imagined the strength and compassion of the American public.

I know that Congress is keenly aware of the role that the mail plays in our society. As Senator Daschle recently pointed out, "I don't know of anything more important than mail. (Lawmakers) read their mail in order to get a sense of what people are thinking. They read their mail because people have specific concerns.... To be cut off from your mail is really a major impediment to the way any Senate or House office works and functions." In this past Sunday's Washington Post, Helen Dewar reported, "Members say a hand-written letter has a personal quality that is irreplaceable. Its absence, they

say, has eroded their own sense of confidence that they are in close contact with the people who elect them, especially the less-affluent and others who do not have computers." Congresswoman Connie Morella stated that, with her Washington office unable to receive mail, constituents were dropping off their letters at her house.

When we are confronted with a challenge of this magnitude that is wholly removed from anything we have seen before, the learning curve is steep. But the Postal Service and all of the employee organizations have been able to disseminate timely information, as it becomes available to us. It is no secret that our union has not always seen eye-to-eye with the USPS, but this unprecedented attack has met with an equally unprecedented level of cooperation.

We have been forced to rethink the way we move our mail. Serving more than 130 million delivery points six days a week requires a massive and expensive infrastructure — an infrastructure that will largely have to be revamped in the coming months. Our members have learned the hard way that they have to look for new threats, and that the country is relying on them for protection. I have visited our members at the Brentwood facility here in Washington and in West Trenton. The New Jersey letter carriers are casing their mail in tents next to the building where they normally work. They have told me that they are proud to carry on with their work as a way of demonstrating their resolve and to send a strong signal to the thugs who perpetrated this crime against our nation.

Every day for the last two weeks I have gathered with the heads of the postal employee organizations and the Postmaster General at postal headquarters to obtain and share the latest developments. We have heard from the CDC, law enforcement and executive branch agencies in our efforts to understand the full magnitude of this situation. In addition to the videotape and other materials that have been distributed from postal headquarters, we at the letter carriers have been working diligently to disseminate information to our members. We have been regularly updating our website with the latest information, our "NALC Bulletin" is distributed and posted in 13,000 postal facilities and we have been communicating with our National Business Agents through our Intranet.

Last week I had the high privilege of meeting in the Oval Office with President Bush, Governor Ridge and Postmaster General Potter. The White House committed $175 million to deal with the immediate response, such as testing and the distribution of antibiotics, masks and gloves. The Postal Service is also using $200 million from its own security fund. However, there are still enormous expenses to be met, and the Postal Service will be seeking the $2.5 billion in funds necessary to obtain and install equipment to sanitize the mail. These are funds that would go towards the purchase of machines through which mail at all processing facilities would pass to be "cleansed" of biological agents. This would prevent the transmission of Anthrax, Smallpox and other infections through the mail. In addition to the actual purchase of the machines, each facility will need to be retrofitted to accommodate the new equipment and to ensure that employees are trained to operate them safely.

It is important to note that the Postal Service is a self-funded entity and does not receive an appropriation. However, remember Congress does owe the Postal Service $957 million under the Revenue Forgone Reform Act of 1993. Rather than being paid $29 million a year over 42 years as is written into that act, the Postal Service needs the full amount now. Even that amount represents only a portion of the revenue lost as a result of the recent events.

This last couple of weeks has exacted a toll on our members and the Postal Service itself. Restoring the confidence of postal employees and the American public is of the utmost importance, not just for our national psyche, but because the Postal Service is an integral part of this country's economic infrastructure. Individuals and businesses rely on the Postal Service to receive and pay bills and securely send original documents. Keeping that system up and running is absolutely essential. Going days without mail exacts an extraordinary price. For example, one utility company in the DC area has reported that they normally receive 30,000 payments through the mail each day. This is just one isolated example of what the mail means to our economy. It is incumbent upon us -- to whatever extent possible -- to make sure that such economic disruption is not visited upon other areas of the country. We also need to keep some level of perspective on the situation. Thus far we have been relatively fortunate that the tragic events of the last few of weeks seem to have been limited to relatively small geographic areas. We also need to be vigilant, because if these evil doers spread their

poison elsewhere in the country, the result could be exponentially worse than it has been to this point.

I'd also like to note, Mr. Chairman, that this disaster has further highlighted the shortcomings of the 30-year-old law governing the postal service. Simply put, the Postal Service needs greater flexibility, not just when disaster strikes, but on a daily basis.

Each year the NALC honors our heroes of the year, and letter carriers never cease to amaze me by demonstrating what they are capable of when they are confronted with adverse situations. Now every letter carrier must display that same type of heroism. They are the first line of protection for a large segment of the American population. I know they are up to the task, but they also have to have the tools to take on this new challenge.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank you and the members of this committee for taking an interest during this difficult time. Too often the work that we do goes unnoticed. In many ways, that serves as a silent tribute to the members of the NALC. Now that the times have called for a more vocal expression of support, I'm glad that you all have been there. Thank you.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, and I can assure you that we're going to do everything we can to give the Postal Service and the postal workers every bit of help they need, in equipment and everything else.

Mr. Baffa.

Mr. BAFFA. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Gus Baffa. I am the newly elected president of the 100,000 plus National Rural Letter Carriers' Association. I have submitted my statement and request that it become part of the record.

I also would like to make a brief oral statement. There aren't any rural carriers in New York City. There are approximately 30 to 40 rural carriers in the Trenton facilities, and many rural carriers are served through the Brentwood facility. On September 11th, this country was attacked by terrorists in New York, Pennsylvania and right here at the Pentagon. What happened as a result of that is this country became united.

Recently, a person or persons unknown have utilized the Postal Service as a vehicle to send their weapon of anthrax through the mail. That is an attack on the Postal Service and the postal family. And we are now united.

The Postal Service has attempted to do its very best during this crisis. There is no play book to follow. This is a road none of us have been down before. It doesn't matter if we are referring to a rural carrier, a city carrier, a mail handler, a clerk, the PMG, the FBI, or the Centers for Disease Control, it's new to all of us. Postal workers are part of the army of foot soldiers in this war against terrorism and getting back to normalcy.

As our President said, we must continue life as normal. Our members are doing that every day. We are reporting to work, we are casing the mail, we are putting it in our vehicles and we are delivering it. Sure, some are very worried. As a Kentucky rural carrier said on a National Public Radio interview when asked if anything had changed, he replied, "Definitely. Now when I come home each day, instead of picking up my 3 year old daughter, who is waiting to give me a welcome kiss with her arms outstretched, I need to take a shower first."

At this time of extreme anxiety, Postmaster General Potter and postal employees across the country have stepped up to the plate to ensure continued delivery of our Nation's mail. It is now time for Congress to step up to the plate by appropriating the sums necessary to ensure safe and ongoing mail delivery and by passing postal reform legislation to ensure that the Postal Service can function safely and effectively in the 21st century.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Baffa follows:]

Statement of Gus Baffa, President of NRLCA

to the Committee on Government Reform

of the House of Representatives

October 30, 2001

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, My name is Gus Baffa. I am President of the 101,000 member National Rural Letter Carriers' Association. Thank you for holding these hearings.

The use of the US mail as a vehicle for terrorist attacks was intended as a biological poisoning of prominent Americans. The attacks have had other effects as well. One effect has been a tremendous disruption of one of the great services to the Commerce of this country, Our United States Postal Service. Mail delayed costs the economy billions of dollars. Banks, Credit Unions, Utilities, Mortgage Companies and Credit Card companies are granting amnesty because of mail delays.

Another effect of the attacks is that the use of one of the most reliable staples in American's daily lives has become frightening to many Americans. Yet, since September 11th USPS has delivered more than 20 Billion safe pieces of mail.

The tragedy to our Postal Community is very real. On behalf of all the members of the rural letter carrier family, I offer our Sympathy to the families of victims of the terrorists. We offer our thoughts and prayers for a full and speedy recovery for our brothers and sisters who are currently undergoing treatment for anthrax poisoning. To the rural carriers who work in Trenton or receive mail from Brentwood, our continuing prayers of thanks that not one of you has been diagnosed positive.

The Postal Service has attempted to do it's very best during this crisis. There is no playbook to follow; this is a road none of us have been down before. This is an asymmetrical attack on our country. It doesn't matter if we are referring to a rural letter carrier, a postal clerk, the PMG, the FBI, or the Center for Disease Control (CDC), it's new to all of us.

Postal Workers are part of the army of foot soldiers in this war against terrorism and back toward normalcy. As our President said, we must continue life as normal. Our members are doing that every day, we are reporting to work, casing mail, putting it in our vehicles, and delivering it. Sure some are very worried. As a Kentucky rural carrier said in a National

Public Radio interview, when asked if anything had changed, he replied sure, now when I come home each day instead of hugging my three children immediately, I bathe first.

At this time of extreme anxiety, PMG Potter and postal employees across the country have stepped up to the plate to ensure continued delivery of our nation's mail. Now it is time for Congress to step up to the plate by appropriating the sums necessary to ensure safe and ongoing mail delivery, and by passing postal reform legislation to ensure that the postal service can function safely and effectively in the 21st century.

The mailing industry is a vital service engine to our Nation's commerce and economy, generating $871 billion annually, and making up approximately 9% of the Gross National Product. However, the postal service is operating under an antiquated law that hinders its ability to adapt to the changed world of the new century. Congress needs to enact legislation that enables the Postal Service to operate in the 21st century as a 21st century institution. Congressmen McHugh's, Davis's, and Chm. Burton's bill is an excellent vehicle to bring this essential change. The time to mark-up this bill is NOW.

We are grateful to the White House and Congress for the $175 million as a short-term carry-over for November. We appreciate the $63 million related to the destruction of Church Street Station in New York City and events immediately after September 11th. We are most grateful for this beginning.

However, we desperately need additional appropriations assistance with the enormous costs of sanitizing the mail and the significant revenue losses associated with this disruption. In addition, we need postal reform legislation to ensure that the short-term money and future appropriations to be properly utilized. We urge Speaker Hastert to make room on the House calendar for reform legislation this year.

A high level task-force consisting of USPS Headquarter Officers, the Presidents of the 7 employee organizations and unions, the Chief Postal Inspector, the Inspector General of the Postal Service, and the CDC has been meeting daily. These meetings bring concerns and questions from our memberships to management and the CDC. It is management's opportunity to share the latest actions with us so we may disseminate them to our members. It's vital communication in this period of uncertainty.

Those meetings are where we learned the USPS has purchased 4 million facemasks and shipped 2 million of them on Oct 23 to 140 locations, starting on the East Coast. These masks are able to filter out 95% of all microbes in the air, including anthrax spores. Use of these masks is not mandatory, but is highly recommended.

The USPS has purchased 86 million pairs of gloves made of vinyl and Nitrile, a high-grade industrial plastic, to supply 3 pairs per employee per day throughout the nation. Forty-four million pairs have been shipped. Use of these gloves is not mandatory, but is highly recommended.

USPS has consulted with the Dept of Defense and is purchasing irradiation equipment to kill any biological agents in mail separated by targeted screening. This new equipment will be built directly into the sorting process. Its technology will be completely safe for employees and customers. It will be using the latest, state-of-the-art technology.

This war effort will not be cheap or completed without sacrifice. The Postal Service needs an appropriation for the long-term sanitation of the mail to protect employees and customers alike, and we need assistance because of

the income disruption. The management and employees of the US Postal Service will come to work and do our jobs each and every day. We need you in Congress as a partner to pass postal reform now, so the appropriations needed to insure the safety of the mail for our employees and customers will be well spent.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to answer any questions.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Baffa.

Mr. Quinn.

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee, my name is Billy Quinn. I'm the national president of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union.

On behalf of the over 50,000 union mail handlers employed by the U.S. Postal Service, I appreciate the opportunity to testify about the challenges of safety and security that currently are being faced by the U.S. Postal Service and our postal employees. The mail handlers we represent are an essential part of the mail processing and distribution network utilized by the Postal Service to move more than 200 billion pieces of mail each year.

Mail handlers work in all of the Nation's large postal plants and are responsible for loading and unloading trucks, transporting mail within a facility, preparing the mail for distribution and delivery, operating a host of machinery and automated equipment and containerizing mail for subsequent delivery.

Our members generally are the first and last employees to handle the mail as it comes to, goes through and leaves most postal plants. Our paramount concern is the safety of postal employees, including all mail handlers. To this end, we have been active participants in the mail security task force that has been established by postal management and includes representatives of our unions and employee associations.

That task force is implementing plans to prevent infection by anthrax or other biological agents that may be sent through the mails. Among other issues, the task force is addressing the need to close affected facilities until they can be certified as safe for all employees. The distribution of necessary antibiotics to postal employees, the distribution and use of masks and gloves that may be helpful in preventing anthrax infections, the development and delivery of safety training programs, and the development of revised cleaning methods for mail processing equipment.

The task force also is looking to the future and is considering a host of issues such as anthrax vaccines and irradiation of the mail. I must say, however, the task force is having great difficulty keeping up with the news and information cycle that has developed around the anthrax issue. Even when the task force has current and accurate information, the timely dissemination of that information to more than 800,000 postal employees and thousands of postal facilities is extremely difficult. This problem is exacerbated by the confusing and often contradictory information that is coming out of postal headquarters, the Centers for Disease Control and State and local health authorities.

I just returned from a meeting of all our local union officers and representatives. After a lengthy discussion of the various safety and medical issues facing mail handlers, our local leadership was fully informed with as much accurate information as possible. Even with this information, however, these representatives remain anxious. Certainly they know that mail handlers must exercise caution while processing the mail. But they are less certain about precisely what to tell their members about the specific steps mail handlers should take to ensure their own safety.

On the workroom floor, there is even more anxiety, because members have even less access to accurate information. The key therefore is the timely dissemination of accurate safety and medical information. That should be the focus of the task force, and that must be the focus of postal management, the CDC, and State and local health officials. What is needed now is the constant dissemination of accurate and to the maximum extent possible consistent safety and medical information to all postal employees. Mail handlers and other postal employees deserve the best available scientific protection against this bioterrorism.

Through science and reason we can overcome rumor and fear. In that regard the most important action Congress can take is to appropriate all of the funds necessary for the Postal Service to process mail safely without harm to employees. It is unfortunate that it takes an incident such as this to make people aware of the hazards of working in postal facilities. Ten years ago, it was the threat of AIDS from needles and blood spills coming from medical waste and poorly constructed packaging in the postal system. With the help of congressional oversight, that problem has largely been eliminated.

Yet our members still face hazardous working conditions. All of the postal unions have written to Congress or testified about the need for protection from dangerous equipment and terrible ergonomic injuries. We therefore need to take this tragedy and turn it into a positive movement for worker safety. This is a unique moment when American citizens have again been made aware of the great importance that the Postal Service serves in our Nation's communications network. They will rally behind a sustained movement to make the postal workplace safer to employees and a source of confidence for its customers.

To do any less would be to fail on our commitment to the future integrity of the U.S. postal system.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be glad to answer any questions that you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Quinn follows:]

National Postal Mail Handlers Union

William H. Quinn
National President

Mark A. Gardner
Secretary-Treasurer

Hardy Williams
Vice President
Central Region

Samuel C. D'Ambrosio
Vice President
Eastern Region

John F. Hegarty
Vice President
Northeastern Region

James C. Terrell
Vice President
Southern Region

Efraim Daniel
Vice President
Western Region

TESTIMONY OF

WILLIAM H. QUINN

NATIONAL PRESIDENT

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

BEFORE THE

SENATE COMMITTEE

ON

GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

and the

HOUSE COMMITTEE

ON

GOVERNMENTAL REFORM

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE:

ENSURING THE SAFETY

OF POSTAL EMPLOYEES AND THE MAIL

OCTOBER 30, 2001

National Headquarters: 1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 833-9095 FAX (202) 833-0008 http: //www.npmhu.org

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Committee. I am Billy Quinn, National President of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union. On behalf of 50,000 union mail handlers employed by the U.S. Postal Service, I appreciate the opportunity to testify about the challenges of safety and security that currently are being faced by the U.S. Postal Service and all postal employees.

The mail handlers we represent are an essential part of the mail processing and distribution network utilized by the Postal Service to move more than 200 billion pieces of mail each year. Mail handlers work in all of the nation's large postal plants, and are responsible for loading and unloading trucks, transporting mail within the facility, preparing the mail for distribution and delivery, operating a host of machinery and automated equipment, and containerizing mail for subsequent delivery. Our members are generally the first and the last employees to handle the mail as it comes to, goes through, and leaves most postal plants.

Our paramount concern is the safety of postal employees, including all mail handlers. To this end, we have been active participants in the Mail Security Task Force that has been established by postal management and includes representatives of all unions and employee associations.

That Task Force is implementing plans to prevent infection by anthrax or other biological agents that may be sent through the mails. Among other issues, the Task Force is addressing the need to close affected facilities until

they can be certified as safe for all employees; the distribution of necessary antibiotics to postal employees; the distribution and use of masks and gloves that may be helpful in preventing anthrax infections; the development and delivery of safety training programs; and the development of revised cleaning methods for mail processing equipment. The Task Force also is looking to the future, and is considering a host of issues such as anthrax vaccines and irradiation of the mail.

I must say, however, that the Task Force is having great difficulty keeping up with the news and information cycle that has developed around the anthrax issue. And even when the Task Force has current and accurate information, the timely dissemination of that information to more than 800,000 postal employees in thousands of postal facilities is extremely difficult. This problem is exacerbated by the confusing and often contradictory information that is coming out of Postal Headquarters, the Centers for Disease Control, and state and local health authorities.

I just returned from a meeting of all of our Local Union officers and representatives. After a lengthy discussion of the various safety and medical issues facing mail handlers, our local leadership was fully informed with as much accurate information as possible. Even with this information, however, these representatives remain anxious. Certainly they know that mail handlers must exercise caution while processing the mail. But they are less certain about precisely what to tell their members about the specific steps mail handlers should take to ensure their own safety. On the workroom floor, there

is even more anxiety, because members have even less access to accurate information.

The key, therefore, is the timely dissemination of accurate safety and medical information. That should be the focus of the Task Force, and that must be the focus of postal management, the CDC, and state and local health officials. What is needed now is the constant dissemination of accurate – and to the maximum extent possible, consistent – safety and medical information to all postal employees. Mail handlers and other postal employees deserve the best available scientific protection against this bio-terrorism. Through science and reason, we can overcome rumor and fear. In that regard, the most important action Congress can take is to appropriate all of the funds necessary for the Postal Service to process mail safely without harm to employees.

It is unfortunate that it takes an incident such as this to make people aware of the hazards of working in postal facilities. Ten years ago, it was the threat of AIDS from needles and blood spills coming from medical waste in poorly constructed packaging in the postal system. With the help of congressional oversight, that problem has largely been eliminated. Yet our members still face hazardous working conditions. All of the postal unions have written to Congress or testified about the need for protection from dangerous equipment and terrible ergonomic injuries.

We therefore need to take this tragedy and turn it into a positive movement for worker safety. This is a unique moment, when American citizens

have again been made aware of the great importance that the Postal Service serves in our nation's communications network. They will rally behind a sustained movement to make the postal workplace safe for its employees and a source of confidence for its customers. To do any less would be to fail in our commitment to the future integrity of the U.S. postal system.

Thank you, and I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you very much.

I think we'll start the questioning with Mr. Waxman, because I have to leave for just a few minutes. So Mr. Waxman, we'll yield to you.

Mr. WAXMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank each of you for your testimony. I think it's been an excellent presentation and I hope, Mr. Quinn, that your words will be taken very seriously by everybody involved, that we turn this tragedy into a very positive development to make the workplace safer for postal employees and give greater confidence to the American people about their mail.

And also that we remind everybody how hard our postal employees work for us. Whether it's at the post office or delivering the mail in the urban areas, and rural areas, they're on the front lines. Given this war on terrorism, they are genuinely on the front lines. The terrorists are using the mail just as they used the airplanes to serve as a vehicle for their attempt to instill great fear in all of our people.

I want to ask you about how you feel the Postal Service is dealing with this whole threat of anthrax and whether they are coordinating with you and partnering with you, the employee unions, to keep employees informed of the rapidly evolving anthrax threat. Do you think the Postal Service has kept your members adequately informed and protected?

Mr. YOUNG. Congressman Waxman, I would say yes. I'll just use last night as an example. At 7:30 p.m., I'm home with my family. My phone rings, it's Doug Tollino from the Postal Service. He's under the vice president of labor relations. He's calling me to tell me that the tests are now back on 19 post offices here in the D.C. area, and that one of them, the Friendship Station, has in fact, they found a very small, he called it a minuscule trace of anthrax, and that they were going to have the EPA try to clean the building up last night. And if in fact they were not able to do that, that the employees would all be moved out of the building into a garage right next door, where they could work until the building was declared safe by the proper authorities.

This is just a common, everyday occurrence at my house. My daughter's 15 years old, she knows who Doug Tollino is as soon as he calls, it's more bad news about this terrible anthrax that's running around. I think from my perspective, they went out of their way to keep us informed.

Mr. WAXMAN. That's good to hear. Mr. Burrus.

Mr. BURRUS. Yes, from the national's perspective, my experience is the same as the NALC. So we have been communicating very, very well. We meet every day at 10 o'clock, review past events, get a report on the number of hospitalizations, the number of suspected sites, the results of testing.

However, the U.S. Postal Service is a very large institution, 38,000 facilities across the country. And the communications that we're enjoying here in Washington is not enjoyed in every one of those facilities. Very bureaucratic, the U.S. Postal Service. And it's not unusual for the agreements that we reach at this level not to be enjoyed by the parties at the local level.

So we're working through that. We have put in place a system where, if the supervisors or managers at the local level do not comply with those things we agree to here, we have a system in place that we can bring it to postal management's attention at various levels, and resolve them as quickly as we can.

However, they're not sharing the same information at the local level that we receive at this level. I try to keep in touch with my members in a variety of ways. I have a teleconference once a week where I make it open to all of our members throughout the country. Last week, I had over 500 sites that were tapped into the teleconference. I gave Mr. Donohoe, Deputy PMG, the opportunity for the last 15 minutes of that conference to speak to our members, to give them the assurance from the headquarters level that postal management really cared about their safety.

But we've had a variety of ways of communicating with our members, and the relationship at this level has been a positive one, in this matter. Let me not expand it beyond this matter.

Mr. WAXMAN. Thank you very much. Mr. Baffa or Mr. Quinn, do you want to add anything to that?

Mr. BAFFA. The task force meetings in the morning are a two way communication. The CDC is there every morning, so we also get to ask them any questions, as Bill Burrus mentioned earlier he had asked the gentleman from CDC some questions. So it gives us a perfect opportunity. Each organization also has a responsibility, and we've all assumed that responsibility and have taken it seriously by utilizing our Web sites or newsletters, our national magazines to get the information out to our people.

The two way communication is vital to unions and management. One morning I had gotten two calls on something in two different areas. And literally, when I mentioned it at the meeting, the vice president of labor relations literally got up, went to the phone, called the area VP, and it was taken care of in less than literally 2 minutes. So the cooperation right now is unprecedented.

Mr. WAXMAN. Thank you.

Dr. WELDON [assuming Chair.] The time is expired. Mr. Quinn, do you want to answer?

Mr. QUINN. Since I concur with my colleagues, there's no need for me to waste your valuable time. [Laughter.]

Mr. WAXMAN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank all of you for your testimony. You care about your workers, and we do, too. Thank you.

Dr. WELDON. The Chair now yields to himself for 5 minutes. But I'm not going to consume the whole 5 minutes.

I just want to say a couple of things. My father was more than 30 years a clerk with the Levittown post office. From this Member of Congress, I just want to say to all of you how much we appreciate the rank and file and their willingness to go to work.

Several of you have mentioned the word anxiety. I just want you all to know you're not alone in that area of anxiety. We have staff that are anxious, we have meetings of just members and the members are anxious. We've been targeted, too. So we're all in this boat together. And it's OK to be anxious. But I want you to know how pleased I am a the attitude of the postal workers. And I've talked to some of them myself in my district and in this area, the Wash-

ington, DC, area. And I'm impressed, people want to carry on. They know that the risks are there, but the risks are low, and the intention is to put fear in our hearts. This is a psychological game.

It's a great tragedy to lose one postal worker, and as we all know, we've lost two. But most of the postal workers are quite safe, and we know that. But the real victory for these terrorists is if they can put so much fear in the hearts of the American people and the postal workers that they'll stop working.

I think very clearly there's more we can do and I've heard the message loud and clear. The Postal Service is going to need some help in dealing with this crisis. And the ranking member and the chairman are ready to work with all the members of the committee and your unions to make sure that we're able to keep the mail moving. It is critical to the economy. Mr. Young, I'm glad you focused on that. Because this is a huge, huge issue for our economy.

So I want to thank you all for your testimony and for the work you're doing. I now yield to the gentlelady from the District of Columbia, Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

If I could just thank the four leaders, the postal union leaders who have given such important testimony today. I don't think it is hyperbole to say that you and your workers are regarded as heroic in this country. And I can certainly say that, from the town meeting I had last night where over 500 people came, most of them of course, not postal workers or letter carriers, but a fair number of them were. I got to speak with the experts from the CDC and the post office who were there to be questioned.

Just let me say that I think it should go without being said that at the very least, the post office, which faced a fairly substantial deficit, should be made whole. That is to say, no worse off than you would have been had this tragedy not occurred. You are no different from the airlines. That is to say, they had nothing to do with the fact that those planes were made missiles and murderous weapons. You had absolutely nothing to do with the fact that the mails have been made missiles of killing.

Just as people had to get medicine without cost to them, it seems clear to me that you should be put back at least where you were. And I certainly hope that does not become a controversial matter in this Congress. And frankly, I think it cannot and will not.

I want to ask your advice. At the town meeting last night, there was not a lot of solidarity, as you might imagine, with the postal management, you know, people don't readily identify with whoever managers are. There was a hell of a lot of solidarity with the postal workers. Tonight, I am sending staff to the Friendship Heights community. Now, not a single person in that community will be in that meeting, I bet you, that works for the postal service.

But we need your help on how to transfer some of your courage to the average citizen. Because they think that what the postal workers are doing is absolutely unbelievable. They see you going to work in tents, they see the pictures of the masks, they see their letter carrier every day. When they don't get their mail, they know why they're not getting it. They miss their letter carrier. Some of them have only a letter carrier in their lives. They identify with the mail handlers and the postal workers.

What would you say to members of the general public, like the people in Friendship Heights who are nervous today because their post office has been closed down, about whether they should regard themselves as in danger or their mail because of what has happened in the Friendship Heights postal office? You have more credibility, based on what I saw last night, to speak to them than anybody in this Congress or bless their hearts, anybody in management. What should my staff say? What can my staff say that union leaders would say to the general public about how to deal with their mail and how to regard this controversy and their own personal safety with respect to the mail?

Mr. YOUNG. Congresswoman Norton, I would suggest that you tell the people of Friendship Heights that they're lucky. Because they're down the road and we know how to deal with this situation. It's only a trace that was found in their station, not even, we're not even sure it's enough to do any harm.

But the right thing is happening there. The station is being closed down, it's being sanitized. That will remove the risk. So if I was to go out there with you, what I'd be telling the letter carriers out there is that they were fortunate, that they had learned from the other mistakes that had been made, the fatal mistakes, to be honest with you, in Brentwood, and that now the Postal Service was doing the right thing and that risk was greatly diminished because the right thing was being done.

Dr. WELDON. The gentlelady's time has expired. Would you like to let them proceed with an answer?

Ms. NORTON. I would appreciate one more, yes.

Dr. WELDON. Go ahead.

Mr. BURRUS. I would tell them that we will be at a point some time in the future where we can guarantee absolutely that all the mail is safe. In the interim, we must tell them that we cannot let the terrorists win. I am afraid of colon cancer, I am afraid of being hit by a truck, being in an automobile accident, I'm afraid of anthrax. We can't be controlled by fear. That is the weapon of the terrorists.

So while there is some minor level of risk, until we guarantee absolutely, we have to tell the American public that we cannot be controlled by fear. We have to understand it, but control it.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you for all you are doing. Thank you for the example you are setting.

Mr. BAFFA. You may want to use some numbers. May I?

Dr. WELDON. Sure, go ahead.

Mr. BAFFA. Since September 11th, we've delivered over 20 billion pieces of mail. Only three have been found to be contaminated. Only three deaths have been attributed to anthrax. The prediction from the CDC, I believe, is 20,000 people will die from the flu this coming flu season.

Now, I don't know if that's going to put their mind at ease when they go to the mailbox. But those numbers are hard facts.

Ms. NORTON. I think it helps, actually.

Dr. WELDON. Those are very well taken points.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Souder.

Mr. SOUDER. Now everybody in my district's going to be asking if their postal carrier had the flu when they dropped off the mail.

But I really appreciate your willingness to speak out on what is going to be not a couple of month question, but probably at least a decade or for the rest of our lives, and that's how you do risk assessment. We appreciate your bravery with that. This is not new. It's new to us in the sense of direct deaths in the United States. But the book Germs right now is either No. 1 or No. 2 on most best seller lists, and it's clearly documenting that we've had variations of this in the United States.

When I was in Iraq in 1998, we had the opportunity to meet with some of the inspectors who had been kicked out, who were looking for the very things that are coming. We've been talking about this, we've been having drills in the military as they've been sent overseas on to handle chemical and biological weapons that could be weaponized in the United States. Now we're here, and we're just at the very, I think what the public is concerned about is not what they necessarily just see in front of them, but what may be coming. And this isn't likely to be some kind of a big hit. We're not sure whether this is a domestic nut or whether it's Iraq or where it is right now.

But clearly, in the scheme of the type of terrorism we see in al Qaeda and elsewhere in the world, this is a kind of a warning to us as to how we're going to deal with this. One thing I want to strongly encourage in risk assessment that you push management to act rapidly to stop things, even if it's only briefly. For example, anybody who is been watching saw that they couldn't penetrate to Capitol Hill or to a lot of the agencies, and they hit the people who were carrying. And if they would have gotten into our offices, they were going to hit a front person.

Probably at some point, maybe a decade or 20 years, maybe next month or tomorrow, they're going to try penetrating at a district level or at a local justice department. I would encourage that whenever you see a new pattern that the unions and the management say, if they see one district anywhere in the country where this happened, that the entire system stop to check it. Because we may in fact have prevented some in the agencies because of holding the mail for a little bit.

Now, I believe we've gone on too long, and that we quite frankly need to lead by example here in Washington, like you've led in the post office. But look for those patterns and let's don't do what Congressman Kanjorski was saying, it always seems like we're behind. For a baby boomer, it seems like we're in an endless Vietnam, where we're always just a little bit behind.

And I wanted to ask you whether you know, is there any unit inside the post office or pushing CDC? Because the mail, we clearly have a vulnerability, we hadn't thought a lot about the mail, but it's extremely logical. It's been out there as a method just like other things. Is there a unit that is currently testing to see what other chemical or biological, just like we were talking earlier, about the anthrax in the envelopes, and, oh, what a whopper of a whoops. We didn't know it could penetrate the envelope. That's a whopper of a whoops. The question is, we don't want more of that type of thing.

Is there a unit that is looking at other chemical and biological as to how they could work through the mail system? OK, we have masks now that can treat this one type of thing. What other things may be coming? Because not looking at this in terms of tomorrow, but a longer sense of tomorrow. Do you know anything? Have you been told about anything? And if not, we ought to be looking at that, trying to figure out what other ways to research to make every letter carrier as safe as possible, knowing that perfection is impossible.

Mr. BURRUS. I'm informed that Postal Service doctors, and they have a number under contract, the Inspection Service and others in the Postal Service are taking a fresh look at our exposure, not just to anthrax, but to a number of other attacks. I understand, I don't know if they had undertaken those types of activities before anthrax or not, but I am assured that presently they have.

So yes, they are. We are not involved in those activities. We're just reacting to anthrax, the labor unions. But the Postal Service is embarking on some studies on other issues.

Mr. SOUDER. In your committees, for example, if we buy $2.5 billion in new equipment, is that equipment all geared to anthrax, or is it——

Mr. BURRUS. No, that would be geared to all bacteria, all organisms, anything that comes, smallpox, anthrax, dyptheria, anything that comes through will be killed.

Mr. SOUDER. Anybody else have any comments on this?

I encourage you to stay aggressive with it, because you're the front line of defense representing your workers. I thank you.

Dr. WELDON. The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from New York, Mrs. Maloney.

Mrs. MALONEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your testimony and for your leadership. As a New Yorker, I can tell you that since September 11th, there have been many heroes, certainly New York's finest and New York's bravest. But now everyone's talking about the postal workers who are going about their business under very challenging and difficult times.

I appreciate very much the efforts that those of you in the mailing industry have taken to restore confidence. This is an enormous industry and its stability is of the utmost importance to our country. As Mr. Baffa pointed out earlier, we really have to keep this in perspective. We really can't blame people for being concerned about the mail today. But he noted that 20 billion pieces of mail have been moving since the anthrax, and only three infections. That's roughly 680 million pieces of mail each day. So the risk to the general public is truly not very large when you put that in perspective.

I would like to ask you or any of you to comment. What else could we be doing to make your workers safe and to ease their fears?

Mr. BURRUS. Do you mean Congress, the Postal Service or the unions?

Mrs. MALONEY. What could we in Congress be doing to help the workers, to ease their fears, to make it safer for them?

Mr. BURRUS. Well, you could advance the funds that the Postal Service will be so desperately in need of. As long as money is at

issue, then the Postal Service is going to be stretched in terms of how much protection they can provide to the employees. The $175 million that has been advanced to date has been very helpful in terms of purchasing some of the protective equipment that postal employees need. But before we're through with this, they're going to need a whole lot more than $175 million.

So I believe that Congress could be directly involved in appropriating sufficient moneys. You new demand of us universal service. And we have to deliver to every American, no matter where they live, provide forwarding services, a number of other services that a good business would not perform at a universal rate. So recognizing that, we perform services as an arm of the U.S. Government, in these times they will need additional financing, funding. And I would request that Congress keep an open ear in regards to requests that will be coming to the Hill.

Mr. YOUNG. There's something else you can do that's a lot simpler than giving us money. And we do need the money. I bumped into a Senator here in town earlier in the week. It was just at the time when the Senate was starting to reopen most of their facilities. I just mentioned to the Senator in passing how encouraging that is to our members, to see you all back in business.

Now, look, I don't want anybody here to take any unnecessary risks, and I want to make that clear. But that double standard thing that was talked about earlier, it's out there. And our members look at that, and they do feel like they're being treated in a lesser manner than you all are being treated. And I just think to the extent that you can safely get back to your business, that's a pretty simple thing for you to do. I know it takes cleaning up and everything.

But I want you to all appreciate how much that says to our members who are out there every day and have been out there every day, to see you all back in business and functioning in your capacity here. So as soon as it's safe to do that, I'd encourage you all to do exactly that.

Mrs. MALONEY. Any other comments?

Mr. QUINN. Some of the members of the committee have expressed some concerns about the costs that might possibly be as much as a $3 billion expenditure, and why is the Postal Service behind the curve on this issue. I'd like you to envision the scenario, if Postmaster General Potter appeared before this august body 3 months ago and asked you for $3 billion, you'd be calling for strait jackets.

The Postal Service has been put, obviously, in a horrible position, and the safety not only of postal employees but of the American public has been put in danger. I'm not treating the subject of the money glibly. But by the same token, you can't expect the Postal Service to be able to do everything on its own. I think this is a perfect example of their quandary. Everybody wants to go to heaven, nobody wants to die. Well, you can't have it both ways.

Mrs. MALONEY. Well, as Mr. Burrus pointed out, by law, the Postal Service is required to deliver mail to every urban apartment, every rural farm, and I also would like to understand whether you feel this should be supported through the general revenues funds——

Dr. WELDON. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Mrs. MALONEY [continuing]. Or would you say, postal increase? Personally I think it should be general revenue funds, but how do you feel?

Mr. BURRUS. I think long term, I've been in the Postal Service since 1954, and experienced that period of time when we were part of the Federal Government. We were competing with education, health care, roads, defense. It's really dangerous to start moving us back in that direction. I think it's appropriate to reform the Postal Service so it's competitive in ways that it can really grow, recognizing that it does have monopoly so there will be some restrictions.

But long term ties between the Federal Government and the U.S. Postal Service is a prescription for the destruction of the Postal Service in the long run. I've watched around the world, those governments held onto their postal systems. And not one that I'm familiar with is surviving today. There has to be clear division between the two.

So I would say, yes, help the Postal Service in this time of need. But don't bring them back into the Federal Government as a branch on budget and be subject to the rises and falls of the political tides that go with budget making.

Dr. WELDON. The gentlelady's time has expired.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. Shays, for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you, Dr. Weldon, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for being here. I have been looking forward to having the opportunity to publicly thank each of you and Mr. Young, your president, for being true statesmen and patriots. You have to weigh a very difficult issue, when do you fight for your union members and make sure that you know they are totally and completely protected, and when do you say, you know, we need to man the fort and take some risks. It's a very tough, tough call.

And so one, I want to thank you, and I want to thank all your workers, every one of your workers. I also want to acknowledge that we lost approximately 6,000 people in an act of war, and Thomas Morris and Joseph Curseen are casualties of that war, and knowing what we know now, they wouldn't have been casualties. They wouldn't have been, we wouldn't have allowed it to happen, knowing what we know now.

I never for an instant believed with all the hearings I've had on anthrax, and we've had about eight, more in fact, I never believed that you could actually see it seep or have it seep through a letter, certainly a sealed letter, but actually the pores of the envelope. I just didn't think it could happen. And we're going to learn a lot of terrible things in the course of the next few years.

I want to say to you that we are at war, that we are in a race with the terrorists, and to make sure that we shut them down before they have access to better chemical and biological delivery systems, before they have nuclear waste or heaven forbid, a nuclear device. That is the reality. And if we all know that, we know why we're fighting this war.

I also want to say to you publicly that when I went to ground zero, what touched me, as a member who represents probably the wealthiest district in the country except maybe for Henry's, I have

a lot of white collar workers and obviously a number of blue collar. I don't have as many uniformed workers, so-called. But it was touching for me to see my white collar workers manning the stations to hand out gloves and protective gear and medicine and food to the blue collar workers, the uniformed workers. Because my constituents came to grips with the fact of how grateful we are for all the service employees who serve our country. They just wanted to be a part of what they were doing and knew they couldn't, because they didn't have the skills. We needed the uniformed workers to do that.

And I'm using my time to question to just say that, but in my request for the chairman to have this meeting, I wanted to publicly acknowledge the loss of two people, to tell you that I regret that we didn't see it happen, and to thank you for the tough call that you have to make. You haven't demagogued this issue, you haven't done all the things that you could have done. And then to just publicly say to you, if it's an issue between $2 million or $3 billion, I consider it a time of war. And your men and women are one of the first line of defense. They are part of this army to fight terrorism.

And I believe that the question during time of war is, what does it take to protect our army, your workers. I think that you will see bipartisan and bicameral and bi-branch support for you all and that you have earned a lot of credibility with all three branches of Government, even the judicial branch, frankly, not that I can speak for that branch.

So I apologize for not having a question. I'm happy to use my 5 seconds, if you want to make a comment, but God bless each and every one of you and all your workers.

Dr. WELDON. Mr. Davis.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I know it's been a long day and we're about at the end of it. Let me just join with all of those who have expressed a tremendous amount of gratitude to not only each one of you, but each one of you as well as the men and women that you represent, that make up the membership of your unions.

I would agree with all of those who have suggested or indicated that whether individuals intended or not, when they signed on or signed up to become postal employees, they now find themselves as soldiers on the front line in the war to preserve the democracy of this country as we continue to provide communication links and its people are able to continue to freely and openly converse with one another from one part of the Nation to the other.

We've gone through the discussion in terms of whether or not there may have been perceptions of different standards, whether or not there has been reaction that was quick enough, and we've looked at all of the other components of what has us in this grip. But I want to commend you for putting the health and safety of your members first and foremost above everything else. And the fact that you have represented that position and that point of view I think has in fact caused some reaction and caused all of America to really understand what it is that you do.

The one point or the one question, and I think Mr. Quinn probably has said it as vividly as it can possibly be said, that we can have all of the intentions, we can have all of the desires, we can

have all of the hopes, we can have all of the intents. But unless we're prepared to bit the bullet in terms of generating what is needed to protect the workers, it obviously will not be happening. Unless we're willing, and I don't know how we find it, who knows how it actually gets found. But it's obvious that it has to be found. It's pretty clear to me that the Postal Service can't find it all by itself. I just don't believe that it can.

So the one question I guess that I would raise, I mean, you made the point about going to heaven and not dying, I like to phrase it a little differently, "in terms of suggesting that you might not get everything that you pay for, but you'll pay for everything that you get," Frederick Douglass, that was one of his favorite sayings and comments. And so my question just simply becomes, if we're going to provide the needed resources to assure the protection of the workers and of the patrons, where does the resource come from?

Mr. YOUNG. Congressman Davis, I think that resource has to come from Congress. I agree with the statements that Bill made about not wanting to bring the Postal Service back under the Federal Government. But I also agree with the Postmaster General when he says this is all about homeland security. And we are in the front lines.

And I just want to leave you with this, sir, if I could. I just came back from Chicago, where our national president, Vince Sombrotto, addressed 800 of our local leaders from all over the country. He said that we cannot function in this society if fear is going to be our constant companion. And the members of our union jumped up to their feet and started cheering.

If you folks want people in the front lines that want to be there, that are prepared to be there, the Nation's letter carriers will stand right with you. We just ask that you give us the tools that we need to do so.

Mr. DAVIS OF ILLINOIS. Thank you for holding this hearing, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURTON [resuming Chair]. Well, thank you, Mr. Davis, for all the hard work you put in on postal reform and everything else.

Mr. Clay.

Mr. CLAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I realize that the hour is upon us, and I appreciate the opportunity to ask a few questions of the panel. Let me first thank the panel for being here today and showing your interest in this issue as well as representing those 38,000 postal employees that work hard every day throughout this country.

Let me ask you about the Brentwood situation, because I'm really concerned about the safety and the health of those men and women who go to the postal system every day. The Postmaster General has stated that he relied on the advice of the CDC in determining whether to have postal workers from the Brentwood facility tested for exposure to anthrax. Postal workers were not encouraged to undergo testing until Sunday, October 21st, 6 days after the letter to Senator Daschle was shown to contain anthrax.

Was the CDC on top of the Brentwood situation? Mr. Burrus, perhaps you could answer that.

Mr. BURRUS. I would believe it unfair to evaluate the Postal Service, CDC, local health authorities or anyone else, applying to-

day's knowledge to an evolving situation that occurred some 3 weeks ago. If I had known 3 weeks ago what I know today, I'd be a very wealthy man. I would have played the right lottery number and, I think that says it all. They didn't know. They acted in good faith.

If they had rejected the advice of CDC, if postal management had not requested CDC, if they did not consult the medical and scientific community as to what they should do at that time, then I think they would be deserving of blame. At the time they made the decision, all of the medical community was telling them that was what they should do.

Now, the Postal Service is a major bureaucracy. It doesn't move as nimbly as some of the smaller units, the smaller enterprises in our society. But given its size, its bureaucracy, its complexity, I believe that they did act in good faith, based upon all the best information available to them.

Mr. CLAY. Just as a followup, how confident are you that the postal facilities that have been contaminated will be safe for employees and customers?

Mr. BURRUS. I think the postmaster general, on the television appearance, responded to that question and he's taking a lot of heat for it. His response was, we're not absolutely sure. The mailing community jumped all over him, the major mailers, the Board of Governors, some of his top staff. But he responded truthfully. We aren't certainly, we really don't know what's in the mail. We don't know what's coming in the mail tomorrow. We cannot assure the American public that the Daschle letter will not appear, and I wake up—every time my phone rings, I'm afraid it's a postal official telling that a Daschle or similar to Daschle letter was found in Chicago or San Francisco or L.A.

Mr. CLAY. Do you know how many postal facilities have been contaminated throughout the Nation?

Mr. BURRUS. Yes, we have a listing of them.

Mr. CLAY. You do have a listing?

Mr. BURRUS. Yes. They provide us that information at our 10 o'clock meeting every day. They bring us up to date on the status of every employee that's been contaminated, every office, what the results of that testing has been. We get a full briefing on that.

Mr. CLAY. How many as of today?

Mr. BURRUS. I don't have it with me. I think it's something like——

Mr. CLAY. Anyone on the panel?

Mr. YOUNG. No, sir, but you should understand, these are only the ones they've tested. They're in the process now of testing, I think the Postmaster General said there's 200 more delivery units that are being tested. The call that I got last night told me that there were 19 stations tested here in D.C., only one, the Friendship station, had any. There were 12 stations tested at the Dulles Airport facility and one of them had a small trace of anthrax. So that information pours in almost daily.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Young, you are satisfied that the steps being taken will provide adequate protection for our postal facilities?

Mr. YOUNG. I'm confident that the steps that are being taken are those that are being directed by the so-called experts, the people

that are supposed to be the CDC, the doctors, the health communities, the ones that specialize in this field.

I would say this, the Postal Service is not only taking their advice, they've gone further than these people. For instance, in New York, it was the Postal Service that insisted to the CDC that they get into this national pharmacy bank and get the Cipro up there to medicate all the employees. The CDC didn't want to do that.

Now, Bill was at that meeting, so was Gus, so was Bill. And they can tell you, it was the Postal Service that insisted. The CDC was saying they thought they were over-reacting. They said they'd rather err on the right side of this.

So everything I see, and I'm not trying to point fingers at anyone, but everything I see, everything I'm aware of leads me to the conclusion that the Postal Service has followed the medical advice from the so-called experts, each and every time, and where they haven't, they've exceeded what they were told to do.

Mr. CLAY. I thank you for that.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Clay. Well, let me just conclude by saying first of all, you know, we've had such an open society for so long. Two months ago nobody would have ever dreamed anything like this would be discussed today, we'd be talking about postal reform alone and none of this other stuff.

But let me just say that I think I speak for most of the Members of Congress in saying that we're going to give you whatever tools you need, the irradiation machines or whatever technology is needed to make sure that the spores or any living organism is killed before it gets to the postal employees. We'll have that on-line as quickly as possible, and anything else that you need, I hope you'll contact us and we'll try to carry that on to the House and Senate leadership, to see if we can't accommodate you.

Because we're not only protecting you and the 800,000 postal employees, but we're protecting everybody who gets mail. So we want to work with you.

The last thing I'd like to say is that I personally believe that one of the ingredients in this overall solution is postal reform. I know that all of you are not in agreement on that, but I'd like to, for those who still have reservations about it, I'd like to get together with you, see if we can work out any differences and come to some conclusions that will solve that problem as well.

And George back there, who is nodding, has been a real soldier on that and we really appreciate your help.

And with that, let me just say, it's been a long day. We appreciate your being with us and we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:58 p.m., the committee was adjourned, to reconvene at the call of the Chair.]

[The prepared statements of Hon. Constance A. Morella and Hon. Edolphus Towns follow:]

The Honorable Constance A. Morella
October 30, 2001
Committee on Government Reform Testimony
"Oversight of the U.S. Postal Service: The Safety of Postal Employees and the U.S. Mail"

I want to thank, Chairman Burton and Ranking Member Waxman, for holding this critical hearing on what actions the United State Postal Service is undertaking to protect postal employees and ensure the safety of our mail.

Since September 11, the world has been a different place for all Americans. However, the attacks on the United States did not end there. Now, letters contaminated with anthrax are being sent through the U.S. mail to inflict terror on the American people.

The anthrax threat has affected America deeply. Unfortunately, this has included the death of at least two postal workers, here in Washington, who were killed in the line-of-duty. Thousands of other postal workers, nation wide, have been affected as they have been encouraged to visit hospitals to receive their precautionary antibiotics treatments against anthrax. Also, the delivery of mail has been disrupted or halted because mail processing facilities are being temporarily shut down while postal workers are tested and facilities decontaminated.

The U.S. mail is a vital part of life in America. The Postal Service delivers 680 millioin pieces of mail daily. Therefore, the American public needs to be reassured that the mail is safe. Today, I am interested in learning what actions the Postal Service is undertaking to ensure the safety of postal workers and the delivery of uncontaminated mail to all Americans.

Also, I am interested in learning what efforts are underway to apprehend the terrorists responsible for these hideous acts? They have changed our perception of the mail we send and receive. In addition, I want to hear from our postal employees on how the safety precautions are impacting them?

Whatever action is taken to resolve this security and safety crisis, I urge the Postal Service to preserve what has become one of the last remaining vestiges of our great American culture. Thank you Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to attend today's hearing and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

Statement of Congressman Ed Towns (NY-10)
Government Reform Committee
Hearing on "Oversight of the U.S. Postal Service: The Safety of Postal Employees and the Mail"
October 30, 2001

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important and timely hearing.

I think that we can all agree that there is nothing more important than safeguarding the public and defeating terrorism in whatever form it takes. Unfortunately, terrorism does not always present itself in a readily identifiable manner. On September 11, 2001 we were all horrified by the heinous act of cowardice that stole 5000 innocent lives from our midst. These terrorist attacks were aimed at the American way of life. Terrorists believed that they could bring America to our knees by destroying sacred symbols of capitalism and security. Clearly, they were wrong. We have not allowed our way of life to fall victim to terrorism and we never will.

Since October 4, we have faced a new threat. It does not look the same, but it is a threat just as insidious and just as cowardly as the tragic attacks of September 11. Terrorists are using the United States Postal Service to spread lethal bacteria. These latest acts of terrorism are designed to instill fear in all of us and make us question another vital pillar of our economy. Anthrax has taught us many difficult and painful lessons. Our learning curve must be shortened. Our response must be more immediate and comprehensive. Moreover, we must always err on the side of safety and we must do a better job of communicating with each other and the public the risks and dangers that bioterrorism poses.

As of today, there are a total of 16 confirmed cases of anthrax, four of which resulted in death. The first case was reported near Boca Raton, Florida. Since then mail containing anthrax has been discovered in New York City, Trenton, New Jersey, and the Washington, D.C. area. Once the nature of these latest terrorist attacks was identified, the Administration, the United States Postal Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the Department of Health and Human Services have responded aggressively and effectively in getting information to the public and the healthcare community while taking the necessary steps to destroy anthrax spores before they could reach their intended destination. The USPS is providing its entire on site personnel with gloves and masks. USPS staff who have been in contaminated facilities are receiving medical attention. In addition, the USPS has entered into an agreement with the Titan Corporation to purchase electron beam radiation (e-beam) machines to sterilize mail prior to sending it onto its destination. This process kills not only anthrax bacteria, but also other potential biohazards including the plague and smallpox virus. Are these steps fool proof ? As USPS Postmaster General, Jack Potter has previously stated, "There are no guarantees," but they will help decrease the potential risk to mail handlers and the general public.

We live in a different world since September 11. We must take whatever steps are necessary to safeguard the American people and the newest heroes in the fight against

terrorism, our postal workers. In addition, we must not allow the terrorist attacks to push the USPS further into debt. We must fund the important security measures that will safe guard our postal workers and our citizens without passing along the costs of these security steps to consumers and fragile businesses.

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