

**STATEMENT OF  
CHARLES MAY, PRESIDENT  
CHICAGO ALONZO J. JERNIGAN - BRANCH 14  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POSTAL SUPERVISORS**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL SERVICE, AND  
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM**

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**MAY 31, 2007**

Chairman Davis, Ranking Member Marchant and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and your Subcommittee to share my thoughts on the postal service problems afflicting the Chicago District. I am the President of the Chicago Alonzo J. Jernigan – Branch 14 of the National Association of Postal Supervisors. I also previously served on the National Executive Board of the National Association of Postal Supervisors for ten years.

For over 37 years, I have been a postal employee and for 27 of those years I have served in various posts as a member of postal management, including the last 15 years in middle management. Later this year I plan to retire as Maintenance Manager for the Cardiss Collins Processing and Distribution Center, located at 433 West Harrison Street. As part of my responsibilities as a branch officer of the National Association of Postal Supervisors, I have represented supervisors and managers for more than 20 years in disputes and personnel actions, from minor actions to downgrades and removals.

During my career I have twice experienced the Chicago District being called the worst in the country: first in the early 1990's, and now once again in 2007. Both times, the scenarios of lost and delayed mail, erratic service, and late night deliveries have been the same. Both times the root causes of the problem have been eerily similar.

In 1992-94, as the delivery problems in Chicago became a national issue, Postal Service upper management directed additional funds and more employees to Chicago to remedy service deterioration. To fix the problem in the early 1990's, anything Chicago thought it needed, Headquarters provided to reverse the situation and upgrade service quality. Ultimately over time, as additional funds and the correct employee mix began to take hold, service improved. By the latter half of the 1990's, service quality in Chicago returned to high levels and was comparable to other areas of the country. But then, postal management, in its continuing effort to cut costs, started to reduce funding and personnel in Chicago. Corners were cut and the signs of deterioration returned. Aging processing equipment was not replaced or sufficiently maintained, due to insufficient resources, both financial and human. Not enough carriers were assigned to deliver the mail. Vacancies were not filled in order to save money. This caused service to spiral downward once again, creating the current situation.

Let me also add another dimension of our problems. All successful and well-managed corporate organizations must embrace accountability and responsibility in connection with their organizational and individual performance expectations. This is certainly true of the Postal Service. However, during my career with the Postal Service, far too often I have seen arbitrary personnel actions taken against management employees associated with service problems for the smallest of reasons, sometimes making individuals; scapegoats for what actually were poor planning and poor direction by senior management.

For example, the mere hint that you were part of the problem has been enough to cause you to be removed from your position. As a result, the careers of competent and professional managers and supervisors have been destroyed or forever crippled, and a culture of fear and poor morale in some parts of the Chicago District has taken root. Threats and intimidation, sometimes explicit, often implicit, are far too common. The Postal Service's pay-for-performance program has contributed to the problem as well. The current PFP system financially rewards managers and supervisors for reducing costs

and cutting work hours, keeping vacant positions unfilled, despite the impact that such actions will have upon service.

So how do we return to “normal” in Chicago? I believe the only way to help Chicago become successful and remain that way is through commitment by the Postal Service to a sustained base of funding, providing proper staffing and the correct type of equipment in the Chicago District -- and then to not allow Chicago to return to where we are today. The infusion of “real” resources needs to occur, not superficial ones. For example, the recent commitment of the Postal Service to assign 200 additional carriers to Chicago will only fill current vacancies, not create new positions. Is this enough? How committed is the Postal Service to staying the course? I encourage you, Mr. Chairman, to ask the hard questions.

In addition, while the Postal Service must continue to seek efficiencies and productivity gains as a well-run business, managers should not be rewarded, through pay-for-performance and other incentives, for personnel cuts and vacancies that contribute in the short and long-term to the deterioration of service quality. I encourage you, Mr. Chairman, to ask the hard questions about pay-for-performance and what it takes to be rewarded, as well as other management incentives in the Postal Service that seek to cut costs at the expense of service quality.

Finally, management officials at all levels within the Postal Service need to encourage and embrace a greater sense of teamwork and trust. Threats and intimidation must not be tolerated nor implicitly encouraged within the Postal Service. The overall future of the Postal Service – and the quality of service that Chicago expects and deserves – depends on it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am available to answer any questions you and the panel may have.