



MEMBER OF CONGRESS

BARBARA LEE
NINTH DISTRICT
CALIFORNIA

September 13, 2012
Meeting of the Berkeley City
Council Subcommittee Re: Berkeley Main Post Office

Statement from Congresswoman Barbara Lee

“The following is a statement on behalf of Congresswoman Barbara Lee expressing her strong opposition to the closure of the Berkeley Main Post Office:

“As stated in the letter I sent to the Postmaster General on July 13, 2012, I strongly oppose the closure of this iconic building. As your representative in Congress I have forcefully advocated for keeping post offices open, continuing six-day delivery, and resolving the unnecessary fiscal crisis facing the Postal Service. Unfortunately, House Republicans refuse to act and will not bring postal reform legislation passed by the Senate to the floor for a vote. I am a cosponsor of H.R. 1351, the United States Postal Service Pension Obligation Recalculation and Restoration Act of 2011, which would relieve the Postal Service of its burden to pre-fund its pensions for seventy-five years into the future. Locally, I have actively defended the Berkeley Main Post Office, and wrote a letter urging the Postmaster General to reconsider its closure.

“The Berkeley Main Post Office is a pillar of the downtown area, providing the community with central access to postal services and symbolizing Berkeley’s arrival into the modern era. For 97 years, the Berkeley Main Post Office has provided postal services to businesses and communities in the area and I stand with my constituents to say that it should continue to serve the public for decades more. I strongly urge you to listen to our voices today and move expeditiously to abandon plans to close this local icon and beloved post office.”

###

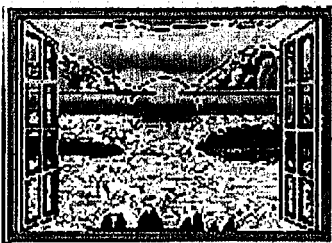
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515



NOT PRINTED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

Berkeley Historical Society

Berkeley History Center
1931 Center Street, Berkeley
Tel. (510) 848-0181
Fax (510) 848-0181



Mailing Address
Main Post Office
P.O. Box 1190
Berkeley, CA 94701

MUSEUM • LIBRARY • ARCHIVES

September 13, 2012

Mayor Bates

Members of the Council

City of Berkeley

I am writing on behalf of the elected Board of the Berkeley Historical Society in regard to the proposed closure of the Downtown Berkeley Post Office on Allston Way. BHS, as you know, is Berkeley's 34-year-old non-profit dedicated to preserving local history and educating the public about our community heritage through programs, exhibits, a historical archive and library, walking tours, and other services.

We believe that the proposed Post Office building closure and sale is unwise, undesirable, and unnecessary. Downtown Berkeley is particularly distinguished by its core of civic buildings including both City Hall structures, Berkeley High School, the Central Library, the Veteran's Memorial and the Post Office. Of these, the Post Office is the second oldest (after the Maudelle Shirek Building, formerly old City Hall), one of the most architecturally important, and a vital and active destination for many in the Downtown.

Early in the 20th century Berkeley's elected public officials, community leaders, and business community worked long and hard to get the Federal government to construct a major Post Office in the center of Berkeley. The success of that lobbying effort was part of Berkeley's coming of age as a major city in the Bay Area and California. It should be unthinkable that this Post Office, established nearly a century ago, and supported with care, consistency, and enthusiasm by the Berkeley community over the decades, should go away or be reduced to some sort of minimal "storefront" or "retail" operation in the Downtown and the building discarded or treated simply as a piece of real estate.

The City of Berkeley should advocate and act decisively to protect both the local Post Office operations and services and the Downtown Post Office building. We look to your leadership just as Berkeley citizens a century ago looked to your predecessors to advocate for construction of the current Post Office building.

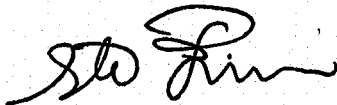
Since the USPS has indicated it intends to maintain some facility in the Downtown but does not need all the space in the current building, the sensible solution would be for the USPS itself to continue its operations in the existing building—built and paid for by the public a century ago—and consider alternative, civic serving, rental uses for the remainder of the structure.

We are particularly interested in seeing the Post Office building continue as a public serving / publicly accessible space, not simply an architectural shell sold to the highest bidder and reused for some private or commercial purpose. There are many government and community serving programs in Berkeley that could make good use of space in a building such as the Downtown Post Office.

We would also like to note that the proposed reduction or removal of Postal Services from Downtown has a practical effect on BHS, and on other non-profits particularly those, like BHS, that operate entirely or primarily with volunteers. Locating bulk mail services in a far corner of Berkeley creates hardship for our organization, which is headquartered just a block from the existing Downtown building.

If you want Downtown to remain an active and used space, it is important to insure that public services like the Post Office remain fully present and engaged in the Downtown.

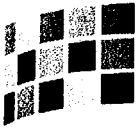
Sincerely,



Steven Finacom

President

Berkeley Historical Society

**BERKELEY
HIGH SCHOOL**

1980 ALLSTON WAY, BERKELEY, CA 94704
510.644.6120 TEL 510.548.4221 FAX
[HTTP://BHS.BERKELEYSCHOOLS.NET/](http://bhs.berkeleyschools.net/)

9/12/2012

To the Postmaster General:

Berkeley High School students and the youth of Berkeley condemn any and all actions that endeavor to privatize or sell the City of Berkeley's Post Office.

The downtown Post Office is a beautiful and historic building that our parents, grandparents and great grandparents have enjoyed, utilized, and paid taxes towards. The Post Office is part of our cultural inheritance, our heritage, our legacy. It is a living, breathing, functional link to our city's past, and it belongs to us and all the future generations to follow.

It is NOT your right to rob the city and its youth of such an important and irreplaceable piece of infrastructure. The Post Office, as part of our common history, is something to be cherished and preserved, not sold at the convenience and discretion of the federal Postal Service.

Peace,

Celia Jailer Shannon

Berkeley High School Commissioner of Student Activism

CITIZENS TO SAVE THE BERKELEY POST OFFICE



Here in Berkeley

The United States Postal Service wants to put a "For Sale" sign on Berkeley's Main Post Office at 2000 Allston Way. Our Main Post Office was built in 1914. It's a civic treasure and belongs to us all.

Berkeley has few if any comparable public spaces where citizens from all over our city come frequently and freely and can experience the quality workmanship and civic pride that used to be part of a government building. A mural at the west end of the lobby and a sculpture at the east end of the exterior arcade were added in 1937 during the New Deal.

In Washington, D.C.

The Postal Service has a cash flow problem but Congress could solve it without spending a cent. Congress refuses to act.

Across the Country

Instead, nationwide the Postal Service is desperately stripping assets, cutting costs and services. 3700 Post Offices nationwide are "under study for closing."

In the past five years, the Postal Service has consolidated over 200 mail processing facilities. On May 17, 2012, the Postal Service announced a plan to continue this consolidation of its network of 461 mail processing locations. The first phase will close up to 140 facilities through February 2013. A second and final phase of 89 additional consolidations is currently scheduled to begin in February 2014.

What about the jobs?

The total number of USPS employees at June 30, 2012, was about 638,000, of which about 540,000 were career employees. There has been a loss of roughly 248,000, or 31%, of USPS career employee jobs from the total of approximately 788,000 as of September 30, 2000.

What can we do?

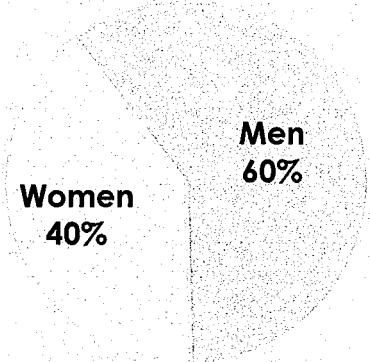
In communities across the nation a grassroots fight is growing to stop service cutbacks and preserve living wage postal jobs.

Join us at **11 a.m. on Thursday, September 13, 2012** in the **Council Chambers at Old City Hall, 2134 Martin Luther King Jr Way** to tell the USPS how you feel about the sale of our Main Post Office.

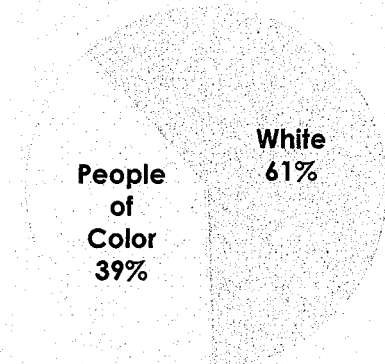
Join Us! We're just getting started.

For updates email us at savetheberkeleypostoffice@gmail.com

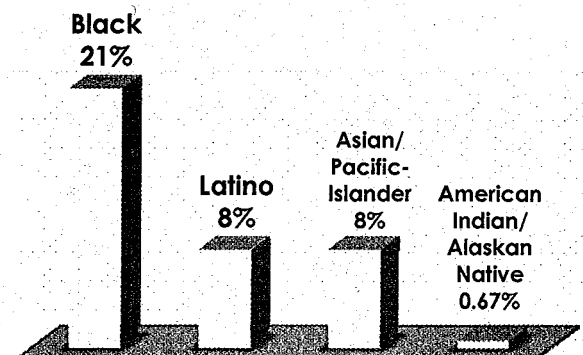
Who makes our Postal Service work?



What Percentage of Post Office workers are People of Color?



What is the racial or ethnic composition of Post Office employees?



**Testimony before Berkeley City Council
September 13, 2012**

Last May, I received an email from a woman who lives Chevy Chase, MD, She wrote to me that:

"My historic post office is (or was) the Bethesda post office. It's an indigenous stone building, with beautiful post boxes (metal, great metal work) and- best of all- a great mural. The mural is of our Women's Cooperative Farm Market, which was set up during the Depression to provide a way for my county's farmers to sell directly to city folk. ~~The mural shows both the market and farms; Montgomery County, MD, was a very significant agricultural area in days of old.~~

The USPS sold the post office in March, without telling anybody who mattered (like our Congressman) what they were doing. I first heard about the sale in July. There's been no information on what the developer who bought the building plans to do with it, and there is absolutely no information on what is going to happen to the mural. Since the building is a landmark, the developer can't tear it down or damage the interior, but I can see that the post office could turn into a lobby ornament for a bigger building or a restaurant or bar. This is a shame, especially since the USPS's fiscal woes are largely self-made (with help from Congress and, ~~i would guess, contributions from the competition- UPS and FedEx.~~)"

This is just one of a number of messages I've received from people around the country: the USPS sometimes conducts pro forma meetings like this one ~~as required by law~~ — or none at all — and then it goes ahead and sells the post

office regardless of its importance to local business or residents or its artistic or historic merit. *The only sticking point in the sale appears to be what to do with the New Deal art that embellishes so many of these fine buildings and which the USPS is required by law to preserve and keep public.* Those murals and sculptures are unique to the U.S. — they have been called The People's Art Gallery. The USPS recently got around that obstacle by removing a mural from Ukiah's downtown post office which it had already closed and sending the mural for restoration in Chicago. You can bet that is very expensive. It's not clear what will happen to the mural afterwards, but it will not go back to the building for which it was designed. That should hasten the sale. //

What is especially curious about these sales is that so many of them are of the most heavily used downtown post offices. They are often architecturally distinguished, they often contain art, and they are sitting on some of the most valuable real estate in some of the wealthiest towns in the U.S. And that is because the sales are not being conducted by the USPS but by its exclusive contractor, CBRE, a private company that ~~aggressively went after the contract~~ and that is profiting handsomely from the sale of the public's property. The press has entirely failed to cover this shocking conflict of interest.

CBRE website shows all these together into one big recycling bin.

Feinstein Blum

U.S. Council of Mayors *claiming it does not have to comply*

The USPS has refused a reporter's FOIA request for the details of that contract. So Mr. Ruiz, ~~what can you tell us about how CBRE got that contract?~~

how was that negotiated

"still a federal agency"

"public transparency as required by law"

**Saving the Post Office:
Letter Carriers Consider Adding Banking Services**

Ellen Brown

<http://WebofDebt.com/articles>

August 9, 2012

On July 27, 2012, the National Association of Letter Carriers adopted a resolution at their National Convention in Minneapolis to investigate the establishment of a postal banking system. The resolution noted that expanding postal services and developing new sources of revenue are important components of any effort to save the public Post Office and preserve living-wage jobs; that many countries have a long and successful history of postal banking, including Germany, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States itself; and that postal banks could serve the 9 million people who don't have a bank account and the 21 million who use usurious check cashers, giving low-income people access to a safe banking system. "A USPS bank would offer a 'public option' for banking," concluded the resolution, "providing basic checking and savings – and no complex financial wheeling and dealing."

What is bankrupting the USPS is not that it is inefficient. It has been self-funded throughout its history. But in 2006, Congress required it to prefund 80% of future postal retiree health benefits, an onerous burden no other public or private company is required to carry. The USPS has evidently been targeted by a plutocratic Congress bent on destroying the most powerful unions and privatizing all public services, including education. Britain's 150-year-old postal service is on the privatization chopping block for the same reason, and its postal workers have also vowed to fight. Adding banking services is an internationally tested and proven way to maintain post office solvency and profitability.

Serving an Underserved Market Without Going Broke

Many countries operate postal savings systems through their post offices, providing depositors without access to banks a safe, convenient way to save. Great Britain first offered this arrangement in 1861. It was wildly popular, attracting over 600,000 accounts and £8.2 million in deposits in its first five years. By 1927, there were twelve million accounts—one in four Britons—with £283 million on deposit.

Other postal banks followed. They were popular because they serviced a huge untapped market—the unbanked and underbanked. According to a Discussion Paper of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs:

The essential characteristic distinguishing postal financial services from the private banking sector is the obligation and capacity of the postal system to serve the entire spectrum of the national population, unlike conventional private banks which allocate their institutional resources to service the sectors of the population they deem most profitable.

With the assistance of the People's Bank of China (the central bank), China's Postal Savings Bureau was re-established in 1986 after a 34-year lapse. As in New Zealand, savings deposits flooded in, showing an extraordinary growth rate of over 50% annually in the first half of the 1990s and over 24% annually in the second half. By 1998, postal savings accounted for 47% of China Post's operating revenues; and 80% of China's post offices provided postal savings services. The Postal Savings Bureau has served as a vital link in mobilizing income and profits from the private sector, providing credit that is available to finance local development. In 2007, the Postal Savings Bank of China was set up from the Postal Savings Bureau and established as a state-owned limited company, which continues to provide postal banking services.

Japan Post Bank:

By 2007, Japan Post was the largest holder of personal savings in the world, boasting combined assets for its savings bank and insurance arms of more than ¥380 trillion (\$3.2 trillion). It was also the largest employer in Japan. As in China, Japan Post recaptures and mobilizes income from the private sector, funding the government at low interest rates and protecting the nation's sovereign debt from raids by foreign speculators.

Switzerland's Swiss Post:

Postal financial services are by far the most profitable activity of Swiss Post, which suffers heavy losses from its parcel delivery and only marginal profits from letter delivery operations.

India's Post Office Savings Bank (POSB):

POSB is India's largest banking institution and its oldest, having been established in the latter half of the 19th century following the success of the postal savings bank system in England. Operated by the government of India, it provides small savings banking and financial services. The Department of Posts is now seeking to expand these services by obtaining a license for the creation of a full-fledged bank that would offer full lending and investing services.

Russia's PochtaBank:

Russia, too, is seeking to expand its post office services. The head of the highly successful state-owned Sberbank has stepped down to take on the task of revitalizing the Russian post office and create a post office bank. PochtaBank will operate in the Russian Post's 40,000 local post offices. The post office will function as a banking institution and compete on equal footing not only with private banks but with Sberbank itself.

Brazil's ECT:

Brazil instituted a postal banking system in 2002 on a public/private model, with the national postal service (ECT) forming a partnership with the largest private bank in the country (Bradesco) to provide financial services at post offices. The current partnership is with Bank of Brazil. ECT (also known as Correios) is one of the largest state-owned companies in Latin America, with an international service network reaching more than 220 countries worldwide.

The U.S. Postal Savings System:

The now-defunct U.S. Postal Savings System was also quite successful in its day. It was set up in 1911 to get money out of hiding, attract the savings of immigrants accustomed to saving at post offices in their native