

November 3, 2011

The Honorable Joseph Lieberman
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Lieberman:

We, the undersigned organizations representing members of the federal workforce, both supervisory and non-supervisory; postal and non-postal; active and retired, write to you to state our strong objections to the inclusion in the postal reform bill of the proposed cuts in Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) benefits to federal and postal workers injured on the job.

We are particularly concerned about controversial proposals to cut insurance benefits on older workers injured while on the job. The proposed legislation would impose a substantial and unfair income reduction for federal and postal employees who simply came to work one day ready to serve their country but tragically suffered an injury that took away their ability to ever work again. Having lost the ability to continue earning a salary and retirement credits, these disabled federal and postal workers would have their Workers' Compensation benefits reduced just for becoming elderly. Entering such a time of life does not lessen their need for income but in fact brings new challenges and expenses such as health care needs.

Last July, your Committee's Subcommittee on Government Management and the Federal Workforce held a hearing on FECA. At that hearing, none of the witnesses embraced the controversial proposal to cut insurance benefits for older disabled workers. Further, all of the employee organizations who testified or submitted statements have said they are willing to work with the Committee on appropriate reforms of FECA. That offer still stands and we renew it today.

We also oppose proposals to eliminate the family benefit that is now part of FECA for injured workers with dependents. This modest additional benefit recognizes that when federal employees suffer workplace injuries that rob their ability to practice their craft, they also rob those who are family breadwinners of the ability to support their family. With FECA benefits designed to replace a portion of after tax take-home pay, the family benefit creates equity between injured workers with and without dependents.

We understand the Committee intends to proceed on postal reform legislation. But such legislation is not the place to impose government-wide insurance benefit cuts on disabled federal and postal employees. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO
American Foreign Service Association
American Postal Workers' Union, AFL-CIO
Federally Employed Women
International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers, AFL-CIO
National Active and Retired Federal Employees
National Association of Letter Carriers, AFL-CIO
National Postal Mail Handlers Union
National Rural Letter Carriers' Union
National Treasury Employees Union
Organization of Professional Employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO

Cc: Members of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Leader Harry Reid
Leader Mitch McConnell