



American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

1300 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005

November 1, 2010

William Burrus
President
(202) 842-4246

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Akron, OH 44308

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Kevin Hassett's October 17 commentary on the U.S. Postal Service is, quite simply, unrelated to reality. Mr. Hassett has a right to espouse his anti-government philosophy, but his political views do not give him license to distort facts.

He is wrong about so many things: Taxpayers do not fund the Postal Service; the USPS career employee complement is 583,000 (not 712,000, as Hassett claims); and both IBM and the Postal Regulatory Commission monitor the Postal Service's adherence to delivery standards.

Perhaps most important, Hassett neglects to mention the principal cause of the Postal Service's deficit: a 2006 federal law that requires the USPS to prefund future retiree health benefits in amounts of more than \$5 billion per year – a burden no other federal agency or private company bears.

In addition to his omissions and misstatements, Hassett's reasoning is severely lacking.

He fails to explain the relevance of computerization to the price of postage. The Postal Service collects, sorts, and delivers mail – physical pieces of paper that are not convertible to digital chips. Yet our "antiquated system" is sufficiently advanced that it can process the mail volume of the entire world.

Hassett decries America's postage costs, but he neglects to compare our rates with those in other countries. Could it be because citizens of the United States enjoy the cheapest postal rates in the world?

On the question of the postal monopoly, basic economic theory dictates that it is not feasible to collect, transport, and deliver an item from Miami to Seattle at the same price as mail sent within a neighborhood. I challenge Hassett to compare the cost of first-class postage with the prices Fed Ex or UPS would charge to deliver such a letter, including fuel surcharges. And the USPS rate

for Standard Mail is less than 20 percent of their charges for delivery over the same distance.

Despite the depressed economy, the home mortgage crisis, and cautious lending practices, the Postal Service delivered 170 billion pieces of mail in Fiscal Year 2010.

Hassett seems most disturbed by postal unions' voluntary contributions to Democrats. Our distribution of funds is tilted in favor of Democrats because the Republican Party has expressed in no uncertain terms its opposition to labor unions, and the right of workers to combine their efforts to exact fair terms for their efforts. It would be foolish for us to finance our own demise – and even Hassett's slanted article does not accuse us of being fools.

Mr. Hassett's column is not a balanced or accurate review of the Postal Service; it is a politically motivated attack designed to support his anti-government philosophy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Burrus". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

William Burrus
President

WB:SD/aw