Save USPS

Your Feb. 8 editorial "USPS SOS" is as short-sighted as the announcement by the postmaster general. It is because of the 2006 congressional law that mandates the Postal Service to pay $5.5 billion a year to fully prefund retirees' health benefits for the next 75 years, and Congress' failure to repeal this burdensome obligation, that we continue to see the billions in red ink.

This is clearly a manufactured crisis by the Republican-controlled House of Representatives that threatens the success of this cherished public institution. Your call to open up the mail industry to private competition does not take into account the reason for the existence of the United States Postal Service.

Our postal system predates the existence of this country and is even written into our Constitution to provide every American the most basic and vital form of communication. This is a constitutional right of the American people; the best thing about it is that it doesn't cost taxpayers anything. This is a pay-as-you-go public service that is fully funded by the people who use it via postage stamps. So for those who feel they no longer need the Postal Service because of the Internet, they should not want to infringe on the millions of Americans who still rely on the Postal Service as a "public" entity that provides a public service.

Opening the Postal Service to the highest bidder would leave rural, elderly and inner-city urban customers as the most underserved and highest charged. The USPS levels the playing field by providing universal service to every American. Even now with the rise of the Internet, the Postal Service is reinventing itself and is seizing the opportunity to deliver more package goods as Americans are shopping more via e-commerce. In fact, the first fiscal quarter of this year the Postal Service has realized a $100 million operations profit without the elimination of Saturday delivery.

We cannot afford to allow for the destruction of this unmatched universal network and this American institution. Millions of jobs would be lost, including those of many veterans and minorities who work for the Postal Service. That is why we have called upon the postmaster general to resign and for members of Congress to enact meaningful legislation to save our service because only they have the authority to do so.

— Mack I. Julion, president, National Association of Letter Carriers, Branch 11, Chicago

Postal praise
I must take issue with many letter writers regarding the U.S. Postal Service. I have had nothing but excellent customer service from the Postal Service and its employees. On occasion, yes, I have had a letter or piece of mail arrive torn; however, the Postal Service places it thoughtfully in a see-through envelope with instructions to call the nearest office if additional assistance is needed.

Some postal customers seem to forget the volume of mail that the Postal Service is still in charge of delivering even with the advent of the Internet. So if one or two pieces are mildly damaged, this is a minuscule percentage of what has been delivered successfully.

While one letter writer contends that he has never had a problem with United Parcel Service or Federal Express, I have had the opposite experience.

— Paula Twilling, Evanston

**Mail service**

There has been a great deal of interest in the United States Postal Service's intent to eliminate Saturday mail. What impact, if any, will it have on local businesses?

When providing information to customers and business partners, many companies have taken advantage of the Internet and email. Initially, the Internet provided a means of posting facility locations, information about products and services and various contact information. Today, customers can email questions and even have interactive chat sessions with company representatives.

Companies have been actively encouraging their customers to order products and make reservations for services online for years in order to reduce the demand on individuals answering company phones and because they have found that customers prefer this. Customers can avoid being put on hold and often complete the ordering process more rapidly. Businesses also see numerous benefits from having customers pay online, including the avoidance of late payments, faster processing of payments and environmental benefits due to the reduction in paper used for payment transactions.

A final category of communication that is absolutely critical for business is the receiving and sending of products used in and produced by their operations. Unlike the other categories of communication, this category cannot be supplanted by electronic communications. Fortunately, there will not be an impact to businesses in this category, since part of the USPS announcement stipulated that package delivery on Saturdays will not be eliminated.

— Frederick Kaefer, associate professor of Information Systems, Quinlan School of Business, Loyola University, Chicago