

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 7, 2003

For more information, contact:
Karen Lightfoot (Waxman): 202-225-5051
Leslie Phillips (Lieberman) 202-224-0384
Dave Helfert (Obey) 202-225-3481
Nicole Letourneau (Olver) 202-225-5335

MEMBERS CALL FOR END TO NEW POSTAL RULE WHICH OPENS THE DOOR TO ABUSIVE MAILING PRACTICES

WASHINGTON – Rep. Henry A. Waxman, Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, Rep. David R. Obey, and Rep. John W. Olver today wrote to the Chairman of the United States Postal Service Board and to the Postmaster General urging them to reconsider a change to the cooperative mailing rule set to go into effect on November 13. If allowed to take effect, this rule will dismantle current consumer protections that prevent unscrupulous marketers from abusing the nonprofit mailing rate and siphoning fundraising dollars from charities.

“While other government agencies are increasing consumer protections, the Postal Service is moving in the opposite direction, in effect inviting unscrupulous marketers to flock to the mail,” said Rep. Waxman. “The FTC, Congress, and the states have taken steps to protect families from unwanted commercial phone and email solicitations. Meanwhile, the Postal Service is opening the door to deceptive commercial mailings masked as nonprofit fundraising solicitations. This new rule will harm consumers who receive the mailings as well as the honest nonprofits that must compete with misleading fundraising requests.”

“This new rule will open the door for unscrupulous commercial fundraisers to siphon money away from legitimate charities,” said Sen. Lieberman. “Rather than expanding opportunities for abuse, we should be protecting the integrity of non-profit mailings. There's still time for the Postal Service to fix this ill-conceived rule, and I urge it in the strongest terms to do so.”

“I am happy to bring this matter to the attention of the Postal Service,” said Rep. Olver. “The existing cooperative mailing rule protects consumers and the integrity of nonprofits that depend on mail to raise money and communicate with their donors. If this rule is repealed, it will be impossible for consumers to know whether the mail that they receive under the reduced nonprofit postage rate is coming from legitimate nonprofits or unscrupulous commercial fundraisers.”