During Tuesday’s Coronavirus Task Force briefing, President Trump was asked why he insisted that   
$25 billion earmarked for the Postal Service be cut from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act. His answer left me wondering if he actually understood the mission of the Postal Service or the causes of the financial crisis the agency is dealing with.

The House of Representatives seems to understand what the Postal Service is up against, which is why this past February they passed the “USPS Fairness Act” with bipartisan support. A companion bill has been introduced in the Senate.

The House also allocated $25 billion to the USPS for revenue forgone during the coronavirus crisis because they seem to understand how important the Postal Service is to America and that without this funding the Post Office could run out of money by June and cease operations.

Our congressmen and congresswomen must realize that not only is the Postal Service the backbone of a $1.4 trillion mailing industry which employs more than 7.5 million non-USPS employees, but also is one of the few current Government institutions spelled out in the Constitution. Perhaps it is understood that many Americans who do not have access to the internet or live in rural areas rely on the Postal Service to receive information, pay bills get goods and supplies. The Postal Service delivered over 1 billion prescriptions last year including just about all of the VA’s medicine.

Perhaps the members of Congress realize what the Pew Research Center has reported, the Postal Service is the most popular government agency. The USPS is the largest, most efficient postal service on the planet, handling 47% of the worlds mail, delivering more than 212 billion pieces of mail to 157 million addresses each year. The Postal Service maintains the largest retail network on Earth, larger than McDonald’s, Walmart and Starbucks combined. The USPS does all this without one cent of taxpayer money; they rely on the sales of stamps and other postal products to run the operation.

Congress must surely know that due to the Postal Service’s mandate to provide universal delivery across the United States companies like Fed Ex, UPS and Amazon rely on the Postal Service to handle the “last mile” delivery which is the most expensive and time consuming part of the shipping process, and unlike their competitors the Postal Service can’t jack up delivery charges for remote areas.

I would hope there was consideration for what would happen to our election process should the Post Office close. Four states already have all-mail voting and more are getting closer to it, most states offer vote by mail if requested and seniors, those with disabilities and others who can’t vote in person, such as active duty military, can cast absentee ballots which are delivered by the Postal Service.

If the Postal Service ceases to exist millions of gallons of gasoline won’t be purchased, 675,000 tires won’t be sold each year and the more than $800 million the Postal Service pays in rent every year will not be paid. Who will process the nearly 7 million passport applications the Post Office handles each year or the 83.4 million money orders they sell each year to Americans without access to traditional banking services?

Finally, I wish they would think about the tens of thousands of dedicated postal employees working 24 hours per day 365 days per year to serve all of America. These men and woman have proven to be instrumental in returning communities to normal after hurricanes, tornados or wildfires, often times having the mail up and running before basic services like electricity or running water are restored. With its constantly updated change of address data base they have worked with FEMA to find people forced to relocate after disaster strikes. Almost 20 years ago they went to work every day, while Anthrax was being sent through the mail and their coworkers were sickened or killed. Today as COVID-19 spreads across the country they show up every day to keep Americas mail moving, and that is all they want to do.

Our elected officials should think about what a treasure the United States Postal Service is, and act to preserve it.

John Flattery is President of the Central Mass. American Postal Workers Union