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Presidential Commission Guidelines

The Commission: The Postal Commission should be created in a manner consistent with these principles:

1. It should be composed of about 10 objective, highly respected people without ties to the affected groups. (The Kappel Commission included six CEO's of companies such as AT&T and GE).
2. Its mandate should require full and independent consideration of all relevant social, economic and political issues related to USPS services. A generalized charge could be useless, even dangerous.
3. It should have continuing, non-partisan public support from the President and key members of Congress, as well as support from the maximum number of affected interest groups, and attention from the media. There must be widespread public understanding of postal problems, and why the Commission was created.
4. Commission members should be prepared to support their recommendations personally and politically; they and their supporters should actively seek to secure approval for their recommendations from the decision-makers.
5. The Commission should be supported by a highly qualified professional staff and by any outside services that may be needed. (The Kappel Commission employed about a dozen professionals, and funded a number of consulting studies.) The notion that ten wise individuals alone can brainstorm their way to a solution is illusory.
6. The Commission will need at least a year for comprehensive fact-gathering and thoughtful study. A speedier effort may arouse suspicion that fair process has been neglected and answers formulated beforehand.

Executive Director:

He or she is a critical choice. That the commissioners, busy with their own lives and work, can handle this study in monthly meetings is unreal. Facts must be unearthed, issue papers prepared, interviews arranged, hearings held and numbers tested and armor-plated. The Commission loses credibility if the ED has a track record on the issues. Because commissioners

usually meet once a month, the ED's power to select materials for their meetings gives him great leverage.

- a. The Chairman, with the aid of the White House, should choose the ED from a handful of eligible candidates. An ED who accepts appointment without competitors may lack flexibility and freedom from bias.
- b. The ED should be authorized to recruit the staff, subject to the chairman's approval for a few top jobs. Any ED who permits others to do the hiring is suspect.
- c. The ED will need support from the Chairman and others to recruit first-class people. That support is essential; it should be provided.

Source of support: The Commission should be authorized to call upon Federal agencies with or without reimbursement. The staff should not include present or former postal executives, or other postal related stakeholders (interest groups, unions, competitors, and the like).

- a. Senior business executives, non-postal government experts, academics, and contractors should be consulted. The contest and confrontation of ideas and viewpoints may open new doors.
- b. Contractors must be selected with special care, since the Postal Service already works or has worked with many such firms.

Outreach: The postal community will knock on the door. All deserve respectful consideration, either by the full commission, panels of the commission or the staff. The general public should be invited to make its views known, in hearings and in writing. Former postal governors and executives should also be consulted.

The Product: The report should be written, or at least carefully edited, by a talented writer. Impact depends on presentation as well as substance.

The Conclusion: This effort needs the best possible strategy for dealing with a vital and important but unrewarding issue. Creating an objective, respected, Presidential Commission and arming it with the necessary tools will be viewed as a responsible action that can best serve the public interest.

