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## United States Postal Service: How it Differs from a Traditional Private Enterprise

*In November 2013, Amazon and the United States Postal Service (USPS) announced an agreement in which the postal service would deliver Amazon goods exclusively on Sundays. Many of those praising the deal contend that the postal service is a private company, and, as such, should be allowed to make such an agreement with a corporate entity. However, there are many notable differences between a private company and USPS. It is not run like a private business, and, as such, it should not be able to provide one retailer with exclusive services that it does not provide to competitors of that business.*

*Here are some talking points to help you communicate with your elected official further in a conversation as to why Amazon’s deal with the postal service is a clear conflict of interest.*

* The USPS is created as a government agency under [Title 39, Section 101.1](http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/39/101.html) of the United States Code. ([*About.com*](http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/consumerawareness/a/uspsabout.htm))
* Congress retains the authority to impose rules and regulations on the postal service and maintain committees (the [U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee](http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/) and the [Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service & the Census](http://oversight.house.gov/subcommittee/subcommittee-on-federal-workforce-us-postal-service-and-the-census/)) to oversee the USPS.
* The postal service receives $100 million annually from taxpayer funds to compensate the agency for revenue loss by providing, at congressional direction, free mailing privileges to blind people and overseas voters, a congressional report noted. ([*Politifact*](http://www.politifact.com/georgia/statements/2013/jul/24/american-postal-workers-union/postal-service-claim-not-fully-target/))
* The entire infrastructure upon which the service was built and continues to operate was funded by taxpayers.
* Many aspects of the postal service are still run by Congress, which often takes actions to reduce costs, improve efficiency, or innovate in other ways. ([*The Cato Institute*](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/usps))
* The postal service must also, by statute, provide mail services to all Americans, regardless as to where they live and regardless as to the cost of serving those Americans. It is also required to provide first-class mail at a uniform price throughout the nation. ([*About.com*](http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/consumerawareness/a/uspsabout.htm))
* Congress protects the postal service from competition. The postal service essentially has a legal monopoly over first-class mail and standard mail -- and this prevents entrepreneurs from trying to improve postal services for Americans. ([*The Cato Institute*](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/usps))
* The Postal Service is exempt from paying federal taxes. USPS can borrow money at discounted rates, and the postal service can condemn and obtain private property under the government rights of eminent domain. ([*About.com*](http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/consumerawareness/a/uspsabout.htm))