



December 15, 2009

The Honorable Loretta Sanchez
1114 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Sanchez:

Like many in the Washington, D.C. community, I looked forward with anticipation to viewing your annual holiday card this December and the “Dancing with the Stars” theme certainly did not disappoint!

However, I was surprised and disappointed to learn that you had decided not to send holiday cheer by way of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) this year. In fact, after reading the press announcement accompanying the release of your holiday card, I feel compelled to respond to certain assumptions regarding the environmental and economic aspects of mail and the industries – such as printing – that produce it.

First, equating “going green” with ending the practice of printing holiday cards perpetuates negative environmental myths associated with paper and paper-based printed materials. After all, paper is a renewable resource and nearly all paper used for advertising and greeting card mail in this country is generated from sustainably managed forests in which trees are planted, harvested and re-planted to ensure a growing future supply. In fact, there are more forests in the U.S. today than there were 50 years ago. According to the forestry industry, more than 1.7 million new trees are planted each day equaling 620 million new trees each year. Much of the paper manufactured from these sources is recycled. In 2008 alone, nearly 60 percent – a record number – of all paper consumed in the U.S. was recovered for recycling purposes.

Additionally, the printing industry demonstrates its commitment to going green through environmentally-responsible practices and processes. Whether it’s through use of vegetable-based inks that reduce air pollution emissions and support renewable resources, through recycling printing plates and paper, through receiving power through renewable resources like solar or wind, or through attaining “chain of custody” certifications from the Forest Stewardship Council and/or the Sustainable

Forestry Initiative to highlight that their practices are environmentally sound, thousands of printers are taking printed paper products “green” every single day.

Second, it’s important to note that substituting electronic delivery for printed and mailed delivery of communications is not without environmental impact. Electronic devices typically require the mining and refining of dozens of minerals and metals, as well as the use plastics, hydrocarbon solvents, and other non-renewable resources. These materials often contain toxic chemicals and metals. Additionally, only 18 percent of electronic devices in the U.S. are currently recycled and many of those are not reused for other products. In fact, 1.84 million tons of these devices were disposed of in U.S. landfills in 2006.

Finally, I can certainly appreciate your sensitivity to the tough economic times that we all currently face. Since 2008, the printing and graphic communications industry has lost over 73,000 jobs in this horrific downturn. Another huge blow to our industry was the considerable decrease in mail volume delivered by the USPS. Mail volume fell by nearly 20 billion pieces in 2009 compared to the same time period last year, representing the largest consecutive three-quarter drop in mail volume since 1971. The USPS attributes significant portions of this loss to the trend of letter mail and business transactions being replaced with electronic alternatives. Considering that nearly half of what is printed in this country is sent through postal mail, the twin factors of recession and mail volume decline represent a truly damaging double-whammy upon printers and our allies in the mailing industry, including paper companies, printing equipment manufacturers, publishers, advertisers and postal union workers.

In California, the printing and graphic communications industry represents over 6,000 facilities, the vast majority of which employ fewer than 50 individuals, and over 100,000 workers. In fact, the Los Angeles metropolitan area is the number one print market in the country in terms of establishments, shipments and employment. These companies are working tirelessly to regain their economic footing and job growth in the coming year. While making charitable contributions is always an admirable action, I’d be remiss if I did not ask you to consider that the negative trickle-down financial impact that cutting your printing and mailing budget has upon printers in

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California and upon the more than 1 million individuals employed by the printing and graphic communications industry nationwide.

Again, I certainly wish you good tidings in the holiday season and by no means attempt to cast a “Bah Humbug” attitude over this joyous time. I do hope that you will consider the points presented in this letter and that you will perhaps return to printing and mailing your holiday cards in the future. Should you wish to discuss further the importance of print and mail to the nation’s economy or the tremendous strides our industry is making on the environmental front, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Michael Makin
President & CEO