Dear Manager, Product Classification:

I am writing on behalf of The American Legion in response to the USPS notice in the August 23 *Federal Register*. The notice reveals the Postal Service intends to propose a rule saying “… no merchandise or goods …” will be permitted in Marketing Mail. If such items were to be mailed, they would require First Class, or other more expensive, postage. We strenuously oppose any such new rule as this would have a catastrophic impact on our ability to carry out our mission on behalf of our nation’s veterans, service members and their families.

The American Legion is the nation’s largest and most influential wartime veterans service organization, committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome programs in our communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting strong national security and continued devotion to our fellow servicemembers and veterans. As a nonprofit mailer, our organization uses front-end and back-end premiums both at the national and state levels to help raise the necessary funds to support our many programs. These premiums, such as calendars, coins and greeting cards, and items like pieces of cloth, flowers and candles have been developed to maximize the response from our members and supporters to yield the best possible outcome for our many veteran, Americanism and youth programs around the country.

If the rule USPS contemplates were proposed and implemented, it would eliminate the use of premiums in nonprofit fundraising mail. As is obvious, we believe, the drastic difference in postage cost – **up to 200% increase** - would overwhelm the relatively slim margins that are now sufficient to encourage our use of premiums in Marketing Mail fundraising. A switch to First Class is simply not an option.

The American Legion has invested significant time and resources to develop a mail fundraising program that meets current standards.  Our mailings have been approved repeatedly by USPS as in compliance with Marketing Mail classification specifications and we have reasonably relied on stability from the Postal Service’s classification system to make our investment in these efforts worthwhile. The sudden elimination of premiums would cripple our mailing program. The USPS says that it partners with us mailers. Springing a wholesale and drastic change such as contemplated does not demonstrate collaboration. It is not how partners treat each other.

In the short run, if not also the long run, The American Legion would suffer substantial lost revenue and consequential lost resources for our programs and those we serve. It is not a foregone conclusion that alternative approaches in the mail would replace our use of premiums in Marketing Mail. To the contrary, the use of premiums in our mail packages is one of the reasons hard-copy USPS mail outperforms many digital options. Ruling out premiums would greatly devalue our postal mail and inevitably lead to a further migration from mail to alternative means of fundraising and membership development. The mail works for us *now*. But, this change would force us to reinvent the fundraising wheel. A process that would lead to lost funds and critically impact our programs dedicated to advocating for veterans, mentoring our nation’s youth, assisting transitioning servicemembers, providing scholarships for students, and comforting the afflicted throughout every community in our great nation.

The American Legion, like other nonprofit mailers, has long relied on our partnership with the Postal Service. We urge you to justify our reliance by dropping this proposal from further consideration.

Sincerely,

**[Insert name, title, and address]**