

Postal Service pushes the envelope

by The Peoria (Ill.) Journal Star

U.S. Postal Service officials recently proposed a "forever" stamp, a stamp that never loses its mailing value, regardless of future increases in the price of postage. This might well be the best mailing innovation since the Pony Express. How many times have you snagged a book of first-class stamps, only to get licked with a postage hike? In order to use your suddenly worthless booklet of "Migratory Birds" for anything other than wallpaper, you must purchase the dreaded make-up stamps - which seem to come only in books of 10,000. Nobody, but nobody, gets through those. If you're like us, you've mailed a phone bill plastered with a dozen of those doggoned 2-centers, just to prove a point.

When you buy a stamp, you're not buying a piece of currency, worth the exact price printed on it. You're buying the rights to mail a document. Those rights shouldn't expire. The forever stamp is a particularly great idea in the electronic age, when many people pay bills through automatic deduction and communicate through e-mail.

Meanwhile, the Postal Service has plumped up the price of a first-class stamp 13 times in 32 years, with another increase - to 42 cents - expected next year. Postal officials say such increases could become annual events.

A forever stamp isn't without its problems. For one, the Postal Service may have to limit how many of the stamps people can buy, to discourage hoarding. Still, other nations, including Britain, France and Israel, already use them. This idea earns our stamp of approval.

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