



News from Washington

House passes budget resolution, committee advances funding for Postal Service vehicle fleet

In a party-line vote of 220-212, the House of Representatives passed a concurrent resolution on the budget for Fiscal Year 2022 (S. Con. Res. 14) on Aug. 25. The 10-year \$3.5 trillion plan includes both non-traditional infrastructure, such as funding for improved family services, elder care, health care and education, as well as infrastructure investments and tax policy changes aimed at combating climate change. The plan will be funded mostly by raising taxes on corporations and the wealthiest Americans—raising taxes on people who make more than \$400,000 a year.

The framework, which passed in the Senate on Aug. 11, reinforces crucial portions of President Biden’s “Build Back Better” agenda, a three-part plan to rebuild the U.S. economy through legislation currently being considered in Congress, by investing in roads, bridges, rail and other traditional transportation modes.

“The House of Representatives is taking a significant step toward making a historic investment that is going to transform America—cut taxes for working families, and position the American economy for long-term growth,” President Biden said.

After passage of the budget resolution in the Senate, the House vote cleared the path for Democratic lawmakers to use a process known as “budget reconciliation,” which requires only 51 votes in the Senate as opposed to the 60-vote threshold required in regular order, which has prevented numerous bills from being considered by the upper chamber. Using the budget reconciliation process, the House and Senate were completing their work on the legislation as this issue of the magazine went to print.

With regard to the Postal Service, the House Committee on Oversight and Reform held a markup on Sept. 2 to consider the committee’s allocations. The committee voted to approve and transmit its recommendations to the House Committee on the Budget.

The Oversight Committee’s total allocation was \$7.5 billion to implement Biden’s Build Back Better agenda, which, among other things, prioritizes electrifying the federal government’s vehicle fleet, including that of the Postal Service. Initially, the committee planned to provide \$2.4 billion for postal vehicles and related charging infrastructure. Due to successful lobbying efforts by NALC on the critical need for an upgraded Postal Service fleet, the total funding increased to \$7 billion after an amendment introduced by Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-MA) was passed.

Of the \$7 billion, \$3 billion will cover the cost of electric vehicles and \$4 billion will be used for charging infrastructure. At the hearing, lawmakers reported that the \$7 billion figure will also be mirrored by the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, which is good news for the overall prospects of securing this important funding to upgrade desperately needed vehicles for letter carriers.

“The benefits of these electric vehicles go well beyond the protection of our climate and human health,” Oversight Committee Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) said in her opening statement on Sept. 2. “Electric vehicles have been shown to cost an average of 20 to 25 percent less over the life of a vehicle as a result of reduced fuel and maintenance costs.”

Several Democratic representatives spoke in support of the amendment to

increase funding for the Postal Service vehicle fleet and charging stations.

“The electrification of our Postal Service fleet will reduce carbon pollution, to the great benefit of the health, safety and sustainability of our communities,” Lynch said.

The committee’s allocations will be included with the larger budget resolution reconciliation package, which Democratic lawmakers are actively crafting. Democrats are aiming to finalize the budget resolution’s reconciliation package by the end of September; at press time, a final vote had not occurred.

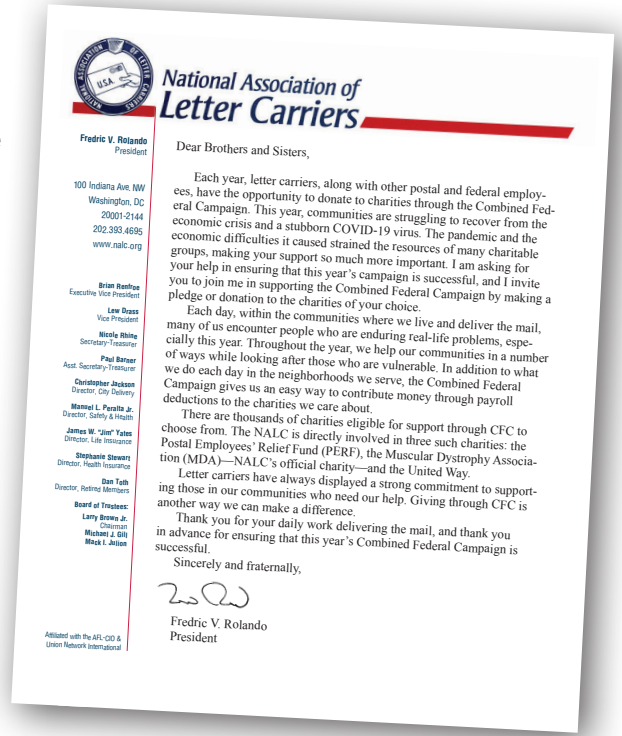
House passes voting rights bill

The House passed the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (H.R. 4) on Aug. 24 in a party-line vote of 219-212. The bill, introduced by Rep. Terri Sewell (D-AL), combats voter discrimination by restoring the protections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that have been cut back after a pair of Supreme Court decisions.

The legislation would restore the portion of the 1965 law that requires specific states to pre-clear certain changes to their voting laws and redistricting criteria with the federal government. The legislation comes as lawmakers seek to combat a wave of new restrictive election laws that have been recently introduced in various states.

“This bill restores the power of the Voting Rights Act, as President [Lyndon] Johnson said, ‘one of the most monumental laws in the entire history of American freedom.’ Any diminishment of the Voting Rights Act is a diminishment of our democracy. In America, the right to vote must never, ever be compromised,” House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) said.

NALC President Fredric Rolando's letter to members asks them to donate through the Combined Federal Campaign.



After the House vote, President Biden expressed support for the bill and said, “The House has acted. The Senate also has to join them to send this important bill to my desk.”

The legislation, named for the late Georgia congressman and civil rights icon John Lewis, likely faces a similar fate as the For the People Act (H.R. 1), another sweeping voting rights bill that passed in the House but was blocked by all 50 Republicans in the Senate—H.R. 4 is unlikely to receive the 60 votes needed to overcome a GOP filibuster in the evenly divided Senate. **PR**

Carriers encouraged to give through CFC

As communities across the country recover from the economic crisis and struggle to escape the pandemic, non-profit groups are working to assure that no one is left behind. Letter carriers, as federal employees, have a convenient way to help them by donating through the world’s largest annual workplace giving program, the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC).

Letter carriers may sign up during the CFC campaign season, from Sept. 1, 2021, through Jan. 15, 2022, to make donations during 2022.

CFC participants make charitable donations via deductions from their paychecks. Participants may use payroll deduction, credit or debit cards, or bank accounts to make recurring donations. They also may make a one-time donation using any of these methods except payroll deduction. They also can volunteer for the charity and count the value of the hours.

Pledges made during the campaign season support eligible non-profit organizations chosen by the donor. Carriers can select the groups they want to support from a list of thousands of eligible charities, and an amount of their choosing will be deducted from their paychecks each pay period and sent automatically to their selected charities.

“Letter carriers who donate through the CFC through paycheck deduction

provide steady resources for the charities they support,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “These charitable groups know they can rely on us year-round.”

All active letter carriers can participate in the CFC through payroll deduction. The easiest way to sign up is through the CFC Donor Pledging System at cfcgiving.opm.gov or through the CFC Giving smartphone app, available on the App Store and Google Play. Retired letter carriers may make a one-time or recurring e-check or credit card contribution to the CFC. These one-time and recurring gifts also can be made through the CFC Donor Pledging System.

“This year, communities are struggling to recover from the economic crisis and a stubborn COVID-19 virus,” Rolando wrote in a letter to members. “The pandemic and the economic difficulties it caused strained the resources of many charitable groups, making your support so much more important. I am asking for your help in ensuring that this year’s campaign is successful, and I invite you to join me in supporting the Combined Federal Campaign by making a pledge or donation to the charities of your choice.”

NALC is directly involved in three charities eligible for support through the CFC:

The Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) is NALC’s only official

charity. In addition to supporting MDA through branch fundraising events, letter carriers can support the organization directly through CFC. MDA is the world’s leading non-profit health organization sponsoring research into the causes of, and effective treatments for, neuromuscular diseases. MDA research grants support research projects worldwide, as well as camps and activities for children who have one of these diseases. For more information, go to mdausa.org.

The **Postal Employees’ Relief Fund (PERF)** provides financial support to active and retired postal employees whose primary residence has been completely destroyed or left uninhabitable by a major natural disaster or an isolated house fire. The charity is run by the four postal employee unions and three management organizations, whose members support PERF through voluntary donations. Information and applications for PERF assistance can be found at postalrelief.com.

United Way Worldwide is the leadership and support organization for the network of nearly 1,800 community-based United Way organizations in 40 countries and territories. United Way focuses on creating community-based and community-led solutions that provide the foundation for a good quality of life. For more information, go to unitedway.org. **PR**