



# News from Washington

## House oversight committee holds hearing on the impact of Postmaster General DeJoy's Delivering for America Plan

**O**n May 17, the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability's Subcommittee on Government Operations and the Federal Workforce held a hearing titled "Tracking the Postal Service: An Update on the Delivering for America Plan" to seek updates from Postmaster General Louis DeJoy regarding implementation of the 10-year Delivering for America Plan, including the Postal Service Reform Act (PSRA)—a cornerstone of the plan.

During the hearing, committee members highlighted concerns regarding the financial stability of USPS, mail service reliability, staffing, network realignment and more. Lawmakers also pressed the Postal Service regarding its plan to ensure a safe working environment for USPS employees, and how it is combating mail theft and crime, particularly violent assaults on letter carriers.

In opening remarks, Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) highlighted an assault this week on his district office staff, which was interrupted by a letter carrier who startled and distracted the assailant,

enabling staff to escape a violent attack that could have been even worse. "One of the heroes in the story was actually the postman," Connolly said. "He came to the office while the attack was going on...and that allowed the woman who was being beaten on the head to escape. He's an unsung hero in our story."

Ranking Member Jamie Raskin (D-MD) criticized DeJoy's recently announced plan for combating the issue of mail-related crime as "light on proactive protection for letter carriers." He emphasized that this problem has become increasingly serious, noting that more than 2,000 letter carriers have been assaulted or robbed since 2020, with 305 carriers targeted so far in 2023. Raskin, along with Reps. Kweisi Mfume (D-MD) and Connolly, sent a letter to Postmaster General DeJoy ahead of the hearing, requesting details on the Postal Service's new plans to protect postal employees.

Overall, DeJoy did not offer any specifics on USPS's plan to protect letter carriers and committed to getting back to the committee with more information by June 12, as requested in the letter.

In addition to concerns around the increase in assaults on letter carriers, lawmakers also questioned DeJoy on what USPS is doing to protect other aspects of the health and safety of employees. They indicated that a large number of letter carriers and postal workers have reached out directly to their offices to raise concerns, and legislators pointed to specific instances of letter carriers getting injured on the job, facing exposure to dangerously hot or cold temperatures, being affected by lack of staffing and high turnover, and more.

DeJoy recognized these issues and said that the Delivering for America plan is meant to improve these conditions and address these concerns, but that financial limitations present a significant challenge in responding to these issues.

NALC is committed to using every available resource to address the increase in attacks on letter carriers, including engaging the public, coordinating with law enforcement, pursuing legislation and seeking strategies such as enforcement measures and protective video technology that will better protect letter carriers.

On the issue of Postal Service finances, several lawmakers and DeJoy recognized the increased financial stability that USPS has seen over the last year following the passage of the bipartisan PSRA. However, many members pressed DeJoy on the agency's finances. Specifically, Rep. Gary Palmer (R-AL) questioned DeJoy about when he expected the Postal Service to "break even."

DeJoy pointed out that the 10-year plan accounts for executive action on the Postal Service's obligations to Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) pensions. This was a reference to the Segal Report, a 2010 report from the Postal Regulatory Commission that directs the Office of Personnel Management to accurately value USPS's CSRS pension assets and liability. If these recommendations, which can be achieved only through executive action, were implemented, the Postal Service would save billions of dollars annually. For years, NALC has been advocating for administrative action on this issue, which complements the repeal of the pre-funding mandate and other financial victories from the PSRA.





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**Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) talks about how a letter carrier helped distract a recent attacker at his district office.**

Rep. Palmer also questioned DeJoy on the Postal Service’s investment strategy with regard to the \$299 billion in assets and employee pensions currently on the Treasury’s books. Palmer pinpointed the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and CSRS investment model for the rest of the federal government and asked whether an alternative investment model would benefit the agency. The question comes following a recent inspector general audit report—“Postal Service Investment and Interest Rate Risk”—that outlined how other investment strategies would result in a significant return on investment.

DeJoy acknowledged that if the \$299 billion on the Treasury Department’s books were invested differently, USPS’s investment funds could more than double. DeJoy noted that any change to the existing investment strategy would have to be approved through congressional legislation.

NALC has long advocated for recalculation of Postal Service pension liabilities by the White House and will continue to do so. With regard to investment, NALC is encouraged to see support and congressional interest in a more sound investment approach, and we will work with lawmakers to pursue legislation.

### **Resolutions protecting service reintroduced in House**

On May 9, Reps. David Joyce (R-OH) and Sanford Bishop (D-GA) reintroduced a door delivery resolution (H. Res. 376), which calls on Congress to take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of door de-

livery for all business and residential customers.

The resolution, which has had consistent bipartisan support in the past, already had 20 bipartisan co-sponsors from both parties as this magazine was going to print.

More than 35 million U.S. businesses and households receive mail at their doors six, and sometimes seven, days a week. Receiving mail, including bills, paychecks, medications, ballots and packages at the door is preferred by the public. Continuing this essential service is critical to the economic success of the Postal Service, and NALC encourages all letter carriers to contact their representative to co-sponsor H. Res. 376.

Reps. Don Bacon (R-NE) and Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) reintroduced another service-related resolution on April 6. H. Res. 277 expresses the sense of Congress that the Postal Service should take all appropriate measures to restore the service standards that were in effect as of July 1, 2012. At press time, the resolution had 29 bipartisan co-sponsors.

On May 23, Reps. Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Kweisi Mfume (D-MD) reintroduced a resolution to protect the Postal Service from privatization. H. Res. 439 calls on Congress to ensure that USPS remains an independent establishment of the federal government and is not subject to privatization.

This resolution was first introduced in 2018 following a report from President Trump that called to privatize the Postal Service. Fortunately, this idea was dead on arrival in Congress and the

resolution has received consistent support each time it has been introduced.

NALC opposes any service reductions or efforts to privatize the agency and supports resolutions that protect the essential and affordable service that our customers rely on.

### **Senate committee advances labor secretary nominee Julie Su**

In an 11-10 party-line vote on April 26, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee advanced Julie Su’s nomination to serve as the next secretary of labor. The vote came after Su testified before the committee on April 20.

Su, who is serving as acting labor secretary following the departure of Marty Walsh in March, was confirmed as deputy labor secretary in July 2021. Before her tenure at the Department of Labor, Su specialized in legal work focused on civil and workers’ rights. She served as the California labor commissioner from 2011 to 2018. She later served as the secretary for the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency.

The next step is for the full Senate to consider Su’s nomination. While all the Democratic senators on the HELP committee voted in favor of Su, three Democratic senators, Joe Manchin (D-WV), Jon Tester (D-MT) and Mark Kelly (D-AZ), and Krysten Sinema (I-AZ), an independent who caucuses with the Democrats, have not publicly stated whether



**Julie Su**

they would vote to confirm Su. With a narrow 51-49 majority in the Senate, Democrats cannot spare more than two votes.

A Senate vote on Su's confirmation had not been scheduled at press time.

## Election Mail Act introduced in the House and Senate

The Election Mail Act (H.R. 2987/S. 1391) was introduced by Rep. Nikema Williams (D-GA) in the House and by Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) in the Senate.

The bill aims to improve the processing and delivery of election mail by directing the Postal Service to deliver all election mail as First-Class Mail. It would postmark all mail-in ballots, ensuring that no voters or election officials have to cover the postage cost. Under the law, Congress would reimburse the Postal Service for the return of all domestic mail-in ballots, as it currently does for the ballots of overseas military members. It also would prevent the Postal Service from making any operational changes within 120 days of an election that would restrict reliable mail delivery.

Additionally, it would require states to count absentee ballots that are postmarked by Election Day and arrive within seven days following the election.

## House passes bill to raise debt limit; conflict remains

The debt-ceiling crisis, and the question of whether lawmakers will agree to raise it to prevent a default on the nation's debt, has been looming since the 118th Congress convened. In a 217-214 vote on April 26, the House passed the Limit, Save, Grow Act of 2023 (H.R. 2811), which would raise the debt ceiling through March 31, 2024, while drastically cutting discre-

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**LETTER CARRIER POLITICAL FUND**

LCPF is a non-partisan political action committee established for the purpose of electing qualified candidates who support letter carriers and a strong and innovative U.S. Postal Service. Since union dues can't be used to support candidates for political office, NALC relies 100 percent on member contributions to the LCPF, which in turn helps us support those on Capitol Hill who defend us.

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tionary spending to Fiscal Year 2022 levels.

The cuts to discretionary spending include repealing many of the energy and climate tax credit expansions under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), cutting the increased funding for the Internal Revenue Service in the IRA, adding or expanding work requirements for Medicaid, food stamps and other federal programs, and stopping the implementation of student debt cancellation.

While the Senate has no plans to consider the bill, House Republican leaders passed it in hopes that some of their measures would remain in a potential negotiated deal.

On May 9, bipartisan House and Senate leaders met with President Biden to discuss the debt limit. As this magazine was going to print, the group was scheduled to meet again, with a deal not yet made.

Experts predict that without action, the country could default on its debt as early as the beginning of June. A default could stop monthly Social Security checks for nearly 66 million Americans. It also could stop or delay certain veterans' benefits, including disability and survivor payments. Overall, experts predict that it would affect the country's already unstable economy, which is fighting record-high interest rates and inflation. **PR**