



Spread the word »  



This week, both the House and Senate debated and passed their respective budget resolutions, H. Con. Res. 27 and S. Con. Res. 11, in response to the Obama administration's February budget proposal. Neither resolution has the force of law, but both allowed for a display of political grandstanding, serving as blueprints for the direction each chamber would like to take in the appropriation and authorization process.

### **“Queen of the Hill”**

On Wednesday, the House debated six budget alternatives in the House. H. Con. Res. 27, the one that passed and the one that “scored” highest, was dubbed “the Queen of the Hill.”

Defense hawks won the day by garnering the most votes for this budget alternative that allowed lawmakers to raise sequestration's spending caps for defense—to the tune of \$100 billion in an off-budget account.

The House proposal cuts overall spending by \$5.5 trillion over 10 years. Included in these cuts are an additional \$318 billion cuts in the benefits of federal and postal employees, who have already contributed more than \$150 billion in deficit reduction efforts. The House-passed proposal would require all federal employees to pay an additional 6 percent of their salaries toward retirement with no corresponding increase in benefits, which amounts to a permanent 6 percent pay cut or to working without pay for three weeks every year. Under this proposal, a top-step letter carrier (Step O) would see an annual reduction in pay of more than \$3,500.

In addition, House Republicans seek to replace the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program contribution formula with a fixed voucher based on the Consumer Price Index.

But wait! There's more. House Republicans also included a proposal to lower the

interest rate on Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) contributions to the G fund.

And that's still not all. H. Con. Res. 27 even goes so far as to outline additional postal specific reforms intended to save \$40 billion over 10 years, including cuts to the frequency and type of mail delivery—in effect calling for an elimination of a day of delivery.

The icing on the cake? The budget also proposes, with no justification, to strip postal employees of our right to negotiate our contributions to health and life insurance.

“This budget takes budget quackery to new heights,” said Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), who serves as ranking member on the House Budget Committee and who proposed the failed Democratic alternative budget proposal also considered this week. “It claims to repeal the Affordable Care Act, but it uses the revenues and the savings from the Affordable Care Act to claim balance at the end of 10 years. The Republican budget disinvests in the future of our nation by making deep cuts to education, infrastructure, and scientific research – it is a deeply pessimistic view of America. It will do nothing, nothing to increase paychecks and take-home pay for working families. In fact, it squeezes them even harder and tighter. It will increase the tax burden on millions of families, those in the middle class and those working hard to join the middle class.”

### **Vote-o-rama**

The Senate's S. Con. Res. 11 gave very little detail in the way of specific proposals, but it seeks to trim spending by \$5.1 trillion over 10 years. Consideration in the Senate is different from consideration in the House. About 800 amendments were considered but, in the end, the Senate only voted on 49 of those filed and it agreed to just over 30.

With regard to the Postal Service, one of the amendments considered was offered by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), seeking to establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund to strengthen USPS by establishing a moratorium on mail processing plant closures, reinstating overnight delivery standards and protecting rural service. Sanders' amendment passed by a voice vote.

What does this mean? Well, it would simply allow a budget committee chairman to adjust budget allocations for committees in anticipation of future legislation such as postal reform—as long as it wouldn't increase the deficit. Lots of fancy jargon for not much.

### **The bottom line**

What happened this week in Congress will not change any laws, but through all of the “budget quackery” and theatrics demonstrated this week, one thing is clear: Middle-class public servants are fair game and will continue to be asked to shoulder a disproportionate burden of the proposed cuts. NALC members should continue to speak out against proposals that would threaten the benefits of all federal employees, no matter the viability of the threat.

### **Recess time**

After all of that political grand-standing this week, lawmakers are heading home for a two-week recess. They will be back in Washington on April 13 with recharged batteries, ready to tackle the next big issue: trade?

#### **Connect with us**



National Association of Letter Carriers  
100 Indiana Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20001-2144  
202-393-4695

[UNSUBSCRIBE](#)