

No summer vacation for legislation

As Congress returned from its Memorial Day recess, it might have appeared that most of its attention was focused not on the Postal Service, but rather on other issues, including immigration reform and online privacy concerns.

But on June 13, House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Darrell Issa (R-CA) released what he termed a “discussion draft” of a possible postal reform bill that he hopes to introduce in the near future.

“This discussion draft has a number of major problems that need to be addressed before it is used as the basis of actual legislation,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said, noting how the draft includes many of the damaging and fundamental flaws that were included in H.R. 2309, Rep. Issa’s failed attempt at a postal reform measure in the last session of Congress.

For example, Issa’s draft calls for immediately eliminating Saturday letter mail service, for taking away from 35 million Americans front door delivery of the mail and replacing it with cluster-box delivery, and for compromising the security of the mailbox by allowing access by non-federal employees.

“The NALC is disappointed that Chairman Issa did not take a fresher approach to postal reform with this discus-

sion draft,” Rolando said. “However, we appreciate the chairman’s invitation to provide input to this legislation before it is formally introduced, and we welcome this opportunity to engage in discussions of this proposed bill with him, his colleagues on the Oversight Committee and the entire House of Representatives.” (Issa’s committee oversees the U.S. Postal Service.)

“We hope that we will be able to work with the chairman on legislation to provide alternative approaches to postal reform that seek to modernize and strengthen the Postal Service—an agency with roots in the U.S. Constitution—rather than to destroy it brick by brick,” the president said.

Carper bill coming, too?

Yet another postal-focused bill might be on the way—this time from the Senate side of the Hill—and NALC members need to pay special attention for possible breaking news about it in the coming weeks.

“There’s word that Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE), the chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, is putting the final touches on his own postal reform legislation,” President Rolando said. “Last year, Senator Carper was one of four authors of S. 1789, a dangerously flawed bill that kicked down the road the financial problems weighing down the Postal Service.” Carper’s committee has Postal Service oversight.

“Fortunately, this year we have a little time to influence and help the senator draft a comprehensive reform bill that offers real solutions to the Postal Service’s financial problems,” the president said.

Some of those solutions are contained in an existing postal reform measure before the Senate, S. 316. Introduced in February by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), this postal modernization measure contains many of the NALC’s legislative priorities, including a call to repeal the 2006 mandate that forces USPS to

spend billions each year to pre-fund decades’ worth of health benefits for future postal retirees. If passed, S. 316 also would make Saturday mail delivery permanent, rather than having six-day mail hinge on whether the specific appropriations language calling for it gets approved from one year to the next.

By the time this issue of *The Postal Record* went to press, 27 senators of a possible 100 had signed on as co-sponsors of S. 316.

“We hope that Carper will look to S. 316 as a blueprint,” Rolando said in a June 6 message to the NALC e-Activist Network. “The more that Senate support grows for S. 316—a bill we like and fully support—the more pressure Chairman Carper should feel to incorporate several provisions of S. 316 into his own bill.

“It might not be possible to include all of S. 316 into Carper’s postal reform legislation,” the president said, “but it is imperative that all of our friends—especially those on Sen. Carper’s committee—co-sponsor and support S. 316 legislation as a way to improve whatever postal reform bill emerges from the committee this year.”

S. 316’s companion bill in the 435-member House of Representatives, Rep. Peter DeFazio’s (D-OR) H.R. 630, had 162 co-sponsors at press time.

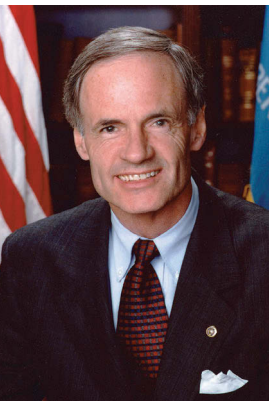
Another postal-focused bill in the House is Rep. Stephen Lynch’s (D-MA) H.R. 961, which calls for a recalculation of the postal surplus in the Federal Employees Retirement System using postal-specific assumptions, with a subsequent refund of that surplus—an amount that could be as high as \$12.4 billion. Lynch’s bill had 124 co-sponsors as this magazine went to press.

Meanwhile, 187 House members had signed on to Rep. Sam Graves’ (R-MO) H.Res. 30, which expresses the sense of the House that the Postal Service should do what it takes to maintain six-day mail delivery service.

You can track the progress of all of these bills, and review fact sheets



Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA)



Sen. Thomas Carper (D-DE)



**Become an e-Activist.
Go to nalc.org.**

on them, through our home page at nalc.org.

Stay e-Active this summer

Rolando encouraged members who have not yet done so to visit nalc.org and sign up to receive e-mail alerts via the NALC e-Activist Network, one of the fastest means of communication our union has with its members.

“Because of the fast-changing nature of legislative action in Congress, news about an imminent vote in Congress can come at any time,” the president said. “With the e-Activist Network, the NALC alerts members to take quick action to let members of Congress know how we would like them to vote.”

NALC members can simply sign up at nalc.org. Then, when important developments occur in Washington, DC, they will receive e-mail alerts instantaneously.

“We know that the value of personal communication, especially in letter form, can’t be replicated in an e-mail,” Rolando said. “But when votes get scheduled on Capitol Hill, it’s crucial that we contact our members lightning-fast, since—despite our best efforts—some in Congress still don’t understand how the Postal Service works, let alone a complicated issue such as pre-funding.”

It takes only moments to join the e-Activist Network, but once you do, you’ll be among those who receive up-to-the-minute notice on legislative action that could affect your pay, benefits or job.

In the news media

On May 24, *Government Executive* had an interesting story on a poll about the public’s attitudes toward the Postal Service. The poll showed, among other things, support for continued Saturday delivery, a strong reliance on postal services and a desire to see more services offered at post offices. What made the survey all the more intriguing was that it

was conducted solely among Americans who use the Internet.

A Washington bureau reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* interviewed NALC Chief of Staff Jim Sauber for a story on Postal Service finances that appeared on Sunday, May 26. The article cited the major role that pre-funding plays in USPS’ red ink, as well as the agency’s efficiency, its popularity with the public, its history of adapting to technological changes, and the rise in package deliveries.

In testimony to the House committee with Postal Service oversight on April 17, the USPS Board of Governors chairman proposed that collective-bargaining agreements between USPS and its labor unions might need to be renegotiated in a search for further cost savings. “Renegotiating contracts is unnecessary,” NALC President Fredric Rolando countered later in the same hearing, “because our recently arbitrated agreement allows us to look for ways to work with the Postal Service to find cost reductions, including in health care expenses and an improved route adjustment process.” A May 29 *Federal Times* article helped to bolster Rolando’s statement by reporting on how the Postal Service is not taking full advantage of its existing agreement with the American Postal Workers Union to save money.

The notion that young people are uninterested in the U.S. Postal Service was belied by a Philadelphia high school student interning at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, who in April made her journalism project—for the Saturday newspaper, no less—a look at the relationship between social media and the Postal Service. She closed her article with a quote from President Rolando: “For 200 years, the Postal Service has faced technological innovations such as the telephone, fax machine or telegraph, emerging stronger each time. If lawmakers address the pre-funding fiasco, rather than reducing services to

Americans and their businesses, it can do so once again.”

BusinessWeek’s June 7 issue includes a spirited Q-and-A with Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR), the sponsor of H.R. 630. DeFazio explained why postal reform is such a big issue for him. “I have a tremendous number of rural communities [in my district],” he said. “The Postal Service is essential for those small towns. I just heard from hundreds of small business folks saying, ‘Hey, if I had to use FedEx, I’d be out of business.’ Congress has yet to meaningfully act to deal with this absurd problem that the post office is being required to prepay health care for people who have not yet been born, who might someday work for the post office. I mean, that’s just crazy stuff.”

Letter carriers from Hammond, IN Branch 580 and Crown Point, IN Branch 1624 rallied at the Highway of Flags Veterans Memorial in Highland, IN, on Sunday, June 9, in support of retaining Saturday mail delivery service. Rally coverage in the *Post-Tribune* noted how the pre-funding mandate has cost the Postal Service \$32 billion since 2007 and is the main reason behind the agency’s financial problems. The *Post-Tribune* led its story with its interview of Branch 580 President **Fred Bell**, and also quoted Branch 1624 President **Sharon Patterson**, as well as the president of nearby Chicago Branch 11, **Mack Julion**. Highland’s *The Times* covered the event as well, also highlighting the pre-funding problem and quoting Patterson.

A *Washington Free Beacon* story on June 7 about federal agencies’ mailing policies contains some good quotes from President Rolando. “The red ink people hear about has little to do with mail volume, the Internet, online bill-paying, or anything related to the mail,” he said. “Instead, it results chiefly from the [pre-funding] mandate,” which “accounts for ‘80 percent of all the red ink and 90 percent of the losses so far in fiscal 2013.” **PR**