

# Hidden progress as a 'Do-Nothing Congress' adjourns



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hasn't been raised in years, our immigration system is broken and our national infrastructure is literally falling apart. And yes, our Postal Service is in desperate need of reform to free it to innovate and grow.

Sadly, the 113th Congress adjourned without taking action on postal reform—or on much of anything else.

**Yet we've made real progress on postal reform. In the week** before adjournment, a bipartisan agreement was reached on a new version of S. 1486, the Postal Service Reform Act of 2014. The bill embraced the core provisions of the postal reform bill that the postal unions and the mailing industry have been advocating: a comprehensive solution to pre-funding, freedom to offer new products, fair treatment on pension valuations, strengthened service standards and a moratorium on plant closings. Just as importantly, the final version of S. 1486 dropped the controversial and counterproductive proposal to eliminate Saturday mail delivery, a proposal that had made the bill totally unacceptable up to then.

The bill's final version also dropped the attack on new postal employee pension benefits. A section that would have made coverage by FERS and the TSP subject to collective bargaining also was eliminated.

But Congress ran out of time, and the leaders who reached the agreement senselessly insisted of eliminating door delivery service for all of America's 5.8 million businesses and on phasing-out door service for nearly 10 million households, a third of all residences that get such service. A mandated shift

**H**arry Truman, *en route* to his upset re-election in 1948 over Thomas Dewey, famously railed against what he called a "Do-Nothing Congress." When the 80th Congress adjourned in 1948, it had passed just 900 bills.

I wonder what Truman would call the Congress that adjourned last December, a Congress that passed fewer than 200 bills, most of which named courthouses and post offices. Petrified Congress? Hibernating Congress?

It would be amusing if the country were in great shape and if there were not so much work to be done. But the minimum wage

to centralized delivery would have cost USPS billions in future revenue and would have raised serious mail security and fairness concerns for millions.

This misguided service cut, controversy over FECA cuts and higher postage rates mandated by the bill, plus a divisive amendment to allow guns on postal property, prevented the final version of S. 1486 from advancing. But the improvement in the bill was real nonetheless.

**As I told the hundreds of letter carriers, family members** and guests who attended the installation of officers ceremony on Dec. 13 (see story on page 8), we have conclusively shifted the debate over the future of USPS. With an e-commerce boom reviving the Postal Service, with growing operating profits and with strong support from the American public, USPS' large financial losses observed in recent years are no longer seen as evidence of technological obsolescence. Instead, the public—and, increasingly, Congress—see these things for what they are: evidence of deeply flawed public policy in the form of the pre-funding mandate.

The changing partisan makeup of Congress does not alter the shift in the debate or the case for consensus reform. Every day, the case for eliminating Saturday and door delivery becomes weaker as seven-day delivery becomes more the norm.

Our goal on Capitol Hill, and in collective bargaining with the Postal Service, is clear: We aim to help it become the dominant delivery company in residential America—an affordable, efficient public-service utility with a career full-time workforce earning a solid, middle-class standard of living.

**I know that the legislative challenges we face over the next** two years will be extremely difficult. There are forces loose in American politics who want to destroy public institutions such as the Postal Service and who would love nothing more than to attack the pay, benefits and workplace rights of federal employees.

But I remain confident and hopeful about the future. That's because I have faith in the men and women of the National Association of Letter Carriers. We have the talent, the skills and the values to meet any challenge that comes our way. And we have a tradition of more than 125 years from which to draw strength.

So happy New Year, brothers and sisters. Another "Do-Nothing Congress" has adjourned. It's a new day with hope for a better future. Let's make 2015 a great year for NALC and an even greater year for America's amazing and indispensable letter carriers.