



NALC is made up of approximately 277,000 active and retired members, of which almost a third are veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.

To date, more than 7,000 NALC members have joined the NALC Veterans Group, which was designed to provide all NALC members who are military veterans access to the information and tools specific to veterans' rights and benefits both inside and outside of the U.S. Postal Service. (Visit nalc.org/veterans to learn more.)

What follows is the first installment of a new regular feature in *The Postal Record* that is intended to update all members on the latest news of interest to veterans—on such topics as retirement, disability benefits and workers' compensation, veterans' rights under the National Agreement, legislation affecting veterans, and community services opportunities for veterans and their supporters.

Legislation: Veteran-related measures and Congress

With so many issues being debated in Congress every day, it's easy to lose track of legislation that affects veterans of this country's armed forces. There are scores of congressional proposals that have the potential to positively and negatively affect all veterans, including letter carriers who are also military veterans, though not all of them will reach President Obama's desk. Here are a few that came up recently:

Up until last November, first-year federal workers accrued only four hours of sick leave each pay period, and this forced many military veterans with disabilities to take unpaid leave because they had not yet built up enough leave time. But in November, Obama signed into law the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act.

This act is designed to provide disabled military veterans 104 hours of leave to seek medical treatment for service-related disabilities during their first year in the federal workforce. This leave is counted separately from traditional sick and annual leave and will apply to all those who work for the U.S. Postal Service—the largest civilian employer of veterans.

So now, newly hired military veterans who have a disability rating of 30 percent or more receive 13 days (104 hours) of sick leave for medical treatment associated with their disability.

Last summer, Obama signed into law the Veterans Identification Card Act of 2015, which directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to issue an identification card to any requesting veteran who is not entitled to military retired pay and not enrolled in the VA system of patient enrollment. For now, only current service members, retirees and certain veterans who have a disability rating of 100 percent are issued such identification cards. The program is expected to begin in 2017.

Meanwhile, the recent announcements that there would be no cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for federal employees and annuitants spurred the introduction of several pieces of legislation. The Seniors and Veterans Emergency Benefits Acts (S. 2251, H.R. 4144 and H.R. 4012) aim to give military (and civilian) retirees a one-time 3.9 percent COLA in 2016—an estimated \$581—which would affect nearly 70 million beneficiaries.

S. 2251 was introduced by Sen. Eliz-

abeth Warren (D-MA). "Giving seniors a little help with their Social Security and stitching up corporate tax write-offs isn't just about economics," Warren said. "It's about our values."

H.R. 4144 was introduced by Rep. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL). "Veterans know not to leave anyone behind," Duckworth said, "but without congressional action, that's exactly what our government will do to them—as well as millions of seniors and people with disabilities."

H.R. 4012 was introduced by Rep. Alan Grayson (D-FL). "Our seniors and veterans have not received a raise in 40 years," Grayson said. "We have been using the wrong system to determine their cost-of-living adjustments. Giving our seniors and veterans a 3.9 percent raise, the average raise CEOs at the top 350 American companies got last year, is an important step to righting this wrong."

While additional consideration of these COLA measures is unlikely without an identified spending offset, NALC applauds these members of Congress for their efforts, and we will continue to monitor these and any other bills that could affect letter carrier veterans.