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. 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.

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.