

Preparing for the post-election lame duck session



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Congress is set to return from the campaign trail the week of Nov. 14. Some members will return having won their re-election bids and some will be in it only through the lame-duck session, which is the period when Congress is in Washington post-Election Day until it adjourns in late December.

Congress' agenda before the new year is impossible to pin down. There's speculation that if Democrats regain control of the Senate, Republicans may try to tackle controversial items more quickly (e.g., passing the Trans-Pacific Partnership). Should Republicans continue to control the Senate, activity may come to an outright halt since they would continue to set and control the agenda. Regardless, their actions could make things more difficult for the incoming administration about issues over which they disagree.

Before leaving town, Congress was able to extend overall government funding through Dec. 9, in addition to providing additional funds to combat the Zika virus and to increase flood relief efforts in Louisiana. This means that, when they return to DC this month, representatives and senators will be forced to haggle over 2017 funding before the holidays. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-WI) have agreed that lawmakers should try to group together Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations measures into packages they can pass as so-called "minibuses" rather than taking up one big "omnibus" spending bill.

Ryan also recently doubled down on his commitment to advance a criminal justice bill before the end of the year, while advocates of Vice President Joe Biden's "cancer moonshot" initiative are seeking \$755 million in new funding for that initiative.

Postal legislation

There is, however, a small chance that the House could consider postal legislation introduced in June by Reps. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT), Elijah Cummings (D-MD), Mark Meadows (R-NC), Stephen Lynch (D-MA) and Gerald Connolly (D-VA). Their two bills, the Postal Service Reform Act of 2016 (H.R. 5714) and the Postal Service Financial Improvement Act (H.R. 5707), were approved by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee in July.

These postal bills are the products of postal stakeholders' discussions with the Oversight Committee over the last two years. They're both awaiting a cost estimate from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). This means postal legislation could be considered at any time. NALC cannot

support H.R. 5714 as currently drafted, but we are seeking to achieve an acceptable bill by working with allies both inside and outside of Congress.

Letter carriers have been hearing a lot about the door delivery cuts being considered in H.R. 5714 and have stepped up to take action. In a major show of force beginning during Congress' summer recess, letter carriers across the country mobilized and have been urging their representatives to co-sponsor House Resolution 28, which calls for preserving existing door delivery services. By building support for the resolution, we can encourage Congress steer clear of the cuts to door delivery in H.R. 5714 and in any new legislation.

Thanks in part to the NALC members and allies who have urged their representatives to support H. Res. 28, the measure collected 25 new co-sponsors between July and September. With the new lawmakers who have added their names, we've helped build a bipartisan majority that supports door delivery and expects to see it preserved.

Our work is far from over, however. We need to build on this momentum that's been generated by our brothers and sisters and help make this a Congress with overwhelming enthusiasm for door delivery. Our efforts won't stop now that we've reached this milestone, and we can't stop educating our members of Congress until each one stands with us.

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We will also work to address other flaws in H.R. 5714, including the need for a "hardship exception" related to Medicare-eligible retirees who have not yet enrolled in Medicare Part B. The bill seeks to maximize Medicare enrollment in an effort to help reduce the cost of retiree health pre-funding.