



# News from Washington

## Senate holds hearing on White House postal task force report

**S**en. Ron Johnson (R-WI), chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, held a hearing on March 12 to discuss the proposals made late last year by the White House Task Force on the U.S. Postal Service. The document calls for radical and counter-productive changes to the Postal Service's business model, pricing and governance as well as to its collective-bargaining system.

The postal unions were not invited to the hearing, which included witnesses from the Treasury Department, Office of Personnel Management, Postal Regulatory Commission and the Postal Service's Board of Governors (BOG). But NALC has submitted for the record to the committee its rebuttal of the task force report.

The rebuttal is available to NALC members on the "Members Only" section of [nalc.org](http://nalc.org). The NALC document uses postal data and even figures from the task force report to make the case for sensible reforms.

As NALC President Fredric Rolando writes in the President's Message in this issue, "Letter carriers will be heard loud and clear on the report—and on the future of the Postal Service."

Media news reports have included widespread criticism of the task force proposal from lawmakers, USPS, postal unions, business leaders and other stakeholders. BOG member David Williams testified at the Senate hearing that the task force was doing the bidding of USPS's competitors through the use of "discredited economic theory."

### White House releases FY 2020 budget proposal

One day before the Senate hearing, the White House released on March 11



**Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI) led the Senate committee hearing on March 12.**

its \$4.7 trillion budget proposal for the 2020 fiscal year (FY), providing a general framework of the administration's budget priorities and kicking off the months-long appropriations process. Postal items were included, and one week later more details were released.

The proposal would cut non-defense spending and slash \$845 billion from Medicare and \$1.5 trillion from Medicaid over 10 years. It would raise the federal budget deficit even after proposing to eliminate a dozen important federal agencies and programs and to reduce funds for the Department of Labor and the training of workers.

Major provisions affecting NALC members in the Trump administration budget for FY 2020 include \$4.1 billion in postal-related cuts for FY 2020 and up to \$98.2 billion in postal-related cuts over the next 10 years. Among the measures to achieve these savings: reducing federal and postal employees' take-home pay by raising their contributions to their pensions, reducing pension benefits for new retirees by basing annuities on workers' highest average yearly salary over five years (high-5) instead of over the highest three years (high-3) and slashing cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs). The savings also would be achieved by implementing the postal

task force's proposed changes to operations and implementation of cost-reduction measures, including changing the price cap to allow for increased rates for products outside of the Universal Service Obligation, reducing days of delivery and door-to-door service as well as increasing the use of private-sector partners, curtailing postal employees' rights to bargain over wages, and opening up the mailbox to private interests. On a more positive note, the budget endorses the task force's recommendation of re-amortizing payments to the Retiree Health Benefits Fund, based on the postal employee population at or near the retirement age—known otherwise as "vested liability." This was a proposal made by NALC.

The budget also calls for instituting proposals of the "Delivering Government Solutions in the 21st Century" report last summer by the administration's Office of Management and Budget, which called for reforming and restructuring the federal government, including privatizing the Postal Service.

Letter carriers need to stay alert as NALC fights to keep these and other harmful proposals from being enacted. Install the NALC Member App on your Apple or Android smartphone or go to NALC's website for the latest news.

NALC will continue to update letter carriers as additional budget details are released and as the House and Senate begin their budget deliberations. NALC's rebuttal of the administration's budget proposal is available at [nalc.org/government-affairs/legislative-updates/white-house-releases-fy-2020-budget-proposal](http://nalc.org/government-affairs/legislative-updates/white-house-releases-fy-2020-budget-proposal).

### Shutdown aftermath in Congress

After 35 days of a partial government shutdown—the longest in U.S. history—



## LCPF correction

In the February issue of *The Postal Record*, the percentage of members contributing to the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF) for the state of Maine was incorrect. It should have been listed at 8.2 percent. Additionally, South Jersey Branch 908 wishes to dedicate individual LCPF contributions from branch members to the memory of Norman Task.



**Tammy Whitcomb**

Congress and the White House completed work on government funding for FY 2019 (ending Sept. 30, 2019). Of note to letter carriers, the funding bill maintains the federal appropriations language that preserves six-day mail delivery service—language that has been part of similar appropriations measures for more than 30 years. The fact that this provision was included with little debate demonstrates the excellent work that letter carriers have done in educating legislators and their constituents on the importance of six-day delivery.

Completion of the FY 2019 budget set the stage for the FY 2020 budget process, which began late because of the government shutdown.

### New resolutions, new fact sheets

Thanks to the work of letter carrier activists, NALC's four priority resolutions on door delivery, opposition to postal privatization, six-day delivery, and service standards continue to pick up co-sponsors and are well on their way to reaching 218—the number that reflects majority support in the House of Representatives.

A new Senate resolution opposing postal privatization (S. Res. 99) was introduced by Sens. Gary Peters (D-MI) and Jerry Moran (R-KS) along with 23 bipartisan colleagues on March 7. As of press time, this resolution was about halfway to reaching 51—the number that reflects a majority of support in the Senate. At [nalc.org/legislation](http://nalc.org/legislation), you'll find the updated fact sheets that are helping your fellow letter carriers educate their members of Congress on our issues.

### Whitcomb appointed as inspector general

Late last year, the USPS BOG appointed Tammy Whitcomb as the third

inspector general of USPS. Whitcomb had been acting inspector general since February 2016, after

serving as deputy inspector general since November 2011. She previously served as the assistant inspector general for audit. Whitcomb joined the Postal Service in November 2005 as an audit director. Earlier, she worked in the office of the Treasury Inspector General.

### Legislation of note

Several bills of note have been introduced in this Congress. Below are several that are relevant to letter carriers, the federal workforce and labor.

#### H.R. 1—For the People Act of 2019

Introduced at the outset of the 116th Congress, H.R. 1 is the House Democrats' sweeping legislation that looks to reform voting rights, campaign finance reform, lobbying and government ethics, among other areas. The bill is mostly a symbolic display of Democratic priorities, as the bill is unlikely to become law due to Republican control of the Senate and White House. Of importance to letter carriers is language expanding no-excuse absentee voting (often referred to as "vote-by-mail") to the whole country.

#### H.R. 92, S. 26—Vote by Mail Act of 2019

Also on the first day of the 116th Congress, Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) reintroduced their vote-by-mail bills. These bills would expand vote-by-mail to all states without additional conditions or requirements, except a deadline for returning the ballots.

#### H.R. 138—Universal Right to Vote by Mail Act of 2019

Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA) reintroduced at the start of this Congress her bill to

address vote-by-mail, which would end state restrictions on a person's ability to vote by mail such as requiring proofs of health issues, religious restrictions, pregnancy status or vacations.

#### H.R. 597—Postal Employee Appeal Rights Amendments Act

On Jan. 26, Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) reintroduced his bill, which would extend federal employee protections against adverse personnel actions, to ensure that the right to appeal such actions to the Merit Systems Protection Board, to any employee of USPS not represented by a bargaining representative.

#### H.R. 748/S.—Middle Class Health Benefits Tax Repeal Act of 2019

Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT) introduced this bill on Jan. 24; it would repeal the 40 percent excise tax on certain employer-sponsored health insurance plans, frequently referred to as the "Cadillac Tax." Sens. Martin Heinrich (D-NM) and Mike Rounds (R-SD) introduced similar legislation to repeal the Cadillac Tax, which taxes high-cost health insurance plans and adversely affects middle-class health benefits.

#### H.R. 840—Veterans' Access to Child Care Act

Already passed in the House with overwhelming bipartisan support on Feb. 8, this bill, authored by Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA), would make the Department of Veteran Affairs' (VA) Child Care Pilot Program permanent and expand it so that military veterans across the country can have access to cost-free child care when they have VA medical appointments. Similar legislation has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA). Nearly a quarter of letter carriers are veterans.

#### H.R. 1254—Equal COLA Act

On Feb. 15, Rep. Connolly announced



While they were in Washington, DC, the Pennsylvania State Association held a veterans appreciation ceremony on March 18 to honor six members who are military veterans.

legislation focused on bringing equality to the way COLAs are made under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). The bill would ensure that all retirees under either system receive the same annual living adjustment. Currently, CSRS retirees receive a 2.8 percent COLA, whereas FERS retirees are capped at 2 percent. Only when annual COLAs fall below 2 percent are retirees paid the same.

**H.R. 1384—Medicare for All Act of 2019**  
On Feb. 27, Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) introduced this bill to create a universal, single-payer health program that would replace most current forms of health insurance except for the veterans' health program and the Indian Health Service. She was joined by 106 House Democrats co-sponsoring the legislation. NALC is currently reviewing the legislation to see what effect it might have on letter carriers, but it is unlikely the legislation will progress through both the House and

Senate, let alone be signed into law.

### In the media

President Rolando had a letter to the editor in the Feb. 11 *Belleville News-Democrat*, the largest newspaper in Southwestern Illinois. He informed readers about the value of USPS, responding to a letter the paper ran.

President Rolando also commented in a Feb. 8 Federal News Radio article, emphasizing the importance of addressing the pre-funding mandate. **PR**

## Legislative visits

More than 250 NALC members representing 25 states from across the South and West visited Washington, DC, Feb. 25-28 to lobby their representatives. Separately, letter carriers from Illinois (on March 5) and Pennsylvania (on March 18) went to Capitol Hill to stress the importance of strengthening the Postal Service.



Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA)



Rep. Emanuel Cleaver II (D-MO)



Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)



Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA)



Rep. Dave Loebsack (D-IA)



Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN)

