

# August is for action: Building support for the USPS Fairness Act



**Fredric V. Rolando**

House bill H.R. 2382).

**The USPS Fairness Act would repeal the retiree health pre-funding mandate Congress imposed on the Postal Service—and only the Postal Service—back in 2006.** Unlike other federal agencies and private companies that cover retiree health benefits costs as they occur (“pay as you go”), the Postal Service was forced to pre-fund decades of future retiree health benefits at the same time it was paying for current retirees’ health benefits. H.R. 2382 would end this unfairness.

The mandate, which has cost USPS an average of \$5.4 billion annually over the past dozen years, is the principal cause of the Postal Service’s perceived financial weakness in the recent past, accounting for 100 percent of its reported losses over the past six years. It’s grossly unfair to the Postal Service, its employees, its customers and to citizens we serve. Although NALC will continue to work with bipartisan allies in the House of Representatives on comprehensive postal reform legislation, enacting the USPS Fairness Act and repealing the mandate is the simplest way to stabilize the Postal Service’s finances and allow USPS to adapt to meet the evolving postal needs of our nation.

Our goal is to convince a majority of the House to co-sponsor the USPS Fairness Act. Since, as I write this, the bill already has 176 co-sponsors, we need to attract only 42 more representatives to reach our goal of a majority of 218 co-sponsors of H.R. 2382. If we did even better—raising the number to 290 co-sponsors—the bill would be automatically added to the House calendar for a floor vote.

**P**olitical Washington—the House, the Senate and the White House—traditionally shuts down for the month of August.

But this August recess, which this year spans six weeks, from July 27 to Sept. 8, will be busier than usual for NALC. In Washington, we will be hard at work negotiating the terms of a new collective-bargaining agreement with the Postal Service. Our current contract expires on Sept 20, 2019. And across the country, NALC branches and state associations will be mobilizing to build support for the USPS Fairness Act (also known as

**During August, our union activists at every level will be deployed in NALC’s campaign for the USPS Fairness Act.** At the national level, our headquarters staff will coordinate the campaign. At the regional level, our legislative and political organizers will work with our state associations and branches to mobilize letter carrier congressional liaisons and other legislative activists to contact and visit members of Congress or their staffers at their district offices to advocate for H.R. 2382.

And, most importantly, we will be urging all our members to do their part. Each one of you reading this column can help our cause. You don’t have to wait to be contacted by your steward or branch officers. You can take action on your own. It’s easy; just visit [nalc.org](http://nalc.org) and click on the link at the top of the home page. It will provide a link to H.R. 2382, where you can click on the list of co-sponsors to find out whether your representative is a co-sponsor. (If you don’t know who your member of Congress is, you can fill in your ZIP code to find out.) If he or she is not a co-sponsor, look up the district office phone numbers and call them.

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The message is simple: Please co-sponsor the USPS Fairness Act—H.R. 2382. If you live near a district office, schedule a meeting with your representative to talk about the bill. If possible, gather some family members, friends and co-workers to go with you. There is strength in numbers. You also can send a letter or a copy of this column to your member’s office with a note encouraging co-sponsorship of H.R. 2382.

Nothing moves a member of Congress more than hearing from the voters at home—old-fashioned grassroots lobbying is still the best tactic to achieve legislative change. If thousands of active and retired letter carriers each do just a little bit, we can accomplish a whole lot together. That is the power of solidarity.

**So please, take a few minutes to participate in our democracy and help win passage of the USPS Fairness Act.** Meanwhile, we will focus on negotiating the best contract possible here in Washington.