



News from Washington

USPS Fairness Act marks opportunity to address postal finances



When Reps. Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Tom Reed (R-NY), Xochitl Torres Small (D-NM) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) introduced the USPS Fairness Act (H.R. 2382) back in April, it provided a serious opportunity to substantially improve the financial situation at the U.S. Postal Service.

The USPS Fairness Act addresses the key issue behind the Postal Service's red ink: the pre-funding mandate. In 2006, Congress passed the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA), which mandated that USPS pre-fund decades' worth of health benefits for its future retirees. This mandate has created red ink for USPS at an average of \$5.4 billion annually since 2007; it is responsible for 92 percent of USPS losses over the last 12 years, and 100 percent of losses over the past six years. Were this burden not imposed, USPS would have recorded a surplus of nearly \$4 billion since 2013.

Repealing pre-funding, as the USPS Fairness Act would do, is key to achieving meaningful postal reform, freeing the Postal Service to invest in infrastructure and better utilizing its universal network to serve business and residential customers.

"These are bipartisan goals that can be achieved," NALC President Fredric Rolando said, "but we need to educate lawmakers on the importance of eliminating this mandate."

Resources on the NALC Government Affairs web page offer information on pre-funding and on H.R. 2382, including a fact sheet titled "Pre-funding."

Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle have signed on to H.R. 2382 as co-sponsors, but at least 218 are needed to reach the required majority support of the 435 House members. In fact, with the new House rules, legislation that

reaches 290 or more co-sponsors can be scheduled for a floor vote.

President Rolando has called on all NALC branches and state associations to make a sustained push over the August congressional recess to mobilize active and retired members of the NALC to contact their representatives in the House of Representatives and ask them to co-sponsor H.R. 2382. (See the President's Message on page 1.)

Even if the number of co-sponsors reaches 218, each additional representative increases the chances of passing this legislation through both chambers.

Letter carriers are encouraged to check NALC's Government Affairs "News & Updates" web page to see if their member of Congress has co-sponsored the bill (you can also check directly by going to Congress.gov and typing in "HR 2382" into the search bar). If your member is a co-sponsor, please take time to call his or her office or send a message expressing your thanks.

You can reach your representative's office by calling the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 (be prepared to provide your ZIP code to connect to your representative). Or you can look up their local district offices by visiting their websites on house.gov.

Four of five priority resolutions at majority of support

Thanks to the efforts of letter carriers nationwide, four of the five NALC priority resolutions have reached majority support in their respective chambers. Resolutions opposing postal privatization, supporting continued six-day delivery, and supporting door delivery are above 218 co-sponsors in the House or 51 co-sponsors in the Senate, which represent the majority in each chamber.

H. Res. 60, which calls for strong service standards, has yet to reach 218 co-sponsors. Check nalc.org for the latest numbers on each of these resolutions and for instructions on how to contact your lawmakers.

USPS Board of Governors nominees advance

In June, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) advanced the nomination of John McLeod Barger of California to be a governor of the United States Postal Service for a term expiring on Dec. 8, 2021.

Currently, the BOG has two governors—one from each party—which is well short of the normal nine governors. If confirmed, Barger, a Republican nominee, would add imbalance to the board. In addition, the nominations of Ron Bloom (D) and Roman Martinez (R), who advanced through the committee in May, are still pending. The committee has one other nomination to consider: Robert Duncan (R) for his second term on the board. NALC will continue to work with the Senate to ensure that there is balance on the Board of Governors.

House FSGG approved, Senate FSGG not yet introduced

At the end of June, the House of Representatives approved the \$24.6 billion fiscal year 2020 Financial Services and General Government (FSGG) appropriations bill, which has broad jurisdiction over agencies, including the U.S. Postal Service.

The bill preserved language supporting six-day delivery. Two postal-related amendments to expand financial services and to improve post office wait times also were included in the bill. Provisions also were put in place to

limit furloughs or reductions-in-force and to prohibit funding from the White House's proposal to merge the Office of Personnel Management with the General Services Administration or with the Office of Management and Budget. A series of other postal-related provisions made it into the bill's accompanying report, which are viewable on NALC's Government Affairs web page.

The Senate has yet to introduce its version of the legislation as appropriations bills are being held while negotiations continue on spending caps, though the six-day language is likely to be included as it has in recent years.

With lawmakers on August recess and the new fiscal year beginning on Oct. 1, time is running out for an on-time funding deal. In all likelihood, a short-term continuing resolution will be passed ahead of the deadline, to keep the government open while negotiations continue. However, the president has shown that he is willing to refuse short-term solutions in favor of shutting the government down and either furloughing federal employees or forcing them to work without pay, as he did in the longest-ever government shutdown from December 2018 to late January 2019.

In the media

NALC President Fredric Rolando's June 16 commentary piece in the *Morristown (TN) Citizen Tribune*, which discussed the value of the Postal Service and the need for the food drive while also addressing postal finances, responded to an editorial the paper ran in support of USPS.

President Rolando's June 15 letter to the editor in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* cited the actual source of the financial problems and the value of the Postal Service, rebutting a pro-privatization editorial by the paper. **PR**