



# News from Washington

## USPS Fairness Act surpasses 290 in House; introduced in Senate

**C**ongress returns from the holidays this month to begin the second session of the 116th Congress. The first session was an active one, with the House passing more than 430 bills and the Senate continuing to prioritize nominations. With the 2020 elections just 10 months away, it's expected that it will be a busy spring on Capitol Hill. NALC is hopeful that the second half of the 116th will see some activity beneficial to letter carriers, postal employees and federal workers, though election years can be tricky—many lawmakers focus on must-pass legislation, such as appropriations, when they aren't out campaigning for reelection. In the meantime, let's review the legislation, the accomplishments and the hangups of the last year.

### Postal activity

In early December, Sens. Steve Daines (R-MT) and Brian Schatz (D-HI) introduced the USPS Fairness Act (S. 2965), a bill to repeal the mandate to pre-fund postal retiree health benefits. The bill is identical to the House legislation (H.R. 2382) introduced earlier last year, which has reached a bipartisan super-majority by surpassing 290 co-sponsors. With the introduction of a Senate companion bill, there now is demonstrated bipartisan and bicameral support for repealing the mandate.

Repealing the pre-funding mandate is at the top of NALC's legislative agenda, as it will end an unsustainable and unfair financial burden and thereby free USPS to invest in its infrastructure, better utilize its vast networks to further serve business and residential customers, and serve as a key step in achieving future postal reform.

"Pre-funding repeal is the key to

achieving postal reform, and letter carriers should celebrate the accomplishment of surpassing 290 co-sponsors in the House," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "While our focus remains on increasing the number of co-sponsors on the House bill, we will provide more information on what NALC members can do to build support for the Senate bill in the near future."

Additionally, in December, the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) issued a revised proposed rulemaking regarding the system for setting postage rates of the Postal Service's Market Dominant products. The PRC proposal eliminates the previously proposed "CPI+2 percentage points" per year cap in favor of a CPI price cap with an annual adjustment for changes in delivery "density"—which would allow the Postal Service to raise rates further if mail volume and revenues fall while the number of delivery points increases. It also tweaked its original proposal to give the Postal Service the authority to raise rates by an additional one percentage point above the CPI if it meets certain efficiency and service quality targets. NALC is studying the potential effects of the proposed system and will fully participate in this process to strengthen the nation's universal postal network.

This past year, significant strides were made on our priority resolutions with record numbers of bipartisan House co-sponsors for door delivery and six-day mail delivery, and for anti-privatization of the Postal Service in both the House and Senate. Restoration of service standards still lags behind the levels of previous Congresses and has yet to surpass 218 co-sponsors, the number needed for a majority in the House.

In August, Ashley Poling and Ann C. Fisher were confirmed to be commis-

sioners at the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC); Ron Bloom, Roman Martinez IV and John Barger were confirmed to the Postal Board of Governors (BOG); and in early December, current chairman of the BOG Robert M. Duncan was confirmed to his second term at the board. With these confirmations, the PRC is fully staffed and there are enough members on the BOG to achieve a quorum for the first time since 2014. NALC expects more nominations in 2020, as four vacancies remain on the BOG.

Other important legislation to letter carriers includes the Social Security Fairness Act of 2019 (H.R. 141/S. 521) and the Federal Retirement Fairness Act of 2019 (H.R. 2478), both of which continued to add co-sponsors through December. NALC fully supports both pieces of legislation and hope a consensus may be reached in Congress that leads to their eventual passage in 2020.

The bipartisan Know Your Social Security Act (H.R. 5306), which would reinstate the printing and mailing of the annual Social Security statement until such time as a wage earner selects to receive it by electronic delivery, was unanimously approved in December in the House Ways and Means Committee. The Coalition for Paper Options, of which NALC is a member, supports this legislation and is encouraged by the growing support in Congress for this bill.

### Other activity of note

There was other significant legislative action for federal workers, the broader U.S. workforce and the country at large.

The Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act compromise between the chairmen and ranking members of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees in Decem-

The USPS revealed two additions to the 2020 Stamp Program: Grand Island Ice Caves and Big Bend. These stamps are a convenient way for customers to pay for Priority Mail and Priority Mail Express Flat Rate shipping with a single stamp.



ber produced a \$738 billion defense policy bill with far-reaching provisions. Among these provisions was language to provide 12 weeks of paid parental leave to the federal workforce and a pay raise for military members.

A deal was announced between congressional leadership and the White House on the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), a trade agreement replacement for the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement

(NAFTA). Both the White House and Congress, Republicans and Democrats, are claiming victory with the revised plan. Of note, the new deal includes significant improvements to labor provisions over the administration's initial proposal. As this issue went to press, the House is set to take up the deal in a vote, while Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has said that the Senate would not consider the deal until the new year.

### Budget activity

As this issue of *The Postal Record* was going to print, Congress was working to meet the Dec. 20 deadline to pass a long-term spending deal through the end of Fiscal Year 2020 or pass a temporary measure to complete work on long-term funding. Be sure to check the NALC Government Affairs webpage for the latest information on FY 2020 and FY 2021. **PR**

## Customer Connect adds up for USPS

**B**y touching every address in the United States at least six days a week, letter carriers naturally develop special relationships with their customers. Since USPS's Customer Connect program began in 2003, thousands of carriers have successfully leveraged their interactions with business customers to encourage them to use the Postal Service, rather than rely on private delivery and mailing services. Below are some recent stories about Customer Connect leads submitted by letter carriers that have helped USPS earn new revenue.

### Business expansions also expand USPS's bottom line



William Prezkuta

In a conversation with one of his longtime customers, Long Island Merged, NY Branch 6000 member **William Prezkuta** learned that the business owner was expanding into a new business venture. But

instead of just continuing with small talk, the carrier saw an opportunity for the Postal Service.

Prezkuta asked the customer if, given the increased amount of shipping he was going to generate with the expansion, he would like to speak with a USPS sales representative. When the owner seemed interested, the carrier took down his contact information. Prezkuta later passed that information to his postmaster as a Customer Connect lead.

After a sales representative presented the store owner with explanations about the various benefits that the Postal Service can provide to its customers, the owner agreed to use USPS for his new business as well. The opportunity to save money, eliminate surcharges and facilitate his personal business needs proved to be persuasive.

Prezkuta's ability to turn a casual conversation into a fruitful partnership generated more than \$526,840 in new estimated revenue for USPS.

Another carrier had the same idea about turning a business expansion into an opportunity for the Postal Service. Uniontown, PA Branch 520 member **Virginia Glisan** was speaking to one of her customers, the owner of a local auto shop, when he mentioned that he was looking to increase business in the area.

The carrier didn't let this comment

go by—instead, she explained about the USPS benefit of Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM). EDDM is designed to help local small businesses with affordable targeted advertising. When Glisan walked the All Care Auto owner through how convenient and easy the process was, he agreed to meet with a USPS sales representative.

When the carrier got back to the post office, she filled out a lead card and gave it to her postmaster. From there, and armed with the knowledge Glisan

had found out about the expansion, the sales team was able to convince All Care Auto to use EDDM for its new business needs. Similarly to Prezkuta's situation, the success of the sale depended on Glisan's willingness to go the extra mile for her customer, and tailor her sales talk to the store's needs.

Thanks to Glisan's connection, her lead generated nearly \$1,000 in new estimated revenue for the Postal Service. **PR**



Virginia Glisan