



News from Washington

House introduces fourth COVID-19 stimulus package; poll shows support for USPS; new postmaster general chosen

As the country continues to adapt to the “new normal” caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress is adjusting to legislating under conditions that are uncertain and changing from week to week. Since March, both the House and Senate have operated for brief periods in Washington, with extended work periods back home in their districts or states to maintain social-distancing requirements. Offices on Capitol Hill and back home have been largely vacated, with staff working remotely. Unfortunately, Congress wasn’t built for remote operations, and the result has been to create an uncertain legislative calendar with a focus on what is needed to keep the country afloat during this time of crisis.

House introduces fourth relief package while Senate hits pause

With three COVID-19-related relief packages in the rearview mirror, on May 15 House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D-NY) introduced a fourth assistance package: the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions, or “HEROES” Act (H.R. 6800).

With regard to the Postal Service, the \$3 trillion package provides \$25 billion in direct appropriations to USPS to help it weather this storm, in addition to the removal of restrictions placed in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act on the \$10 billion in USPS borrowing authority from the U.S. Treasury. Also included in the package is the creation of a “Heroes Fund,” which would provide hazard or premium pay for essential front-line workers, including letter car-

riers and other postal employees. That pay—\$13 per hour—would be capped at a maximum of \$10,000.

“These provisions are an improvement and a first step in keeping the Postal Service stable,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. NALC continues to call attention to the need for relief for the duration of the crisis to cover the difference between postage revenues and total USPS expenses, as well as a mechanism to reimburse the Postal Service for the cost of COVID-19-related leave.

Among the general provisions also included in the legislation are measures to provide a second round of \$1,200 direct payments to individual Americans; require an enforceable safety standard governing infectious diseases, within seven days of passage, from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA); provide additional support to small businesses and non-profits; preserve health coverage for those who are at risk of losing their employer-provided health insurance; and extend unemployment benefits.

These provisions are in addition to \$1 trillion in funding for state and local governments struggling from the rising essential workforce costs and shrinking tax revenues. These developments are threatening the jobs of many essential workers across the country, including medical personnel, first responders and teachers. That funding is divided into three categories: for states, counties and municipalities.

On the issue of voter protection and accessibility during the pandemic, the stimulus package would require that all registered voters be provided access to absentee ballots to vote by mail in the November 2020 general election.

It also seeks to improve the safety of in-person voting by expanding early voting in the fall. Toward these ends, it provides \$3.6 billion in state grants. Recent negative comments from the Trump administration about vote-by-mail have elevated the issue and could lead to contention in negotiations on the final package down the line. NALC is not actively lobbying on this issue; we are focused entirely on securing congressional funding for the Postal Service so the agency and letter carriers can continue to provide essential service to the American public.

Letter carriers answer the call to action: With all of the negotiations on Capitol Hill, the importance of engaging and educating lawmakers never has been greater. Letter carriers around the country have answered the call to action by keeping in regular contact with their senators and representatives over the course of the last two-and-a-half months. More than 110,000 actions (including phone calls, emails and letters) have been initiated by letter carriers urging lawmakers to support immediate and ongoing financial relief for the Postal Service until this crisis is over.

“The importance of these actions cannot be overstated but our fight is far from over,” President Rolando said. “Letter carriers should be proud of their hard work as we continue to fight for the future of one of our nation’s most treasured institutions.”

Lawmakers echo need for relief: Thankfully, letter carriers are not alone in this fight. The American public is firmly on the side of the U.S. Postal Service, as multiple polls (see below) and articles have shown in recent weeks and months. That support is not lost on Capitol Hill. Numerous letters have been sent from representatives

and senators to their congressional leaders and the administration urging financial relief for USPS, including letters from a bipartisan group of 10 senators led by Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Susan Collins (R-ME); a group of 122 representatives led by Rep. Emanuel Cleaver II (D-MO); a bipartisan group of 21 members of the New York congressional delegation; a group of 26 Republican lawmakers led by Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA); a group of 58 members led by Reps. Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ) and Raul Grijalva (D-AZ); a group of 30 senators led by Sen. Tom Udall (D-NM); and a group of four bipartisan members, made up of Reps. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Pete King (R-NY), Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Mark Amodei (R-NV), who, in addition to pushing for financial relief for USPS in their letter to congressional leadership, also formed the Postal Preservation Caucus, which is committed to saving the agency, and invited their fellow members to join the new caucus.

Poll shows American public supports direct funding to USPS

On May 1, the GOP-affiliated North Star Opinion Research and the Democratic-affiliated Hart Research Associates, two leading public opinion polling firms, released the findings of a national poll of registered voters (viewable on the NALC website) about the importance of the continued operation and funding of the Postal Service during this pandemic. The results of the NALC-commissioned poll show overwhelming support for USPS across party affiliations and geographic regions, with 92 percent of respondents favoring congressional appropriation of funds in the

next relief package to sustain the Postal Service through the coronavirus crisis—that includes 90 percent of Republicans, 96 percent of Democrats and 90 percent of rural voters. The results reflect a broad consensus that the mail and package service provided by the Postal Service is important, a sentiment shared by 94 percent of those polled—including 95 percent of Midwesterners, 95 percent of Democrats, 92 percent of Republicans, 91 percent of Independents and 94 percent of rural voters.

To support NALC's continued efforts, letter carriers should continue contacting their senators and representatives to urge support for funding in the final draft of the new assistance package. Let lawmakers know that the Postal Service enjoys overwhelming public support for emergency funding, as it carries out its mission—which never has been more important than it is now. You can take action by visiting the Legislative Action Center on the NALC website.

New postmaster general

The Postal Board of Governors (BOG) announced the choice of a new postmaster general on May 6. Louis DeJoy will succeed outgoing PMG Megan Brennan, and is expected to begin serving in his new role on June 15. He is the first PMG in more than 20 years to not rise through the ranks of the Postal Service. Mr DeJoy currently is president of LDJ Global Strategies, a real estate development, private equity and consulting company based in Greensboro, NC. He also serves as the lead fundraiser for the Republican National Convention. Prior to that, he spent more than 30 years as a highly successful CEO in the logistics field.

On May 7, President Rolando congratulated Louis DeJoy on his appointment as the 75th postmaster general. We say, again, that the National Association of Letter Carriers is committed to working in good faith with him to build a relationship based on mutual trust



Postmaster General Louis DeJoy

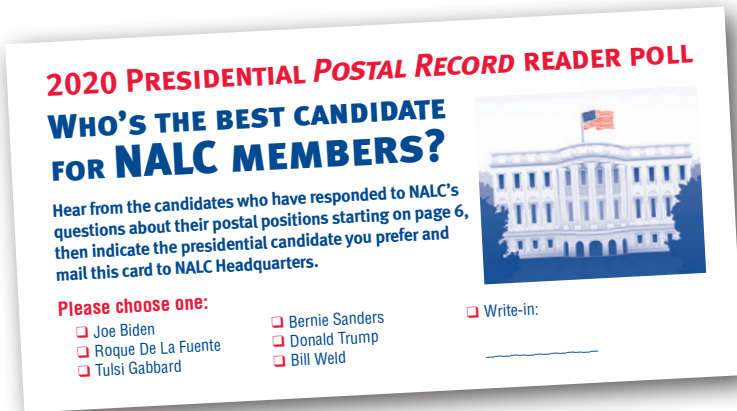
and a shared vision for the future of the Postal Service. This shared vision should embrace a strategy to grow as a public institution that values its employees and that works with its unions to promote high-quality service, safety, efficiency and a workplace culture of mutual respect. We look forward to seeing whether his agenda is indeed consistent with this vision.

The selection of the new PMG followed the unexpected resignation of Board of Governors Vice Chairman David Williams on April 30. It is reported that Governor Williams resigned in protest over the Treasury Department's inappropriate meddling in the management of the Postal Service. We had recently written to the Board members urging them to resist such meddling, and we ask the same of the new postmaster general.

Soon after the appointment of DeJoy, Deputy Postmaster General Ron Stroman announced that he would step down in June, capping four decades of public service. NALC congratulated Williams, Brennan and Stroman and wished them well in the future.

Results of NALC presidential postcard survey

With the November election just around the corner, NALC continues



ment, we can report that questionnaires have been completed and published, a public

index to include many more countries, including Canada, China and numerous other “emerging market” economies. Most 401(k) plans in the private sector have adopted the broader index and the FRTIB generally seeks to give federal employees and annuitants the same investment options that other Americans have.

to monitor federal races around the country as well as the upcoming presidential race. With so much at stake for letter carriers and our employer, NALC is paying close attention to which candidates will put the interests of letter carriers first. As we weigh an endorse-

ment, we can report that questionnaires have been completed and published, a public opinion poll of our membership has been conducted and, now, NALC presidential postcards have been returned.

The results of the NALC presidential postcard poll from our members are as follows:

Candidate	Cards	Percent
Biden	3,982	58.4
Trump	1,814	26.6
Sanders	740	10.8
Other	208	3.0
None	69	1.0
	6,813	99.8

Nominating new FRTIB members is the right of the president, though we hope that the new board members would remain non-partisan and independent, serving only the interests of the TSP’s participants and beneficiaries.

However, the intervention by Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia is not appropriate. In a letter sent on May 11 to the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board, Scalia stated that, “at the direction of President Trump, the board is to immediately halt all steps associated with investing the I Fund according to the [new index], and to reverse its decision to invest plan assets on the basis of that international equities index.” The Labor Department has no legal authority to direct the FRTIB’s actions; it serves only as the TSP’s auditor under the law.

Pandemic alters schedule for Nolan interest arbitration

The interest arbitration hearings to resolve the impasse in collective bargaining between the Postal Service and NALC over a new National Agreement have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In February, Arbitrator Dennis Nolan agreed to serve as the neutral chairman of a three-member arbitration board. Arbitrator Nolan then provided available hearing dates during the months of May, June and July. Unfortunately, the onset of the pandemic has made it impossible to proceed with the hearing schedule. As the public crisis extended into the spring, Arbitrator Nolan provided available dates in the fall to replace the May dates. In early May, NALC was forced to reschedule the June and July dates as well. Under the new schedule, hearings will begin in late September and continue through November. **PR**

TSP nomination and FRTIB update

On May 4, the White House announced three nominations to the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board (FRTIB) to replace three of its five current members. The nominees are Christopher Bancroft Burnham, Frank Dunlevy and John Barger, who also is a current member of the U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors. The board governs the federal government’s Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), which controls about \$700 billion in assets and is drawn from the 5.5 million employees of the federal government.

The sudden nominations were prompted by a political dispute over whether the TSP’s International stock index fund should be allowed to invest in Chinese companies. The current board decided earlier this year to expand the number of countries included in the International (I) Fund’s

As this issue went to press, the FRTIB announced that it would suspend its plan to broaden the I Fund’s tracking index to allow the new board members to weigh in on this issue once they are confirmed by the Senate. ETAC and the Federal Postal Coalition have called on Sen. Ron Johnson, chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, to forgo the expedited process allowed for FRTIB nominations. We urged him to schedule confirmation hearings so that the nominees can be properly vetted, and so that the principle of the Board’s independence can be re-established. **PR**