



News from Washington

Senate confirms two Postal Service Board of Governor nominees

May was a busy month on Capitol Hill on postal issues with two bills seeing action (see page 6) and two of three postal nominations advancing.

On May 13, the Senate approved the nominations of Amber McReynolds and Ronald Stroman to serve on the U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors (BOG). McReynolds will hold a term that expires on Dec. 8, 2026, and Stroman's term will expire on Dec. 8, 2028. These confirmations are effective immediately and will fill two of three vacant BOG seats.

The Senate vote on a third nominee, Anton Hajjar, is still pending.

McReynolds is one of the country's leading experts on election administration/policy and is co-author of the book *When Women Vote*. She is chief executive officer of the National Vote at Home Institute and Coalition and the former director of elections for Denver, CO, where she developed one of the nation's most sophisticated vote-by-mail systems.

Stroman is the former deputy postmaster general and chief government relations officer for the Postal Service. He retired in 2020. Prior to joining USPS, Stroman worked on Capitol Hill, serving the House's Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the House Judiciary Committee. In addition, he served in the Department of Transportation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Stroman also led the Biden-Harris transition team for the Postal Service, which included NALC Chief of Staff Jim Sauber.

Hajjar is the former general counsel of the American Postal Workers Union. Hajjar's experience includes pro bono representation of victims of employment discrimination, including Arab and Muslim Americans after the Sept. 11 terrorist



Ronald Stroman



Amber McReynolds



Anton Hajjar



Kiran Ahuja

attacks. He currently serves on the American Law Institute's governing board.

On April 28, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs (HSGAC) advanced the nominations of Hajjar, McReynolds and Stroman for the BOG and Kiran Ahuja as director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

In his opening statement, Hajjar referenced the opportunities within USPS to grow business and improve service for the American people. McReynolds mentioned the crucial role USPS plays in our democracy by delivering ballots and emphasized that universal service obligation is a top priority. Stroman spoke about the commitment and resilience of USPS employees, his experience with the Postal Service, and his goal to work in a bipartisan manner to restore financial stability, improve operations and grow business for USPS.

"The Postal Service and its dedicated workers continue facing unique challenges that have been compounded by the ongoing pandemic," HSGAC Chairman Gary Peters (D-MI) said. "It is essential that nominees to the Board of Governors are qualified leaders who will focus on service, and work with Congress to ensure our postal workforce has the right support to deliver for the American people each and every day."

HSGAC Ranking Member Rob Port-

man (R-OH) also emphasized the important role of the BOG. "Providing high-quality mail and package services to all Americans remains vital," he said. "If confirmed, you have a challenging road ahead, and I hope you will work closely with us, and your colleagues already on the Board, to see it through."

During the hearing, the nominees were questioned on a range of topics including declining service quality, the universal service obligation, and opportunities for enhancements and innovations within USPS.

The three nominees agreed that improving service was one of their top priorities, and they committed to working with the BOG and Congress to do so if confirmed. The nominees reiterated their commitment to working with the postmaster general, the BOG and stakeholders to improve service.

Ahuja, an attorney who served as chief of staff to the OPM director from 2015 to 2017 and spent six years as director of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, was also questioned during the hearing. If confirmed, Ahuja would lead OPM, the federal agency that provides human resources policy and manages health care, life insurance, and retirement benefits for federal employees and retirees.

Regarding postal employees, Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE) asked Ahuja to

commit to reviewing a recommendation to adopt private-sector pension allocation for USPS if confirmed. NALC supports this change.

The nominees received the support of all Democratic committee members. Hajjar, Reynolds and Stroman all received support from Portman while McReynolds and Stroman received support from Sen. Mitt Romney (R-UT). Ahjula's nomination, which received no support from Republicans, will go to the full Senate for a confirmation vote.

"NALC congratulates McReynolds and Stroman on their confirmations to these important positions," said NALC President Fredric Rolando. "A fully functioning Postal Board of Governors and competent leadership at the OPM are critical for letter carriers and other postal employees. We look forward to working with them and the rest of the BOG to ensure that letter carriers have a voice when decisions affecting their interests are made."

White House releases the American Families Plan

On April 28, the White House released the American Families Plan, a \$1 trillion plan that seeks to increase access to education, provide paid family and medical leave, and make health care and child care more affordable and more accessible. The American Families Plan is the second major part of President Joe Biden's economic recovery plan, following the American Jobs Plan released March 31.

As it relates to letter carriers, the plan calls for a new national program providing paid family and medical leave for all workers. By Year 10 of the program, the \$225 billion investment would guarantee workers 12 weeks of paid leave with payments of up to \$4,000 a

month for leave required to care for a child, an ill family member, personal illness and other such circumstances.

Overall, the plan expands the scope of universal public education by proposing \$200 billion for free preschool and \$109 billion for two years of tuition-free community college. It also would invest \$85 billion in Pell grants. The plan includes investment in child care, ensuring that lower- and middle-income families would spend no more than 7 percent of their income on child care. Additionally, the proposal includes \$45 billion for nutrition programs, including free and reduced-price meals for children across the country.

The plan makes permanent elements of the short-term American Rescue Plan passed in March, including the child tax credit, the dependent tax credit and the earned income tax credit. It also proposes lowering health care premiums for those covered by Obamacare exchanges.

The White House proposes funding the American Families Plan with tax increases for high-income Americans that would raise \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years. The plan would raise the top income tax rate from 37 percent to 39.6 percent, reversing a portion of the 2017 tax cuts implemented by the previous administration. The tax increases would not affect anyone earning less than \$400,000 per year. The plan also proposes full funding of the Internal Revenue Service to improve tax enforcement and auditing on the wealthiest Americans, which the White House projects would raise \$700 billion over the next decade.

The American Families Plan is an ambitious proposal, and it is up to the House and Senate to craft legislation that reflects the administration's initia-

tives. Partisan tensions remain high in Congress, and White House officials have reiterated that President Biden is open to discussing ideas on how to fund and invest in programs in the plan.

"NALC appreciates President Biden's efforts to strengthen America's social safety net, which has been seriously weakened by state-level cuts over the past several decades," President Rolando said. "We look forward to working with both parties in Congress on legislation inspired by his plan that would improve the lives of our nation's workers and their families."

Paid family and medical leave bill introduced in Senate

On April 15, Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) introduced the Comprehensive Paid Leave for Federal Employees Act (S. 1158) in the Senate. The bill, which mirrors H.R. 564, introduced by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) in the House in January, would provide up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave for federal employees, including Postal Service employees.

A similar bill, the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act, previously passed in the House during the 116th Congress, but the Senate narrowed the legislation to 12 weeks of paid parental leave, which ultimately did not include USPS employees.

Employees could use the paid leave for personal illness, caring for a family member, or time off work needed for a family member leaving or returning from active military duty. Currently, federal employees are entitled to 12 weeks of leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act for such reasons, but they are not guaranteed paid leave.

NALC will continue to monitor this legislation and will update letter carriers on any future actions. **PR**