



News from Washington

White House releases FY 2022 budget request outline

The White House released its Fiscal Year 2022 (FY 2022) budget outline on April 9. The budget proposal reflects the priorities of the administration, but it must be reviewed and approved by Congress, which controls the budget and appropriations process. As is customary with presidential first-year budget requests, the outline lacks certain specifics. Later this spring, the White House will release a more detailed presidential budget request as Congress begins the budget and appropriations process.

Regarding the Postal Service, the outline reiterates the administration's priority of securing electric vehicles and specifically increasing "demand for American made, zero-emission vehicles through federal procurement." The budget request includes \$600 million for electric vehicles and the development of charging stations for 18 federal agencies and USPS. (For more information on Postal Service vehicles, see page 22.)

Notably, in contrast to presidential budget requests over the past four years that have proposed reducing or eliminating retirement benefits, increasing employees' share of health benefits and other changes to Postal Service operations, this first Biden administration budget includes no such cuts.

Overall, the budget outline includes more than \$1.5 trillion in discretionary spending for FY 2022. This includes \$769 billion in domestic spending, a 16 percent increase from FY 2021, and \$753 billion in defense spending, a 1.7 percent increase. The proposal focuses on funding medical research, education, housing, reducing gun violence and climate change, and

more. It focuses these efforts through increased funding to federal agencies, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development (15 percent increase), the Department of Education (41 percent increase) and the Department of Justice (5.3 percent increase).

House passes bill to protect organizing rights

On March 9, the House of Representatives passed the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act (H.R. 842), which offers protections for the rights of workers the right to organize and bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions.

H.R. 842 passed by a vote of 225-206 with five Republicans—Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (PA), Don Young (AK), John Katko (NY), Chris Smith (NJ) and Jeff Van Drew (NJ)—joining a majority of Democrats. Rep. Henry Cuellar (TX) was the only Democrat who voted against the measure. H.R. 842 was introduced by Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA) and 195 original co-sponsors in the House, and by Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) and 44 original co-sponsors in the Senate.

The PRO Act supports the workers' right to strike for basic workplace improvements, including higher wages and better working conditions. It would create a mediation and arbitration process to ensure that corporations and newly formed unions reach a first contract, would authorize unions and employers to negotiate agreements that allow unions to collect fair-share fees that cover the costs of representation, and would protect the integrity of union elections against coercive "captive audience" meetings. The PRO Act also would streamline the National Labor

Relation Board's (NLRB) procedures to secure worker rights and effectively prevent violations by establishing penalties on corporations that violate those rights and by combatting misclassification of workers as supervisors and independent contractors.

"NALC appreciates the 225 bipartisan members of Congress who demonstrated their support for basic worker protections," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. In addition to lobbying for passage of the legislation, NALC sent a letter to the House in support of this important legislation.

"While NALC is an open shop with over 93 percent voluntary membership, we do not take our success in organizing for granted," Rolando wrote in the letter. "To protect our rights, we all know that all workers must enjoy a real right to organize, not just a theoretical right to do so. We stand in solidarity with the millions of workers and their families whom this legislation will benefit."

President Biden has said he would sign the PRO Act, but the legislation now must be considered by the Senate, where 60 votes will be needed to advance the bill the president's desk.

NALC is participating in lobbying efforts in the Senate and will continue to lobby for enactment of this important legislation to ensure all workers have the right to organize.

Public Servants Protection and Fairness Act introduced in House

On April 1, Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA), chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, reintroduced the Public Servants Protection and Fairness Act (H.R. 2337), which would create an equitable Social Security formula and

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka speaks during a February 2020 press conference advocating for the passage of the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act.



provide relief to public employees and retirees who were negatively affected by the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). H.R. 2337 has 136 Democrat co-sponsors and is identical to a previous bill introduced by Neal in the last Congress.

The WEP, intended to equalize benefits for workers with similar earning histories both in and out of the Social Security system, has unfairly penalized many public employees, including some postal employees. This bill provides a measure of relief to current Social Security beneficiaries affected by WEP by providing them with an additional \$150 per month. Future retirees also would be eligible for the new formula, which calculates benefit amounts based on the proportion of lifetime earnings covered by Social Security. The bill includes other protections, among them are benefit guarantees and improved language to ensure that future benefit amounts are clear.

While NALC supports the full repeal of WEP and the Government Pension Offset that is included in the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82), NALC appreciates Chairman Neal's legislation to partially address the WEP.

Biden announces infrastructure and jobs plan

The White House released the American Jobs Plan, a \$2 trillion, eight-year plan to invest in the nation's infrastructure, on March 31. The plan seeks to boost capacity in several sectors, including transportation, renewable energy, manufacturing, caregiving and local governments, while combating climate change and strengthening worker protections. It

also reinforces existing "Buy America" provisions and urges the use of unions while embracing the PRO Act.

President Biden's plan has some provisions that relate directly to the Postal Service. The plan restates the administration's priority of embracing electric vehicles and calls for "using the vast tools of federal procurement to electrify the federal fleet, including the United States Postal Service." The plan also includes a target of 500,000 new electric charging stations by 2030. The Postal Service recently announced a contract with Oshkosh Defense that would partially satisfy this electrification goal (see page 22).

With respect to investing in Postal Service facilities and equipment, the plan is silent; however, Biden emphasized the need to invest in retrofitting federal buildings. NALC has advocated for federal investment in core Postal Service infrastructure, including facilities, equipment and vehicles. That investment would enable the Postal Service to better serve the needs of the public while also creating good union jobs for building trades and other industries.

Overall, President Biden's plan calls for \$620 billion to improve highways, bridges, airports and public transit systems. Additionally, the plan includes \$300 billion for domestic manufacturing and \$100 billion for workforce development programs, including training programs for those

who have lost jobs. The plan also includes \$100 billion for an improved electric grid, \$45 billion for clean water across the country and \$100 billion to set up high-speed broadband internet nationwide. Other funding is included for new affordable housing, improved public school buildings and Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals.

Biden proposes to pay for the American Jobs Plan with an increase in the corporate tax rate and an increase in the global minimum tax rate paid by U.S. corporations earned from overseas. Americans earning more than \$400,000 also would pay higher taxes. In effect, the plan partially repeals the previous administration's massive tax cuts for big business and the wealthiest taxpayers.

Following the announcement of the American Jobs Plan, it will be up to the House and Senate to craft legislation that reflects the administration's priorities and pass it in the House and Senate, where partisan tensions are high, especially over additional government spending during a pandemic and the raising of taxes.

NALC's priority remains working with Congress and the administration on efforts to bring financial stability to the Postal Service. As such, NALC encourages Congress to include funding to make much-needed investments in the Postal Service's vast infrastructure network. NALC looks forward to working with Congress on these efforts. **PR**