



News from Washington

Congress expected to be busy in buildup to fall elections

In January, members of Congress returned to Capitol Hill to begin the second session of the 117th Congress. During the first session, key pieces of legislation were passed, including the American Rescue Plan, which provided COVID-19 relief, and the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which is a critical part of President Joe Biden's Build Back Better agenda and which involves a \$1.2 trillion investment in the nation's roads, bridges, airports, transit, rail, broadband, electric charging stations, power grid modernization and clean drinking water. The Build Back Better Act, a second key portion of the administration's agenda, passed in the House during the first session, but negotiations regarding the \$1.75 trillion social spending and tax package remain ongoing in the Senate.

With the fall midterm elections looming, this is expected to be a busy season on Capitol Hill.

At the start of the second session, with the Build Back Better Act facing some roadblocks, Democratic leadership has prioritized voting rights legislation. Nineteen states have passed 34 pieces of legislation that make it more difficult to vote, including limiting voting by mail, which allowed 54 million voters to vote safely in the November 2020 election.

Legislation that protects and secures voting rights, such as the For the People Act (H.R. 1) and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (H.R. 4), has passed in the House but has been repeatedly blocked in the Senate by Republicans because of the filibuster, a Senate rule that requires 60 votes to advance legislation. In a 50-50 evenly divided Senate, passing this legislation would require a rule

change to the filibuster. To get this legislation through Congress and to the president's desk, the Senate currently is working on a rule change that would eliminate the filibuster, which President Biden has openly supported, but to which two Democratic senators have announced their opposition.

President Biden said that even if these measures continued to fail in the Senate, he would keep fighting for voting rights. "As long as I have breath in me, as long as I'm in the White House, as long as I'm engaged at all, I'm going to be fighting [for these measures]," he said.

NALC recently partnered with the AFL-CIO and other local affiliates to encourage senators to pass this critical voting rights legislation.

Postal reform

As this issue of *The Postal Record* was going to print, the bipartisan Postal Service Reform Act (H.R. 3076) was being scheduled for a House floor vote. Following House passage, the Senate is expected to expedite Senate floor consideration of the measure before the legislative calendar winds down for the midterm elections in November. NALC encourages letter carriers to continue building support for the Postal Service Reform Act (H.R. 3076 and S. 1720).

For more information, visit the Government Affairs section on nalc.org.

White House partners with USPS to deliver at-home COVID-19 tests

In early January, the Biden Administration announced that it would partner with the Postal Service to mail free, at-home rapid COVID-19 tests to Americans in an effort to make testing accessible to families amid a shortage of testing options in communities nationwide.

On Jan. 15, the administration said that four days later it would launch covidtests.gov, where each household can request up to four free tests, which would be expected to ship within 12 days. The tests will be sent through First Class Package Service, and the administration plans to prioritize distribution to communities that have limited access to testing and that also are high-risk.

Five hundred million tests were to be made available on Jan. 19, and the White House planned to procure an additional 500 million at-home tests, bringing the total number of free tests being made available to one billion. The White House also planned to launch a call-in line for households to request these tests—as this publication was going to print, the number had not yet been made public.

"The ongoing pandemic has proven beyond a shadow of doubt the critical importance of the services we provide six and seven days a week to keep people connected and essentials moving," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "This partnership is the perfect example in action. Letter carriers are proud to be the face of this important initiative as we continue serving all communities equitably."

Postal Board of Governors selects chairman and vice chairman

On Jan. 12, the Postal Service Board of Governors (BOG) unanimously selected Roman Martinez, a Republican, to serve as chairman and Anton Hajjar, a Democrat, as vice chairman.

After the administration declined to nominate then-Chairman Ron Bloom, a Democrat, to another term in December, Vice Chairman Martinez served as acting chairman. Also in December, the administration declined

to nominate Republican John Barger to another term. The administration nominated two new governors to replace Bloom and Barger; Dan Tangherlini, a Democrat, and Derek Kan, a Republican, who are both awaiting Senate consideration for confirmation.

As required by the Postal Reorganization Act, the president nominates members of the nine-member BOG, which is responsible for overseeing the executive management of the Postal Service. By law, no more than five members can be affiliated with the same political party.

NALC will continue to update letter carriers as nominations and other changes to the BOG occur.

Supreme Court rules on OSHA vaccine and testing rule

It was announced on Jan. 13, as this magazine was going to press, that the Supreme Court had blocked the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) on COVID-19 vaccine and testing. This rule required workers at businesses with more than 100 employees, including the Postal Service, to get vaccinated or comply with weekly testing. The rule, a push from the administration to get more Americans vaccinated, would have affected more than 80 million workers.

The case reached the Supreme Court after 26 business groups and 27 Republican-led states sued to challenge the OSHA policy.

On Jan. 4, the Postal Service requested temporary variance from OSHA that would have delayed implementation of the OSHA ETS for 120 days. At press time, the Supreme Court's ruling appears to have rendered that request moot.

While the broader OSHA rule that would have affected millions of workers was blocked, the Supreme Court upheld a separate rule that requires healthcare workers at facilities that receive Medicaid and Medicare funds to get vaccinated. **PR**

Deadlines set for national convention

Delegate eligibility lists for the 72nd biennial national convention in Chicago this summer are being mailed to all branches this month. The lists must be completed and returned to Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine's office at NALC Headquarters no later than June 8 in order for branch representatives to be registered as delegates to the convention. The convention is set for Aug. 8-12, 2022.

All proposed amendments to the *NALC Constitution* to be submitted for consideration at the convention must be received by Rhine's office by June 8 as well. That date is 60 days in advance of the convention, as prescribed by the *NALC Constitution*. Proposed amendments will appear in July's *Postal Record* for the membership to review.

Resolutions to be considered by delegates also must be received by the June 8 deadline in order to

be printed in the *Resolutions and Amendments* book provided to delegates. Resolutions received after June 8 still may be considered at the convention.

Branches wishing to sell items in the designated branch sales area

during the convention must contact Rhine's office to secure guidelines and forms. The completed forms must be returned to Headquarters by June 8, as well.

Go to nalc.org for more convention news. **PR**

COLA: Cost-of-living adjustment

- ▶ Following the release of the December consumer price index (CPI), the fifth cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) under the 2019-2023 National Agreement is projected to be **\$957 annually**. This COLA is based on the change in the CPI from the base index month to January 2022, with the previous four COLAs subtracted.
- ▶ The 2023 projected COLAs for the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), which are based on the

CPI's increase between the third quarter of 2021 and third quarter of 2022, is **2.1 percent** and will be finalized with the publication of the September 2022 CPI in October 2022.

- ▶ The 2022 COLA under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) is **7.8 percent** based on the release of the December CPI. This COLA is based on the change in the CPI between December 2020 and December 2021. Visit nalc.org for the latest updates.