



News from Washington

The three-legged stool—pursuing opportunities in Congress to improve USPS finances



In 2022, NALC celebrated a major victory when President Joe Biden signed the Postal Service Reform Act into law. After an intense 12-year battle, the law codified six-day mail delivery, fully integrated postal employee health insurance with Medicare and, perhaps most importantly, finally repealed the crushing pre-funding mandate that required the Postal Service to pre-fund retiree health care costs decades in advance, costing the agency billions of dollars annually.

Repeal of the pre-funding mandate had immediate positive impacts on the Postal Service's balance sheet, but from the start, NALC knew this was only the first step. Two more steps are needed to stabilize the Postal Service's finances to secure our jobs and retirements: reallocating the Postal Service's Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) pension liabilities and authorizing the Postal Service to implement a new, higher-yielding investment strategy for future contributions to its retiree health and pension funds.

Pension liabilities between the pre-1970 Post Office Department and the current, independent USPS have been misallocated for more than 50 years. Multiple analyses by the USPS Office of Inspector General (OIG), the Postal Regulatory Commission, and the independent Segal Group have found that the methodology used by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) placed unfair responsibility on USPS. This unfair responsibility comes at a cost of \$3 billion annually and has shifted at least \$90 billion in unjust financial obligations onto the independent agency. In the third quarter of 2025, USPS announced a \$3.1 billion loss.

This necessary change would negate the losses the agency faces.

The Segal Group's 2010 audit recommended immediate reforms, and Section 802 of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act authorized OPM to enact them. However, OPM has refused to take action for 15 years, citing dubious legal obstacles and practical implementation problems. Unfortunately, OPM's inaction has significantly harmed postal finances. This change, along with an improved investment strategy for the agency's retiree health and pension funds, is needed to ensure the financial stability of the Postal Service.

Currently, USPS retiree health and pension funds are required to be invested solely in low-yield Treasury bonds, essentially causing the agency to forfeit billions of dollars in annual returns. NALC is pursuing a solution that will allow the Postal Service to diversify its investments and put money into higher-yielding assets, enabling the agency to capture these lost returns. NALC supports diversifying the postal investment portfolio with stocks and bonds by purchasing Thrift Savings Plan-style index funds.

As recently as 2023 the USPS OIG reinforced its conclusion that if the funds had been invested differently the returns would have been much greater and that the current strategy is risky and overly cautious.

While NALC has worked to persuade every presidential administration since 2010 to direct OPM to fix the glaring pension misallocation, no action has been taken. While we continue to pursue this option, we are engaging Congress to correct this issue and pursue a commonsense investment strategy for

future retiree health and pension fund contributions.

NALC already has a robust legislative agenda. So, why is improving the Postal Service's finances through Congress a top priority? In short, to secure the future of our jobs and retirements. A better financial position for the Postal Service could improve our position in collective bargaining and interest arbitration, which is always top of mind for NALC.

President Renfroe testifies on crime against letter carriers

In July, the House Subcommittee on Government Operations held a hearing titled "An Update on Mail Theft and Crime." The hearing was a direct result of NALC's engagement with lawmakers to bring attention and action to addressing crime against our members.

President Renfroe delivered a clear message. "To protect America's mail, we must start with protecting the people who deliver it," he said.

Renfroe went on to testify that while these crimes and assaults used to be rare, they have been on the rise in recent years. He urged Congress to pass the bipartisan Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (H.R. 1065/S. 463), referencing the five letter carriers who have been tragically murdered on the job in the last few years, the thousands of other letter carriers who have been victims of crime, and the alarmingly low conviction rates for these cases.

Renfroe was asked about the Postal Service and USPS's joint Project Safe Delivery plan, an initiative launched in May 2023 to enact enhanced security measures, improve investigations and raise public awareness. Renfroe said that NALC supported the initiative

and the work of the Postal Inspection Service, but he added that "the scope of the problem has severely outgrown their capacity to protect us."

"We can't wait for another letter carrier to be murdered or more violent federal crimes against civil servants who serve the American people every day to decide it's finally time for legislative action. The time is now," he told the subcommittee.

Renfroe reminded lawmakers that this is "not a partisan or political issue" or "a finger-pointing exercise or blame game."

"It is a problem that everyone should recognize and be 100 percent behind addressing. No one wants violent crime in their neighborhood," he added.

Renfroe emphasized that protecting letter carriers must be a top priority. "Letter carriers want nothing more than to serve our people, but we must be protected. And the people who commit these crimes must be arrested, prosecuted, convicted and sentenced."

The subcommittee's other witnesses were Brendan Donahue, inspector in charge at USPS; Julius Rothstein, deputy inspector general at the U.S.



President Renfroe testifies before the House Subcommittee on Government Operations at a hearing on mail theft and crime on July 23.

News from Washington (continued)

Postal Service Office of the Inspector General; Frank Albergo, president of the Postal Police Officers Association; and Anthony Holloway, chief of police at the St. Petersburg, FL, Police Department.

During the hearing, Ranking Member Kweisi Mfume (D-MD) emphasized that mail theft is about more than data. “It’s also about human beings who are on the other side of the equation. We refer to them as letter carriers. They work day in and day out to make sure that the service that we’ve come to take for granted is still there,” he said.

The hearing came as the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (POLCA) continues to gain bipartisan support. At press time, H.R. 1065 had 139 co-sponsors and S. 463 had seven. As a reminder to letter carriers, POLCA was first introduced last Congress by Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and Greg Landsman (D-OH) and Sens. Josh Hawley (R-MO) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). The co-leads reintroduced the legislation at the beginning of the 119th Congress in February.

The bill includes three components to deter these criminal acts and protect letter carriers:

- Allocating \$7 billion in funding (appropriated over five years) to re-

place and modernize all collection boxes, Arrow Keys and associated locks.

- Designating an assistant district attorney in each judicial district to prioritize in a timely manner, cases involving an assault against a letter carrier.
- Standardizing sentencing guidelines for those who are found guilty of committing these crimes.

Crimes committed against letter carriers have continued to climb—a majority of which involve a weapon and an assailant in pursuit of an Arrow Key.

One such incident occurred in April 2022 when a letter carrier was delivering at an apartment complex in Oklahoma City, OK. An assailant approached him from behind, held him at gunpoint, and forced him to give up his Arrow Key. Fearing for his life, the carrier complied—properly so. The assailant then demanded the carrier’s cell phone and crushed it on the ground. Fortunately, after the assailant fled, the carrier was able to call 911 from his smart watch. The carrier was traumatized and could not sleep for a month. He never went back to that apartment complex and transferred to a different route.



Three months later, a different carrier was at the same Oklahoma City apartment complex when he was robbed at gunpoint for his Arrow Key. Less than three months after that, that same carrier was robbed a second time at gunpoint in the same vicinity. Yet again, the assailant was in pursuit of the sensitive equipment that letter carriers carry. In only a few months, three armed robberies of letter carriers occurred in the same complex.

“Each assault and threat at gunpoint is directed at a person,” President Renfroe said. “They are directed at public servants, our members, who work hard every day to serve the American people.”

In January 2023, a Pittsburgh, PA, letter carrier was delivering mail when a man aggressively confronted the carrier, demanding to know the location of the man’s mail. The carrier did not recognize the man as a customer from his route, so he politely asked for the man’s address and said he would assist him once he finished his current delivery.

As the carrier headed to his next customer’s porch, the man opened fire at him, shooting three rounds. Fortunately, the carrier was not physically injured and was able to use nearby vehicles as shields, but he suffered the anguish of experiencing such an attack.

Later that year, in August, an Orlando, FL, letter carrier was delivering from her postal vehicle on a cul-de-sac when a car pulled up behind her. Three assailants exited the car and surrounded the delivery truck. One stood at the passenger side with an assault rifle, while another appeared at the driver’s side with two handguns, and the third stood guard. Three guns were pointed at a letter carrier in broad day-

light while the perpetrators demanded her Arrow Key. The carrier spent the next several days at home, away from work, attempting to recover from the unimaginable attack.

Another grievous attack occurred in November 2024, when a letter carrier was delivering on her route and a hooded assailant approached her at gunpoint and attempted to sexually assault her in her postal vehicle. She was able to persuade the assailant to let her go and fled to safety in a customer’s home, where she called 911.

“These stories, and thousands of others like them, are shocking and repugnant,” President Renfroe said. “Although these are horrible stories, fortunately, these letter carriers survived. However, some of these violent crimes have tragically ended in death.”

In the last three years, five letter carriers have been murdered on the job. Aundre Cross from Milwaukee, WI; Jonte Davis from Youngstown, OH; Jay Larson from Rockford, IL; Octavia Redmond from Chicago, IL; and Ray Hodge from Bronx, NY, lost their lives to senseless acts of violence while on the job.

As these crimes have persisted, the number of arrests and convictions has remained unconscionably low. In Fiscal Year 2023, USPIS reported that it responded to 6,729 reports of violent crimes or threats, which resulted in only 289 arrests for assault and 193 arrests for robbery. These cases often sit untouched on district attorneys’ desks. According to USPIS, between 2016 and 2023, only about 40 percent of robbery and assault cases resulted in arrests and approximately 26 percent led to convictions.

Even when an alleged perpetrator is convicted, the sentence does not always



NALC President Brian L. Renfroe (above) leads a rally (opposite page) in Austin, TX, on July 29 and explains the need for the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (H.R. 1065/S. 463).

News from Washington (continued)

match the severity of the crime. Under current law, the sentencing guidelines for these crimes committed against federal employees in uniform and on the job are overly weak and permissive.

For example, in 2024, a San Francisco, CA, defendant was convicted of robbing a letter carrier at gunpoint and sentenced to only 30 days' imprisonment. Meanwhile, the assailant who murdered New York letter carrier Ray Hodge earlier this year was convicted and received only a 15-year sentence for ending the life of a young father, brother, friend and co-worker.

Even though the Postal Service is aware of the severity of these crimes and has taken steps to devalue the Arrow Key infrastructure, progress is

moving slowly and immediate action is needed.

POLCA is critical legislation that will provide necessary modernization of postal infrastructure, and deter these crimes from happening, ultimately keeping letter carriers and the mail safer.

As NALC branches have continued to mobilize and host rallies nationwide to raise awareness, President Renfroe's testimony before the subcommittee was a major step to bring continued attention to the legislation.

NALC members can visit nalc.org/ action to take action on H.R. 1065/S. 463 and NALC's other priority legislation.

In other news

House establishes bipartisan postal caucus

In July, Reps. Nikki Budzinski (D-IL), Chris Pappas (D-NH), Andrew Garbarino (R-NY) and Jack Bergman (R-MI) announced they would lead the House bipartisan postal caucus in the 119th Congress.

"NALC appreciates these representatives leading the bipartisan postal caucus," NALC President Renfroe said. "Protecting letter carriers, strengthening the Postal Service's universal network, keeping USPS a public, independent agency, and pursuing commonsense financial reforms are critical to our daily service to nearly 169 million homes and businesses that rely on us.

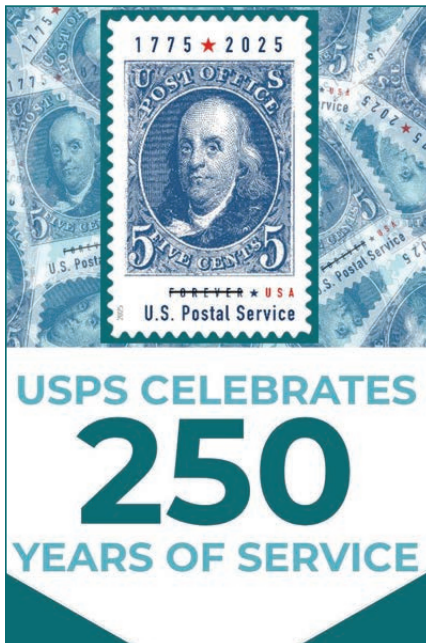
"NALC looks forward to working with these leaders and encourages all House members to join to postal caucus," he added.

Resolution recognizing USPS 250th anniversary introduced in Senate

On July 24, Sens. Gary Peters (D-MI) and Dan Sullivan (R-AK) introduced a

Chicago, IL Branch 11 members rally on July 8 at Roseland Station to remember Octavia Redmond, who was murdered on the job on July 19, 2024.





resolution recognizing the 250th anniversary of the Postal Service. S. Res. 337 was introduced with eight other bipartisan co-sponsors: Sens. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), Mike Crapo (R-ID), Susan Collins (R-ME) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH).

The resolution recognizes the historical significance of the Postal Service, honors the public servants who have served and continue to serve the agency, and invites the public to commemorate this milestone by recognizing a postal employee, sending a letter, or purchasing stamps.

“NALC thanks Ranking Member Peters and Sen. Sullivan for leading this resolution that celebrates one of the most important and beloved institutions in America, the Postal Service,” President Renfro said. “Letter carriers have always been what make

the Postal Service strong, carrying out its universal service obligation every day. On this anniversary, NALC members should be proud of everything we’ve accomplished since the establishment of our nation’s post office.”

Congress introduces bill to provide workers paid time off to vote

On Aug. 6, the 60th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act, Congress reintroduced the Time Off to Vote Act (H.R. 4908/S. 2549). Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-HI) led the Senate version with 17 Democratic co-leads, and Rep. Nikema Williams (D-GA) led the House version.

The bill would require employers, including the Postal Service, to provide at least two consecutive hours of paid leave to vote in federal elections. This time could be used for in-person voting, returning a mail-in ballot, or other voting-related activities.

“Whether you’re voting in person, early or by mail, every American deserves a convenient and fair way to participate in our democracy,” President Renfro said. “As more Americans choose to vote by mail, letter carriers make it easier for millions of people to access the ballot box. NALC supports this bill, which would expand that access for letter carriers and all working Americans, and urges Congress to pass it.”

NALC is closely monitoring this and the many other bills related to voting rights and vote-by-mail that have been introduced this Congress. Check the “Government Affairs” section of nalc.org for any future updates. **PR**

NALC hires Swartz as director of legislative and political affairs

Paul Swartz joined the staff of the National Association of Letter Carriers in August. Prior to coming to NALC, Swartz spent 22 years with the National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association, first as a governmental affairs representative. In 2007, he was promoted to director of governmental affairs.

A 2002 graduate of the Catholic University of America, Swartz earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Politics, and was inducted into two honors societies: Pi Gamma Mu and Pi Sigma Alpha. Swartz spent two years interning for former Sen. John Breaux (D-LA), assisting in the Press Office, Projects Office and with the legislative staff. Swartz served on the Board of Governors to the National Democratic Club until his term expired and he is also a member of the Congressional Management Foundation. **PR**

