



News from Washington

NALC participates in second House Congressional Postal Caucus roundtable

On June 9, NALC participated in the House Congressional Postal Service Caucus's second stakeholder roundtable, which served as a follow-up to the first labor-focused roundtable in March that the union also took part in. NALC Chief of Staff Kori Blalock participated, bringing strategic guidance on the ways Congress can take action to support the nation's letter carriers, who are central to a strong, financially independent Postal Service network, now and into the future.

The Postal Caucus chairs, Reps. Nikki Budzinski (D-IL) and Jack Bergman (R-MI), were joined by fellow caucus members Reps. Maggie Goodlander (D-NH) and Derrick Van Orden (R-WI), who asked panelists to discuss the role of the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC), the Delivering for America plan, and most importantly, the Postal Service's long-term outlook.

While the first roundtable was focused on labor priorities, this second roundtable comprised other stakeholders such as those from the PRC, EasyPost, Envelope Manufacturers, PostCom, C21 Postal Coalition and Postal Supervisors to discuss their views.

During the panel, Blalock emphasized the shared goal of all stakeholders in working to ensure a strong service-oriented postal network that serves 170 million delivery points six—and sometime seven—days a week. NALC strongly emphasized the direct correlation between service and financial stability, highlighting that protecting service begins with investing in the Postal Service's infrastructure—namely letter carriers and postal employees, vehicles and technology. NALC's cen-



NALC Chief of Staff Kori Blalock (far l) provided the union's point of view at the House Congressional Postal Caucus's second stakeholder roundtable.

tral focus was for stakeholders to work together on viable, bipartisan reforms, including a better investment strategy for USPS retiree health and pension funds, increasing the agency's borrowing authority and fairly recalculating USPS's Civil Service Retirement System pension obligations.

"If you want service to get better, we must collectively focus on legislation to address these core issues," Blalock said.

Blalock emphasized that NALC appreciates every opportunity to engage in these important conversations and is committed to continue leading the fight to pass meaningful, bipartisan financial reforms and will work with the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform on the best path forward.

House subcommittee holds hearing on financial future of the Postal Service

On June 4, the House Subcommittee on Government Operations held a hearing with all four commissioners of the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC). The commission currently has one vacancy. Commissioners Robert Taub, Ann Fisher, Thomas Day and Ashley Poling all discussed the current

financial situation facing the Postal Service and possible solutions.

In his opening remarks, Chairman Pete Sessions (R-TX) recognized the "conflicting and vaguely defined requirements and expectations" the Postal Service is forced to operate under. "It must deliver everywhere, not all the time, but darn close to it—regardless of how remote or resource-intensive such a delivery might be," he said. "Said another way, the Postal Service must act like a business and unlike a business simultaneously. Deciding what we want is going to require tough decisions—by everybody."

Ranking Member Kweisi Mfume (D-MD) recognized the recent challenges facing the Postal Service, referencing the last subcommittee's hearing on USPS where the agency mentioned its \$9 billion net loss and its serious risk of running out of cash soon. He emphasized that mail delivery is a public service that powers communities across all 50 states and territories. He explained the regulatory function of the PRC, and why the commissioners were invited to testify.

The PRC commissioners argued that to stabilize the Postal Service's financial condition, Congress and the Postal Service must define the uni-

versal service obligation (USO) and develop a new financial structure that ensures long-term self-sufficiency. To date, other than mandating six-day mail delivery in the Postal Reform Act of 2022 (Public law 117-108), Congress has largely left the USO open and undefined.

Commissioner Taub outlined certain principles whose scope they believe must be decided upon, including geographic scope, range of products, access to services and facilities, delivery frequency, affordable uniform pricing, service quality, and an enforcement mechanism. He stressed that only after these principles are defined can costs be assigned to them to establish a financial structure.

Commissioners Fisher, Day and Poling each voiced their agreement with Taub's testimony and highlighted other issues related to the PRC's role in improving the USPS financial condition, including a discussion of what rate authority should be granted to the agency and the importance of maintaining service quality.

Regarding ways to address the agency's finances, during the question-and-answer period, Rep. Gary Palmer (R-AL) asked about diversifying the Postal Service's retiree and health pension investments. "How much thought have each of you given to the recommendations given by the inspector general about diversifying retirement assets beyond securities?" he asked, and added, "We aren't going to let people who've spent their career delivering mail lose their retirement benefits."

Unfortunately, the commissioners minimized some of the commonsense reforms that would improve the Postal Service's financial condition and for



which NALC has long advocated. These reforms include the implementation of the recommendations of the Segal report to correct the long-term overallocation of pension liabilities on the Postal Service, allowing the Postal Service to invest its pension funds in a diverse portfolio of stocks and bonds to substantially increase its rates of return, and raising the agency's borrowing authority to an amount that allows the agency to modernize its network to meet today's needs. These reforms would bring immediate financial relief to the Postal Service and would not open the agency to a lengthy regulatory process that could result in changes to service that could be felt by the American public.

"NALC is disappointed in the commissioners using this hearing to minimize the most effective option to improve the Postal Service's finances," NALC President Brian L. Renfroe said. "As regulators, they should use their position to pursue any and all options to improve the agency's financial situation, not create further hurdles.

"NALC appreciates the subcommittee holding this hearing, but urges its members, and all of Congress, to focus on changes that will most benefit our members. Commonsense solutions to

address USPS's financial condition and measures to protect our members from violent crimes and assaults on the job are essential for our future and safety."

House passes bill making it easier to form unions

On June 9, the House passed the Faster Labor Contracts Act (H.R. 5408) by a bipartisan vote of 230-193. The legislation, led by Reps. Donald Norcross (D-NJ) and Pete Stauber (R-MN), would make it easier to form a union by preventing employers from stalling first contract negotiations with newly certified unions.

The bill ensures that when employees vote to form a union, the employer cannot drag out negotiations and prevent the collective-bargaining process. The legislation advanced in the House by a discharge petition, with every Democrat and 20 Republicans voting in favor of the bill. The bill now waits for consideration in the Senate.

While this bill does not directly affect letter carriers or postal employees, NALC supports this legislation and any congressional action that expands collective-bargaining rights and makes it easier for workers to join and form unions. **PR**