



News from Washington

As vote-by-mail is under attack, NALC participates in House field hearing on protecting mail-in ballots and democracy

On March 31, President Trump signed an executive order called the “Ensuring Citizenship Verification and Integrity in Federal Elections.” While many experts believe the president lacks the authority to issue such an executive order, and litigation challenging the order is pending, this is the administration’s attempt to reshape how elections are conducted. The executive order instructs the Department of Homeland Security to work with the Social Security Administration to create a list of all citizens age 18 and over who are confirmed to be U.S. citizens. This list would be sent to election officials in each state.

The order would require the Postal Service to send ballots only to individuals on the list, “ensuring that only eligible absentee or mail-in voters receive absentee or mail-in ballots.” This order was issued as the SAVE America Act—legislation that imposes strict voting requirements such as proof of citizenship, photo ID requirements, and registration changes eliminating most online and mail-in registration methods—and is stalled in the Senate because of a Democratic filibuster. The president and many Republicans are pushing for including the SAVE America Act in their proposed upcoming reconciliation packages.

Following these ongoing unprecedented attacks, on April 9, Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and House Committee on Administration Ranking Member Joe Morelle (D-NY) hosted a field hearing in San Francisco, CA, focused on protecting democracy, election security, voting rights and vote-by-mail.

NALC President Brian L. Renfroe

was invited to participate as a panelist to share letter carriers’ perspective on the recent attacks on mail-in ballots and how such drastic action could affect letter carriers’ work.

President Renfroe began his remarks saying, “I want to be real clear about what the Postal Service’s role is in our democracy. It is that we accept, transport, process and deliver mail, including ballots.”

Despite extreme vote-by-mail surges in 2020, 2022 and 2024, the process remains extremely secure, and instances of fraudulent mail-in ballots are still exceedingly low.

“We continue to be committed to make the whole process better and better and better through what we do operationally with the Postal Service, as well as fighting back attempts that, at the end of the day, are designed to keep people from participating in our democracy,” Renfroe said.

Other panelists included Dr. Barbara Simons, former chair of Verified Voting Foundation; Kevin Shelley, former California secretary of state; Brittany Stonesifer, voting rights and redistricting program manager at California Common Cause; professor Rory K. Little, UC Law San Francisco; and Gabriela Carcamo from The Arc San Francisco.



President Brian L. Renfroe testifies at the House field meeting.

Reps. Mike Thompson (D-CA), Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA) and Kevin Mullin (D-CA) also attended the hearing.

“I appreciated the opportunity to bring NALC’s voice to this panel as we continue fighting to protect America’s access to mail-in ballots,” Renfroe said following the hearing.

USPS announces agency’s temporary suspension of FERS contributions

On April 9, the Postal Service announced it will temporarily pause employer contributions to the defined benefit portion of the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). The pause has no immediate impact on any current or future retired letter carriers.

The Postal Service is required to make two types of payments to its FERS account: normal cost payments, which cover the cost of the pension benefits earned by postal employees each year, and amortization payments, which pay down the agency’s

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unfunded liability (the difference between what is owed to current and future retirees and the actual assets in the account).

As the Postal Service's financial condition has declined due to changes in mail volumes and significant financial constraints placed on the agency by Congress, USPS resorted to defaulting on most of its annual amortization payments in order to preserve cash to maintain operations and payroll. It continued to make all of its normal cost payments during this period.

However, the Postal Service now says its financial situation has deteriorated so much that it has become necessary not to make any of these payments. According to USPS, the two actions outlined below are necessary to prevent the agency from running out of cash as early as February 2027.

First, the USPS Board of Governors voted last month to allow the Postal Service to temporarily suspend its normal cost payments, which will allow the agency to retain about \$2.5 billion for operations. This suspension is effective April 10.

During the suspension, the Postal Service will continue to transmit postal employees' contributions to FERS. This suspension will not affect the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). The Postal Service will continue to transmit USPS automatic contributions, employee contributions, and USPS matching contributions to TSP.

Second, the Postal Service petitioned its regulator, the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC), to grant it a waiver lifting restrictions on how USPS may use some of its revenue. Under the current price cap system designed by the PRC, the Postal Ser-

vice has been allowed to raise rates slightly higher than inflation, but it's been required that revenue is used to pay FERS amortization costs. As of April 9, the PRC has granted the Postal Service's request allowing the agency to use that revenue for operations instead, stating that it "expeditiously granted the waiver in the interest of the public and to provide the Postal Service some breathing room." The PRC estimates that this will free an additional \$2.4 billion for USPS operations this fiscal year, and potentially a total of \$15 billion through 2030.

These actions will not immediately have a detrimental impact on current or future retirees, but each missed payment increases the Postal Service's FERS unfunded liability. The two actions combined will result in about \$5 billion in additional past-due FERS contributions this year, bringing the Postal Service's total missed FERS payments to about \$17 billion since 2014.

"This move is necessitated by the Postal Service's current financial situation and is a direct result of continued inaction by Congress to fix the legislative constraints that inhibit the Postal Service's ability to invest in its infrastructure and modernize to meet the needs of its employees and the American people," Renfroe said.

"If Congress were to allow for a new investment strategy for USPS retiree health and pension funds, a fair recalculation of the agency's Civil Service Retirement System pension obligations, and an increase in the agency's borrowing authority, this pause in FERS contributions would not be necessary," he added. **PR**