

program, to focus on a few installations where membership rates lag behind the norm, and on those employees who recently chose not to join the Union. And, of course, the Committee continued to discuss ways to convince Local Unions to spend their resources wisely, focusing on the representation of members under the National Agreement.

Legislative Efforts in the 112th Congress.

Finally, the Committee discussed the many legislative issues confronting the NPMHU.

In February, the Committee adopted the NPMHU legislative agenda for the current 112th Congress. In May, the Committee joined with hundreds of mail handlers from around the nation at the NPMHU's 2011 Legislative Conference.

And in July, the Committee analyzed a host of legislative issues. Bob Losi, the NPMHU Legislative and Political Director, and Roger Blacklow, Senior Legislative Advisor, reported on recent legislative and political developments. They began with a discussion of S. 1010, the POST Act introduced by Senator Tom Carper (D-DE). It is the main vehicle of possible postal reform in Congress, and is the subject of discussions among Senators Carper, Susan Collins (R-ME), and Joe Lieberman (I-D, CT). Provisions include: allowing the USPS to use overpayments in its pension funding to meet prefunding obligations in retiree health, furthering new retail services such as shipping beer/wine through the mail, letting

the USPS close postal offices for strictly financial reasons, and adding anti-union collective-bargaining instructions to potential interest arbitrators. The AFL-CIO has sent a letter to Democratic Senators objecting to this bargaining-related language and opposing its inclusion in the bill.

Other important legislation in the Senate relative to NPMHU issues includes the following:

- S. 353, introduced by Senator Collins, which contains language on the overpayment issue similar to S. 1010, would consolidate Area and District offices, promotes retail outlets in non-postal venues, maintains the legal prohibition on closing post offices strictly for cost purposes, adds arbitration language similar to that of the Carper bill, and changes FECA's coverage for employees injured on the job by throwing recipients off the program upon reaching retirement age and moving those recipients into their respective retirement programs.

- S. 261 introduced by Senator Collins, which makes the FECA changes included in S. 353. This bill also is opposed by the NPMHU and by Senator Carper, because of the financial harm caused to workers' compensation recipients. More recently, the GAO and other less partisan groups also have opposed these changes. The Committee also discussed other changes unveiled by the U.S. Department of Labor, which are troubling but less devastating.

- H.R. 1351 introduced by Representative Stephen Lynch (D-MA), which directs

the Office of Personnel Management to recalculate the pension overpayments made by the Postal Service based on current accepted accounting practices and transfer any excess money from the pension account to the Retiree Health Benefit Fund (fulfilling the mandate of the PAEA of 2006 to fully fund that account at approximately \$5.5 billion per year). This bill is now co-sponsored by a bipartisan group of more than 220 Representatives. It also returns to the USPS \$6.9 billion in overfunded money.

- H.R. 1262 introduced by Representative Gerald Connolly (D-VA), which would grant the USPS federal support to rebuild its vehicle fleet into new electric vehicles, to ship beer and wine, and to sell "forever boxes," which are shipping boxes that, if bought under today's price structure, ship under today's prices even if shipped in the future after rate increases (similar to the "forever" stamp).

- H.R. 2309 of introduced by Representative Darryl Issa (R-CA), which would force a radical restructuring of the USPS, including all the worst provisions of the Carper and Collins bills (such as anti-union arbitration language), the creation of unelected authorities to seize control of the USPS if it does not pay its federal obligations (such as the yearly \$5.5 billion payments to the RHBF) and to override any collective bargaining agreements, adopt 5-day delivery, force pay comparability to non-union

businesses, and much, much more (or worse). The NPMHU strongly opposes this bill, as do the other postal unions. But "elections have consequences," and thus Representative Issa became Chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee when the Republicans took control of the House of Representatives in 2010, and his bill becomes the pre-eminent legislation in the House.

- H.R. 2465 introduced by Representative John Kline (R-MN), which would institute changes in OWCP that are supported by the Democrats and the NPMHU. Those changes would cover treatment from a physician assistant or advanced practical nurses, increase coverage for disfigurement of face, head or neck, increase funeral expenses to \$6,000 (from \$800), and allow for the recoupment of COP from a third party suit, but would not tackle the important issue of payment status when the individual reaches normal retirement age.

The Committee also discussed the then-ongoing controversy over raising the debt ceiling. The resulting bi-partisan committee will be looking for budget cuts, and federal retirement and health insurance programs remain on the chopping block.

The Committee will continue its discussions on each of these important topics, with its goal of developing effective strategies in addressing these matters.