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review on the NPMHU website at www.npmhu.org.]

The Committee discussed ways of dealing with these issues, at the Local, Regional, and National levels, and many of those discussions and strategies were reflected in detailed presentations during the March 2012 Semi-Annual Meeting of the Local Unions.

Postal Finances

Turning to the economic status of the USPS, the current state of USPS finances remains extremely poor. Last year, which was Fiscal Year 2011 ending on September 30, 2011, the USPS end of year deficit was over \$10 billion, and only half of that deficit was attributable to the pre-funding requirements of the Retiree Health Benefits Fund (RHBF). Based on the first few months of Fiscal Year 2012, the Postal Service is projecting a similarly large loss this year as well. Thus, even if Congress were to provide complete financial relief against the \$5.5 billion payment now due each year to the RHBF (which payments are not being made, and which payments the USPS does not expect to be able to pay), the projected deficits would continue to be unsustainable for an institution that has little remaining borrowing authority.

The principal cause of these deficits, of course, has been a sustained drop in the volume of first-class mail, caused by the combination of electronic diversion and the economic recession that started in 2008. Generating new revenue, or at least stopping the decline in revenue, is central to the contin-

ued operations of the Postal Service over the coming years.

At the same time, because of the Postal Service's economic losses, it is clear that some downsizing of the Postal Service and its workforce are inevitable. The NPMHU and its Locals have been losing members, and without any USPS hiring, those trends will continue. Thus, at precisely the time when the Union must marshal its resources to protect its members because of massive closings and consolidations, the financial resources of the Union are becoming more limited. The Committee discussed the practical impact of these trends, emphasizing the need to continue organizing new members, especially among current postal employees who are being reassigned or transferred into the Mail Handler craft.

If there is a long-term and sustainable solution to these issues, it necessarily will involve Congressional action. And thus, the Committee turned its discussions to the legislative arena. Legislative and Political Director Bob Losi and Senior Legislative Advisor Roger Blacklow presented the Committee with an updated report.

On the Legislative and Political Fronts

There currently are nearly 30 bills dealing with postal issues and the USPS pending in Congress. But the Committee's attention was focused on the bills that apparently are most likely to receive Congressional attention. Those bills will affect FERS, CSRS, FECA, the structure of the USPS, and collective bargaining. In the Senate, they include

S. 353, S. 1010 and S. 1789. In the House, the key bills are H.R. 1351 and H.R. 2309. Particular mention was made of Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), who has taken the lead in the Senate to improve and re-fashion the current version of S. 1789, a bipartisan bill that was adopted by the Senate Committee under the auspices of Senators Lieberman, Carper, Collins, and Brown. [A modified Senate Bill 1789 was passed in that chamber in late April of this year; as of this writing the House of Representatives has yet to move a postal bill for a vote by the full House.]

Also discussed were H.R. 3813 and its offspring H.R. 3630, which found their way into the bill that extended the "Payroll Deduction/Unemployment Insurance" legislation in February. This legislation will increase the amount of money that new federal and postal employees will have to pay into FERS. Much worse legislation affecting current employees was avoided, with the help of other federal and postal organizations, LIUNA, and the AFL-CIO. Details on the House and Senate bills are available on the Union website, www.npmhu.org, or on the Library of Congress website at thomas.loc.gov. (Also discussed by the Committee were the recently released Obama budget blueprint and the positive effect of the Obama Administration's new appointments to the National Labor Relations Board.)

Considerable discussion ensued on these bills, and their relationship to the lobbying strategy that needs to be employed now that the USPS has released its list of facilities

to be closed or consolidated. For many Senators and Representatives, the link has been made between the closing of processing plants, the proposed reduction in service standards, and the financial condition of the Postal Service. Now that the targeted facilities have been named, the situation becomes much more tangible to all Members of Congress. For many Members, the timing of these closures could make their re-election chances in 2012 much more problematic.

Finally, the Committee also discussed American politics and the upcoming Presidential election, including the Republican candidates who are trying to unseat President Obama. Following that Presidential discussion, the Committee was given lists of (a) Senate seats that are either open or have a vulnerable incumbent and (b) similar outlooks for House seats.

There was a brief discussion of state-level activities in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Indiana. The push by right-wing, anti-union forces for "right to work" for less legislation is a threat to all unionists.

The presentation ended with a discussion of the NPMHU PAC, which for the first time may exceed \$200,000 this year. Also mentioned were the September 2011 "Save Our Postal Service" actions, which had a huge effect both on Capitol Hill and in energizing our members. LIUNA has offered to make our issues part of their e-activist alert system. However, more "e-activists" are needed in order to respond to the increasing challenges of pending legislation.