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 legislative agenda for the current 112th Congress. In May, 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.

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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 strict for cost purposes, adds arbitration language similar to that of the Carper bill, and changes FECA’s language for employees injured on the job by throwing recipients off 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 transfers 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, add arbitration language similar to that of the Carper bill, and changes FECA’s coverage for employees injured on the job by throwing recipients off program upon reaching retirement age and moving those recipients into their respective retirement programs.

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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.