

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL LEAVES MAIL HANDLERS RELATIVELY UNSCATHED

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As part of the NPMHU Legislative Conference in May, Mail Handlers lobbied Congress opposing changes to their retirement benefits as seen in the initial version of the reconciliation bill, One Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R. 1). While in Washington, DC, our members met with their elected officials sharing how these proposed changes to retirement benefits would not only result in a loss of take-home pay, but also impact their personal financial planning, hurt recruitment efforts for the Postal Service, and undermine collective bargaining rights.

Between the legislative conference and the final passage of the bill, there were various iterations of H.R. 1 impacting either postal employees or federal employees. The House Oversight and Government Reform (OGR) Committee put forth the first version of the bill's language, which included increases for everyone enrolled to the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) to 4.4 percent regardless of hire date; elimination of the FERS Annuity Supplement for those who qualify to retire early; utilize an employee's highest five earning years instead of the current highest three earning years to calculate annuity payments; require new employees would choose between the choice of being represented by union or paying an additional 5 percent to their FERS contributions — a total of 9.4 percent; and, require a fee for employees who file a Merit Systems Protection Board claim or appeal.

On April 30, OGR Committee voted for the most part along party lines to advance its part of the bill. Congressman Mike Turner (R-OH-10) was the sole Republican who voted against it. He commented, "I oppose any and all efforts to reduce federal spending by taking money from the hard-earned pensions of federal workers. These pensions are not giveaways — they are promises to federal workers in exchange for their dedicated service."

In the bill's next move forward, the House Rules Committee changed the language, improving it slightly by only including

the elimination of the FERS Annuity Supplement; moving from the high-three to the high-five calculation; and, choosing between at-will employment and higher employee contributions to FERS. The House of Representatives voted on this version of H.R. 1 on May 22, again, mostly on party lines, 215 members voting for, and 214 voting against.

Following the House passage, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) released its version of the text on June 12. Initial language in the Senate did not target Mail Handlers directly, but other federal employees faced changes to retirement benefits and collective bargaining rights. Two weeks later, HSGAC amended its version of the bill, and removed initial changes to collective bargaining rights, but

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instead called for across the board increases to employee FERS contributions of 9.4 percent for all postal and federal employees, regardless of hire date.

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It should be noted that while H.R. 1 does not directly affect Mail Handlers' benefits and labor rights, there is some language that could. NPMHU Secretary-Treasurer Tabarus discussed what the "no tax on overtime" provisions means to Mail Handlers in his article.



Just because NPMHU effectively defended against initial attacks in H.R. 1, anti-worker proposals in the bill can easily resurface. There are bills in both the House and Senate that target automatic union dues deduction from a member's pay. The Paycheck Protection Act, H.R. 2174/S. 1597, prohibits federal agencies, specifically including the United States Postal Service (USPS), from automatically deducting labor organizations' dues or political contributions from employees' pay. Our brothers and sisters in the federal workforce are being further targeted with legislation that would require federal agencies to charge unions for use of agency resources and employee time. As NPMHU has seen attacks against collective bargaining rights through actions of the executive branch as well as these legislative efforts, we will remain vigilant against any calls to diminish the Union's labor rights.

THE NEED TO PROTECT DEMOCRACY

There have also been threats against basic democratic rights not only against union members, but all eligible voters in America. On Monday, August 18, President Trump stated he would issue an executive order before the 2026 midterm elections calling for an end to mail-in ballots. He falsely claimed elections conducted by mail cannot provide an accurate count of ballots. There has been no evidence of fraud due to mail-in or absentee voting. Eight states and the District of Columbia only have mail-in voting; ten states offer permanent absentee voting; nineteen states offer no excuse absentee voting; and, the remaining thirteen states allow for absentee voting with an excuse. During the 2020 elections, the USPS processed over 135 million mail-in ballots; in the 2022 midterm elections, 82 million mail-in ballots were processed; and, in 2024, 59.4 million mail-in ballots were processed, or 30 percent of all ballots. For all three of these elections, ballots were processed at an on-time rate above 97 percent. Additionally,

the authority over elections is given to states per the United States Constitution — the federal government cannot intervene in how states manage elections.

As there are tight margins between the parties in both the House and Senate, it is imperative that every eligible voter participate in the democratic process. With the 2026 midterms quickly approaching, Mail Handlers should be aware of when their congressional primaries take place, how and where they can vote, and of course, where candidates stand on policy issues that will impact Mail Handlers' daily lives. Regardless of whether wanted or not, the outcomes of elections impact Mail Handlers' lives. Make sure your interests are being protected. Beyond the act of voting Mail Handlers can also participate in the NPMHU Political Action Committee (PAC). The NPMHU PAC helps fund political candidates who are pro-labor, pro-postal, and pro-Mail Handler. The 2024 congressional elections cost \$9.5 billion, and every dollar NPMHU PAC can put towards helping those who will fight for us on Capitol Hill counts. Mail Handlers can give as little as \$1 a pay period, adding to the financial stability and political sustainability of the PAC. NPMHU encourages all of its members to be politically active at any level.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS IMPACTING POSTAL VOLUME

Following the Trump Administration's implementation of trade tariffs, including taxing small packages entering the USPS system, duties on packages will see an increase between \$80 and \$200. This is resulting in the rise of prices in consumer goods. In response of these rising costs, 25 countries have suspended deliveries into the United States. The impact on mail volume is not yet fully known, but as 44 percent of global mail is processed through USPS, a loss of volume and revenue can be expected. As this is a new development, NPMHU will keep its members informed as to how these tariffs impact the Postal Service and Mail Handler jobs.