

118TH CONGRESS GETS OFF TO A ROCKY START

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On January 3, 2023, members-elect to the House of Representatives opened up their offices to the public, welcoming guests to watch the election of the Speaker of the House and swearing-in of the 118th Congress. What happened next will be a question on high school U.S. history tests for years to come. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA-20) was expected to narrowly win the role, however a group of twenty Republicans held out and it took four days and fifteen votes for him to finally gain the Speaker's gavel. Concessions to win the leadership role included lowering the threshold for a motion to vacate — meaning only one member of Congress to call for the Speaker of the House to be removed from the position — and, placing select dissenters on the Rules Committee — allowing them to set which bills go to the House floor for a vote.

Affecting legislation pertaining to the Postal Service, the committee of jurisdiction will now be called the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability. Chairman James Comer (R-KY-01) indicated he will be emphasizing the accountability aspect of the committee — looking into waste, fraud, and abuse specifically in policy regarding the pandemic response, improper influence from the Biden Administration, and the military withdrawal from Afghanistan. Committee staff have indicated if there were to be a hearing on the Postal Service and its workforce, it would most likely be directed at any issues of service. Additionally, there could be a review

of workers' rights within the postal and federal workforces. In the past, the NPMHU has seen bills introduced attacking official time and dues check-off. These issues could get better traction in the less labor friendly 118th Congress.

Over on the Senate side of the Capitol, things were relatively calmer, and the session got off without a hitch. With a win in Pennsylvania, and keeping seats in Arizona, Nevada, and Georgia, Democrats were able to keep the majority and come out with a slight margin of one seat ahead of Republicans. However, this means like the Republicans in the House, Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) will have a difficult task to ensure consensus among Democrats. We saw this was a problem in the 117th Congress when it came time to negotiate the infrastructure bill and social spending legislation.

Internal party divisions in the House and Senate are expected to come to a head when they will be tasked with developing a solution to the nation's spending and debt crisis. Shortly after the new session of Congress began, Department of Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen announced the country had reached its debt limit and will go into extraordinary measures to ensure the nation can pay off incurred debts. While the White House and congressional Democrats have said they will not negotiate deficit reductions in order to raise the debt limit, Republicans have begun to look at ways to cut entitlements in the budget, which usually for Mail Handlers means

targeting retirement and healthcare benefits. The last time we saw a divided Congress and a Democrat President tackle the debt ceiling, what resulted was drastic cuts to benefits under the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) from postal and federal employees hired after 2013. Adding to the likelihood postal employees benefits will be targeted once again, the Congressional Budget Office released a report in December 2022 recommending increasing employee contributions to retirement benefits for all employees to 4.4 percent, regardless of when they were initially hired. Additionally, Mail Handlers could see the threat of moving from a "High Three" to a "High Five" for annuity calculations; the elimination of the FERS annuity supplement for those who retire early; reductions or eliminations of COLAs; and, changes to the G Fund in the TSP. It has been the argument of the NPMHU that postal employees' and retirees' benefits are not the source of the nation's deficit and the Union will continue to push back that they should not be the solution to reduce spending.

NPMHU PAC GROWS ON CAPITOL HILL

In order to effectively combat these attacks against earned benefits, the NPMHU must work with all members of Congress, regardless of party affiliation. Conversations need to be had with conservatives, moderates, and progressives alike on the value of the dedicated work of Mail Handlers and our brothers and sisters throughout



the Postal Service. Postal issues are bipartisan issues, and the NPMHU is a bipartisan union. This is not only seen in our legislative work, but also in our political work. Mail Handlers continuously support incumbents and candidates that will support the mission and goals of the USPS while protecting its workforce.

The NPMHU expands its strength on Capitol Hill through its Political Action Committee (PAC). The PAC allows us to make financial contributions to elected officials who advocate on our behalf so they have the resources to remain in office, and that those who speak out against us don't stay in DC. NPMHU PAC gives to members of both parties, targeting those that support postal and worker issues. NPMHU members' contributions to the PAC are 100% voluntary and do not come from union dues. I want to thank everyone who

gives to the PAC and a list of those gave throughout 2022 is on the following pages. If you have questions about to which candidates NPMHU PAC gives or how contributions are decided, please reach out.

REGISTER FOR THE 2023 NPMHU LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the NPMHU will host its ninth, biennial Legislative Conference, May 2-3, here in Washington, DC. This will be a great opportunity for Mail Handlers to learn how congressional action impacts their professional and personal lives and how they can become an effective grassroots activist. On the first day, attendees will hear from experts from Capitol Hill, the Postal Board of Governors, the Postal Regulatory Commission, and our labor brothers and sisters on the importance

of the legislative process and how the NPMHU can be an influence. On the second day, after they have reviewed the legislative goals of the NPMHU and learned how to effectively lobby elected officials, Mail Handlers will participate in a day of action, meeting with their Representatives, Senators, and staffers. As there are many newly elected Members of Congress, they need to be educated about who we are and how our work is vital to the well-being of the Postal Service and the nation. Additionally, it is important to meet with returning members of Congress and grow established relationships with them. It is through this work that the NPMHU expands its political strength. Letters were mailed to local presidents with greater details on the event and how to register. We look forward to seeing you in the nation's capital soon.