

MOVING FORWARD IN THE NEW YEAR

Katie Maddocks, Legislative and Political Director



As 2020 has just begun, the NPMHU is hopeful that the new year in Congress is just as positive as the last.

2019 provided many positive steps forward for the United States Postal Service and its employees on Capitol Hill. The year began with members of the House of Representatives immediately introducing resolutions calling for the Postal Service to remain a public institution and not become subject to privatization, and for the Postal Service to return to its 2012 service standards. It ended with positive movement on H.R. 2382, the USPS Fairness Act. This legislation calls for the repeal of the onerous mandate to prefund retiree healthcare benefits, which is responsible for 100 percent of USPS's financial losses since 2013. In a hearing on the financial status of USPS in April 2019, it was repeatedly noted that no other federal agency is forced to prefund retiree healthcare benefits, and if a private company were forced to do so, it would risk bankruptcy. While the bill would not resolve all of USPS' financial problems, it would help move it onto the right path.

The NPMHU worked with other postal unions to ensure that there was strong support for H.R. 2382, and our actions resulted in over 300 bipartisan members of the House cosponsoring the bill. This support led to a vote on H.R. 2382 being called during the week of February 3, 2020. On the Senate side of Capitol Hill, Senators were equally as supportive, obtaining a majority of support on its own resolution protecting against privatization, S. Res. 99, as well as introduction of companion language to the USPS Fairness Act, S. 2965.

In order to do so, NPMHU members must remain vigilant against threats against their professional livelihoods. Recently, these threats have been seen with the USPS Five-Year Plan and a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, GAO-20-140, on USPS employee compensation, both released in January 2020.

The Five-Year Strategic Plan, which initially was proposed as a ten-year plan scheduled to be released in January 2019, is vague in its recommendations, but its proposed changes for middle-mile operations could result in plant restructuring or closures. The plan also repeatedly mentions utilizing more public-private partnerships as a

means of increasing efficiencies and lowering costs, which could result in privatizing jobs.

Further threatening employees, the GAO report called upon USPS and Congress to review employee structure and compensation in order to obtain significant financial savings. This included utilizing non-career employees at greater rates in order to save on benefits and salary payments. The report also suggested reducing USPS contributions to healthcare coverage. While this would create savings for USPS, it would be accomplished only at the expense of workers. The report further called for moving away from collective bargaining rights over compensation, allowing USPS to implement pay cuts. This is similar to the proposal seen in the Postal Task Force report issued in December 2018.

Though these suggestions from USPS and GAO would be detrimental to postal employees, to implement them would require congressional approval. Members of Congress, however, have recently shown strong support to not only protect the Postal Service from privatization, but also union jobs. It is unlikely these propositions will go far on Capitol Hill.

One member of Congress who will be genuinely missed in the new year is House Committee on Oversight and Reform (COR) Chairman Elijah Cummings (D-MD-07). Chairman Cummings passed away on October 17, 2019. Chairman Cummings served in the House since he was first elected in 1996, and held a leadership position on COR since December 2010. During his tenure, he was a consummate champion of postal employees' rights and thoroughly understood the need for a sustainable Postal Service.

After his passing, the House Democratic Caucus elected Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY-12) to take over as

visit www.canivote.org to see your registration status, polling locations, and when primary and general elections will take place.

chair. Chairwoman Maloney has been a longtime supporter of working families, and the NPMHU looks forward to working with her on postal issues. Other changes to COR include the additions to the majority side with Katie Porter (D-CA-45) and Deb Haaland (D-NM-01), as well as to the minority side with Fred Keller (R-PA-12).

ELECTIONS 2020

While November 3, 2020 seems far away, NPMHU members are preparing to vote for not only the President of the United States, but also for their members of Congress. At the time of publication, presidential primary caucuses have already begun in select states, and congressional primary elections are set to begin in the first week of March. Election Day 2020 will be here before we know it.

All 435 seats within the House of Representatives will be up for re-election, as well as 35 seats (including 2 special elections) in the Senate. We've already seen Representatives and Senators announcing they will not seek office again in

2020: 35 Representatives are leaving office, while 5 Senators are leaving. Historical voting trends show Democrats likely to retain power with the House and current polls show it is likely that Republicans will retain their majority in the Senate. But this information should not be taken as election decisions are already made. There are currently 17 House races rated as a toss-up (5 currently held by Republicans and 12 currently held by Democrats), while 3 Senate races (all currently held by Republicans) are rated as such. In the 2108 elections, 98 Representatives won their elections with 55 percent of the vote or less, and 19 Senators won with 55 percent of the vote or less. Voter participation matters.

The NPMHU encourages all of its members and their families to participate in the upcoming elections. You can check with your state's Secretary of State office, or visit www.canivote.org to see your registration status, polling locations, and when primary and general elections will take place.

Of greater notoriety, there also will be a presidential election in eight months. While postal issues are not getting as much press time as topics such as immigration, healthcare, or education, candidates have commented on their policy on USPS. President Trump let his stance on the future of the Postal Service and its employees be known with the report of the Postal Task Force, which called for an end of collective bargaining rights and a move towards privatization. Many of the Democratic candidates have spoken out on the importance of unions in the workforce, as it is a means of strengthening the middle-class and provides fair pay and benefits for hard working Americans. Candidates Biden, Bloomberg, Buttigieg, Gabbard, Klobuchar, Sanders, Warren, and Yang have explicitly stated to the AFL-CIO their support for keeping the Postal Service a public entity as privatization would be harmful to both employees and customers.

Regardless of political party or ideology, consider candidates who are supportive of ensuring a sustainable Postal Service that protects its workers and their jobs, while meeting the demands of all Americans. We can work together to elect postal friends and champions to Congress and the White House.

THANK YOU, BOB LOSI

I want to extend my deepest thanks and congratulations to my predecessor, Bob Losi, as he begins his much-deserved retirement. Not only was he a dedicated servant of the union, he also is a great philanthropist, working for charities to serve those in need. I have known Bob for the better part of the last decade during my time working for other unions and associations. Throughout the years, he provided me not only professional guidance but also (sometimes much needed) laughs; I am truly indebted to him. While he'll only be a phone call away, he will be greatly missed at NPMHU Headquarters. Thank you and good luck, Bob!

