

# MAIL HANDLERS HOLD THEIR TENTH LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

Katie Maddocks, Legislative and Political Director



After a four-year hiatus, the National Postal Mail Handlers Union hosted its 2023 Legislative Conference for the 118th Congress, May 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>. Presidents, Legislative Representatives, and policy enthusiasts from the Union's Locals gathered in Washington, DC, to discuss NPMHU's legislative priorities for the congressional session, and to learn how to effectively lobby their members of Congress in the House and Senate.

The first day of the conference included a full training program, with a host of speakers and panel discussions highlighting the issues the Postal Service and the labor movement are now facing in Congress and the needs for grassroots lobbying. One aspect that set this legislative conference apart from others is that this was the first one in over a decade that postal reform was not NPMHU's top legislative priority. Through our

union's collective voice, we were able to get the Postal Service Reform Act passed in strong bipartisan measure in both the House and Senate, and signed into public law. Because of our dedicated work, we were able to gain approval on this bill that repealed the 2006 mandate to prefund retiree healthcare costs; integrate Medicare coverage for future retirees; codify six-day delivery; enter agreements with state, local and tribal governments



to offer services; and provide greater transparency to customers on delivery delays. The new law will help to stabilize the Postal Service's finances and stem calls for privatization.

While we had this monumental win with the reform bill, NPMHU still has legislative goals for the new 118<sup>th</sup> Congress. In the opening panel, I was joined by APWU Legislative Director Judy Beard, and NALC Chief of Staff Kori Blalock Keller. The primary message of the panel was the power and impact that joint efforts by the postal unions can have for all of our members. Those attending the conference were tasked with thanking lawmakers who voted in favor of the Postal Service Reform Act first and foremost. But in addition to thanking those who voted in favor of the postal reform bill in the House and Senate, NPMHU members were also educated on other legislation that supports the Postal Service and the labor workforce. NPMHU participants were tasked with garnering support on H.Res. 277 while on the Hill. This non-binding House Resolution expresses support for the Postal Service to revert back to 2012 standards. In 2015, the Postal Service reduced service standards, resulting in the delay of first-class mail, periodicals, and newspapers, causing the virtual elimination of overnight delivery. These delays continue to negatively impact businesses and households, effectively driving away customers



Local 301 Recording Secretary Phill Alvarado, SEBM Scott Lasell, Vice President Sean Sweeney and President Dan St. Marie make their way around Capital Hill.

from the Postal Service and leading to a decrease in revenue and the worsening of its financial situation.

Additionally, the Mail Handlers Union is supporting a bill that expands the rights for union organization. The Protecting the Right to Organize Act, H.R. 20/S. 567 expands protections for those looking to organize, as well as expands the jurisdiction of the National Labor Relations Board. Furthermore, NPMHU members asked their members of Congress to sign onto the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82/S. 597) that repeals unfair reductions to Social Security for those enrolled in the Civil Service Retirement System.

In order for NPMHU members to effectively lobby these issues on Capitol Hill, Amy Pfeiffer, the Chief of Staff for Congressman Andy Kim (D-NJ-03), spoke on best practices for meeting with members of Congress and their staff and what they can expect. She emphasized how her office works to ensure that they hear from constituents on issues important to them and how policy developed in Washington, DC will impact them back home. She further emphasized that in addition to the importance of meeting with members of Congress here in DC, relationships with elected officials can be advanced with meetings in district



Local 308 Treasurer Mike Rembelinsky, Senator Tom Carper (D-DE), SEBM Brian Carson, and SEBM Brian Clark



Senator Gary Peters (D-MI)



Kori Blalock Keller Chief of Staff NALC

offices. The NPMHU Day on the Hill should not only occur once every two years but should be extended and cultivated back home.

What also helps with lobbying efforts is having a good understanding of the political landscape of Washington. To help with this, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades Government Affairs Director Liz McElroy discussed the outcome of the 2022 Midterm Elections; the changes of leadership within the

House of Representatives; those who won in congressional districts won by opposing parties in state-wide and presidential races; and, how this impacts the legislative agenda for Congress and the NPMHU's efforts on Capitol Hill. By understanding the political landscape, the Mail Handlers can better understand how elected officials will support legislative policy.

The conference also heard from many experts on the postal issues currently being debated in the nation's capital.

Anton Hajjar, the Vice Chair of the United States Postal Service Board of Governors, and Ashley Poling, Commissioner with the Postal Regulatory Commission, spoke to how their positions influence policy decisions of the Postal Service and the need for a working relationship with the Mail Handlers and other stakeholders.

We were privileged to hear from Representative Gerry Connolly (D-VA-11) and Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) who both spoke about their work



Local 300 SEBM Charles Valentine, Local 300 Recording Secretary Ray Bermudez, Local 300 SEBM Lucy Lombardo, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Local 300 Vice President Yvette Johrson, Northeast Region Vice President, Local 309 President Dave Wilkin, Local 300 President Kevin Tabarus and National President Paul Hogrogian



Lobbying Panel Amy Pfeiffer Chief of Staff, Rep. Andy Kim (D-NJ-03) and Katie Maddocks



Local 302 Legislative Representatives Wazeer Livingston and Juanita Contreras meet with Senator Jacky Rosen's (D-NV) staff



Katie Maddocks Legislative and Political Dir. NPMHU



(l-r) VP Dave Wilkin, VP Lawrence Sapp, VP June Harris, NST(E) Kevin Tabarus, LiUNA General President Brent Booker, NPMHU National President Pau Hogrogian, VP Don Sneesby and VP John Gibson.



Local 329 Local President JR Macon, Local 329 SEBM, BP Chattanooga TN Julius Takacs, Senator John Boozman (R-AK) and Local 329 SEBM Lyndon Cox



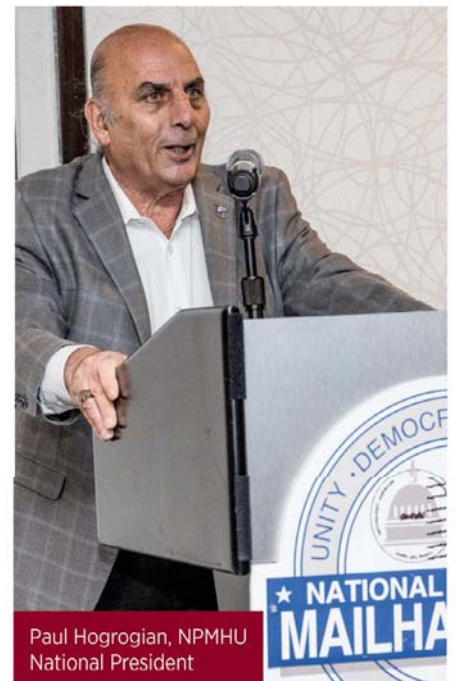
Senator John Fetterman (D-PA) met with Local 322 Treasurer Donna Truschol and Local 322 President Kelly Dickey

to secure passage of the Postal Service Reform Act. Because of their efforts, the Postal Service is on a path of sustainability that delivers to urban, rural, and suburban communities alike. They have both been true champions of the Postal Service and its dedicated workforce. The Mail Handlers are grateful for their work in Congress and for taking the time to speak to our attendees.

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) President Everett Kelley gave a spirited speech on the need for grassroots lobbying; the importance of getting involved with the legislative process; and, the need for union representing federal and postal employees to work together. NPMHU is lucky to have an ally in

protecting the rights and benefits of our members.

The second day of the conference allowed all newly-trained Mail Handlers to meet with Members of Congress and their professional staff. Prior to heading up to the Hill for their scheduled appointments, newly elected LiUNA General President Brent Booker spoke to the group. Having just started his tenure, his address at our conference was his first as General President. Booker echoed General President Emeritus Terry O'Sullivan's previous messages of empowerment, citing that NPMHU's fights are LiUNAs fights, and our Laborer brother and sisters will support our legislative efforts. The rest of the day was spent by Mail Handlers



Paul Hogrogian, NPMHU National President



Local 318 Vice President Lynden Clark, Local 318 Legislative Committee Member Danny Diaz, Rep Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL-26), Legislative Director Vanessa Scott, and Local 318 Recording Secretary Ron Nordyke



Congressman Gerry Connolly, (D-VA-11)



Anton Hajjar, USPS Board of Governors



Local 308 Cleveland Branch President Shelly Benton, Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Local 308 Recording Secretary Darvis Wanton, Local 308 President Bip McLemore, and Local 308 Mansfield Phil Hubert



Political Panel Liz McElroy, Government Affairs Dir. IUPAT and Katie Maddocks



Judy Beard, Legislative and Political Dir. APWU



Ashley Poling, Commissioner Postal Regulatory Commission

talking with their Representatives and Senators, asking them to support legislation on our agenda.

Not only were NPMHU elected leaders and Mail Handlers able to share their views on pending issues throughout their day on the Hill, but relationships forged during the conference will prove helpful throughout the rest of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress.

One aspect that keeps our voice on Capitol Hill present is the NPMHU Political Action Committee. NPMHU

PAC is the political arm of NPMHU and is extremely important to our legislative program, which allows the Union to support members of Congress who work to protect and defend the rights of Mail Handlers. The NPMHU PAC recognizes our members who give to the PAC annually in the Mail Handler magazine. However, there were some mistakes in our PAC database that fell through the cracks. Southern Region VP Lawrence Sapp, who gives through his annuity, should be recognized as

an Ambassador, giving at over \$500 in the calendar year. Additionally, Phil Alvarado of Local 301 should have been recognized as a Super Ambassador, giving over \$1,000 in 2022. If you have any questions about giving throughout the calendar year or how to give to the PAC, please reach out to me. I am happy to answer questions about congressional candidates NPMHU PAC gives to and why, or your individual giving level. Thanks to all who support the NPMHU PAC!