

## CAPITOL HILL HAPPENINGS

Robert Losi, Legislative and Political Director



**M**uch has happened on Capitol Hill since our last Mail Handler magazine, as a number of key bills and resolutions have been introduced by both Democrats and Republicans since the start of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress.

### RESOLUTIONS

First, here is an update on where the resolutions that are supported by the NPMHU stand. Again, they have strong support from both sides of the aisle.

**H. Res. 60**—Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States Postal Service “should take all appropriate measures to restore service standards in effect as of July 1, 2012.” Sponsor is Congressman David McKinley (R-WV); introduced on January 17, 2019; currently has 161 co-sponsors.

**H. Res. 33**—Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that “Congress should take all appropriate measures to ensure that the United States Postal Service remains an independent establishment of the Federal Government and is not subject to privatization.” Sponsor is Congressman Stephen Lynch (D-MA); introduced on January 9, 2019; currently has 248 co-sponsors.

**H. Res. 23**—Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States Postal Service “should take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of door delivery for all business and residential customers.” Sponsor is Congresswoman Susan Davis (D-CA); introduced on January 4, 2019; currently has 183 co-sponsors.

**H. Res. 54**—Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States Postal Service “should take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of its 6-day mail delivery service.” Sponsor is Congressman Gerald Connolly (D-VA); introduced on January 16, 2019; currently has 236 co-sponsors.

### BILLS

Since the beginning of May 2019, both Democrats and Republicans have been working diligently to right the ship of postal finances through a number of bills that, if enacted, would put the Postal Service in a much stronger posture to thrive for many more decades into the future.

**H.R. 2382, the USPS Fairness Act**—The first such bill was introduced on April 29, 2019 by Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR), with original cosponsors Congressman Tom Reed (R-NY), Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and Congresswoman Xochitl Torres Small (D-NM). This legislation, if passed, would end the prefunding burden for the Retiree Health Benefits Fund that was placed upon USPS finances when the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) was passed in 2006. That legislation has caused close to all of the USPS losses since 2006. It truly has been an albatross around the neck of the Postal Service; it has caused hundreds of processing plants to close, consolidate and/or slow down the processing of mail through service standard changes. This legislation, in addition to the postal reform bill, is exactly what the doctor ordered to put the postal service on the road for growth and prosperity in the future.

**Both Democrats and Republicans have been working diligently to right the ship of postal finances.**

**H.R. 2553—the USPS Shipping Equity Act**—Congresswoman Jackie Speier (D-CA) introduced this bill with twelve colleagues representing both political parties. This is exactly the type of legislation that is needed to change the way the USPS does business. The Postal Service has been unable to participate in this market because of archaic rules that prohibit the USPS from shipping beer and wine and competing against FedEx and UPS. If passed, this bill could be a shot in the arm for postal finances and another step towards financial freedom. Not to mention that it would give the consumers another option.

**H.R. 2553—the Postal Service Financial Improvement Act of 2019**—Introduced by Congressmen Stephen Lynch (D-MA) and David McKinley (R-WV), this bill is identical to versions from past congressional sessions. Instead of requiring that all monies from the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefit Fund be invested in lowly yielding US Treasury bonds, the Postal Service would be authorized to invest in certain index funds. By allowing the Postal Service to invest wisely and safely, the return could be much higher.

### **ALWAYS ON DEFENSE**

Although all of the listed resolutions and bills, if passed, would help the USPS, the NPMHU must always be on guard for budget items and legislation that could harm Mail Handlers as well! For example, in President Trump's Fiscal Year 2020 budget, language was submitted to eliminate cost-of-living adjustments for FERS retirees and reduce such adjustments for CSRS retirees. Another item in President Trump's FY20 budget that would be harmful would be changing from a high-three to a high-five salary when calculating pension credits. This would adversely affect both the CSRS and FERS retirement systems by reducing earned benefits. Lastly and very costly, the President inserted language in his most recent budget to

eliminate the FERS Annuity Supplement. This benefit adds a financial bridge for FERS retirees before they become eligible for Social Security benefits, and its elimination would cause most FERS eligible retirees to put off such a move.

### **HILL POLITICS**

As you know, the Presidential election and congressional elections are not scheduled until November 3, 2020. That election will decide not only who our next President will be, but also this election will decide what party controls the Senate and house which as equally important to all Mail Handlers and federal employees is extremely important.

The schedule for two House special elections to be held in 2019 is as follows. First, the 3rd Congressional District in North Carolina will have a general election on September 10, 2019 to fill the seat that was held by deceased Republican member Walter Jones. Also, in North Carolina, voters will go to the polls on November 5, 2019 to elect a new member to the House representing the 9th Congressional District. The seat has been vacant since the Board of Elections in North Carolina voted unanimously not to seat the Republican who won the contested seat in the November 2018 midterms because of alleged absentee voter fraud.

