



HATCH ACT GUIDANCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Two years ago, the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC), which is the federal agency charged with enforcing the Hatch Act applicable to federal or postal employees, issued written guidance concerning the use of social media under the Hatch Act. Given the importance that social media has taken on in electoral campaigns, especially this year's ongoing battles for U.S. President, one-third of the Senate, and the entire House of Representatives, that guidance should be reviewed.

The guidance came with real world examples that may be surprising to the average mail handler, such as the following: "You stay at work during your lunch break and check Facebook on your personal cell phone. A Facebook friend posted a message about an upcoming event supporting a candidate in a partisan race. Even if you are not in a pay status during your lunch break, you may not like or share that post while you are in the workplace."

As the 2020 elections approach, it is imperative that all mail handlers be aware of the limitations imposed by The Hatch Act. Generally stated, employees may not engage in political activity while on duty or in the workplace. Political activity is an activity directed at the success or failure of a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group.

pandemic. The Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act (H.R. 6800) would provide the USPS with \$25 billion in financial relief and remove borrowing stipulations imposed by the CARES Act. Directly impacting NPMHU members, the HEROES Act would grant pandemic premium pay for all postal employees. Acknowledging that these men and women, as essential workers, are placing themselves and their families at a greater risk of contracting the coronavirus, the bill calls for an additional \$13.00 an hour for time worked from January 27, 2020, until 60 days after the pandemic ends. While nothing can fully make up for the physical and mental stress employees are facing, the NPMHU hopes this assistance will provide some ease to members. The HEROES Act was passed in the House on Friday, May 15, and moved to the Senate. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and President Trump expressed disapproval of the bill, and will not support it as it stands.

As I am writing this article, in early June, a lot has been happening in a short amount of time. In addition to the HEROES Act, the House introduced legislation providing for \$25 billion in shovel-ready, infrastructure projects for the Postal Service. This will modernize postal facilities and create jobs. As these pieces of legislation move forward or if additional bills are introduced that would impact the Postal Service and NPMHU members, please follow the NPMHU website for any updates. Or if you have any questions about legislation impacting you, please feel free to contact me at kmaddocks@npmhu.org.

The coronavirus is impacting a lot of aspects of our daily routines, but it could also impact Americans lives for years to come. One way this could be seen is through the electoral process. Many of you probably saw the images from the Wisconsin presidential primary election on April 14 or the Georgia primary in early June. Voters were lined up outside of polling locations for hours and were not able to practice safe social distancing. As a result, at least 52 voters in Wisconsin contracted COVID-19. In order to protect the health and well-being of voters, many states have taken measures to allow for vote by mail. Recognizing the longevity of the problem and the impact it will have on the democratic process, the HEROES Act calls for the use of vote by mail for the November 2020 election, and all subsequent elections. States that implemented vote by mail before the pandemic have seen a marked increase in voter participation and reduced election costs. While some suggest that vote by mail shows party favoritism, there is no evidence to prove that contention. To see if your local election board allows for vote by mail, to check your polling location, or to register to vote, please visit www.canivote.org.

This is a difficult time for all of us, but it will eventually pass. I hope everyone and their families are doing as well as can be and staying safe. I am sure we'll see each other soon.

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