

NPMHU MEMBERS FIGHT INACTION IN THE SENATE AND CUTBACKS

FROM USPS HEADQUARTERS

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The United States Postal Service recently has been getting more media attention since the coronavirus pandemic began back in March 2020. We've been seeing reports on the evening news and our local newspapers on the financial difficulties the Postal Service is facing due to losses of volume and revenue, notwithstanding (or perhaps because of) the nation's increased reliance on services for delivery of medication, stimulus checks, and government correspondence, in addition to letters between family members and greeting cards sent to friends. As the Postal Service and the work of its dedicated employees have gotten more attention, the public is beginning to fully understand the necessity and value of a public post office that is able to reach every American household and business at an affordable rate.

While we have seen increased support from the public during this unprecedented time in postal history, elected officials have fallen short. As I mentioned in the last magazine, the House of Representatives passed the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act (H.R. 6800) back in May, and that bill, among other things, would have provided \$25 billion in emergency funding to the Postal Service; remove borrowing restrictions imposed on USPS by the Department of Treasury; and, allot hazard pay of \$13.00 an hour to all postal employees and other essential personnel who worked the front lines during the pandemic.

The HEROES Act was quickly stalled in the Senate, however. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) stated that the language in the HEROES Act was a non-starter for Senate Republicans and that House Democrats were demanding too much at too big of a price. The Senate left DC for their August recess, without developing a plan for the next stimulus package. The silver lining to this issue is that a group of bipartisan Senators have introduced the Postal Service Emergency Assistance Act, S. 4174, which would provide the \$25 billion in emergency funding and remove the borrowing stipulation, while also setting up the ground work for future postal reform.

Adding to the problems of the Postal Service, new Postmaster General Louis DeJoy instituted a new pilot program impacting the delivery times of over 300 postal facilities across the country. The pilot program calls for operational changes that

would limit carrier trips out of processing centers to deliver mail, resulting in mail being left behind and delivery delays. Additionally, PMG DeJoy examined the elimination of using overtime and documents from the Postal Service, stating, "the USPS will no longer use excessive cost to get the basic job done. If the plants run late they will keep the mail for the next day. If you get mail late and your carriers are gone and you cannot get the mail out without OT [overtime] it will remain for the next day." Obviously, as these "next day" delays cascade into each other, this has resulted in major delays in mail processing and delivery of mail, to the frustration of NPMHU members and other postal employees, as well as postal customers.

These shared frustrations resulted in congressional inquiries from members of both the House and Senate to the PMG, asking for an explanation for the need of the pilot program. The office of the PMG responded stating the pilot program is within the PMG's authority and the pilot program is a means to address the Postal Service's financial challenges. Not satisfied with the response, Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Gary Peters (D-MI), Tom Carper (D-DE), Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Tina Smith (D-MN) along with Representatives Carolyn Maloney (D-NY-12), Steve Lynch (D-MA-08), Gerry Connolly (D-VA-11), and Brenda Lawrence (D-MI-14), requested that the USPS Office of Inspector General conduct an audit of these changes; how these changes affect delivery and service; and, whether there is a conflict of interest based on PMG DeJoy's financial assets invested in the USPS competitors and contractors.

Additionally, members of Congress met with NPMHU members at facilities impacted by the pilot program to gain first-hand knowledge about how implemented delays are impacting our work. To list just a few examples, Senator Peters and Representative Lawrence met with Local 307 Branch President Derek Douglass at the Michigan Metroplex, while a few days later Representative Carolyn Maloney met with Local 300 Vice President Yvette Johnson and Treasurer Willie Delgado.

On August 18, members of the House and Senate held press conferences in front of postal facilities across the country, in which NPMHU members participated, to bring attention to the implemented delays. As a result of the pressure from this media attention, from congressional push-back, and from the public outcry, DeJoy issued a statement that he would roll

back changes to operations and service standards, other than insisting on adherence to transportation or truck schedules; even this partial rollback, however, would only apply to election mail and would only last past this year's November 3, 2020 election. But for most members of the House, this action was too little, too late. Representative Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, introduced H.R. 8015, the Delivering for America Act. If adopted into law, this bill would provide the Postal Service with \$25 billion in emergency appropriations; suspend any changes to service standards between January 1, 2020 through the end of the COVID-19 pandemic; prohibit the ban on overtime to ensure deliveries are made on time; and, treat election mail as first class mail. Knowing the significance of this legislation, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA-12) called all 435 Representatives back to Washington, DC to vote on the bill during a special session of the House on Saturday, August 22. NPMHU National Headquarters sent a letter of support on the bill to every member of the House, and our membership was encouraged to contact their Representatives, also asking for a yes vote on H.R. 8015.

Needing direct answers from USPS management, the House and Senate held separate hearing with DeJoy and Board of Governors Chairman Robert Duncan. DeJoy used the time to explain that his actions were a means to cover costs and address the Postal Service's long financial problems. While assurances were given that election mail would be protected, questions arose regarding other operational changes and their impact on service standards. DeJoy was asked to account for the delays of medication and the drop in service standards, on which he often hesitated, or could not provide complete explanations or reasoning for any delays.

This pilot program and its resulting delays implemented by PMG DeJoy cannot be thoroughly or accurately discussed without reminding NPMHU members that DeJoy's history with the Postal Service lies solely outside of the agency as a subcontractor that made his money by undercutting and eliminating postal jobs. Furthermore, PMG DeJoy and his wife have given over \$2 million to the Trump campaign and other Republican candidates, and was previously named the financial chair for the 2020 Republican Convention. It therefore is not surprising that PMG DeJoy is promoting policies that reflect the anti-Postal Service beliefs of President Trump, instead of policies that are in the best interest of the Postal Service, its employees, and its customers. Previous Trump Administration attacks against the USPS and its employees have included the following:

- [Calling the Postal Service a "joke";](#)
- [Insisting that use of the mail to vote in this November's national elections will cause a "rigged" election or allow for fraud in the election results;](#)

- [Increasing postal rates, including quadrupling pricing on package mail. This could potentially price some postal customers out of the market.](#)
- [Moving away from six-day delivery, negatively impacting delivery schedules;](#)
- [Expand third-party relationships and moving towards a privatized system;](#)
- [Removing the current bargaining rights of postal employees, taking away labors' say in how employees are compensated; and,](#)
- [Utilizing a defined contribution retirement plan instead of the current defined benefit plans, putting the burden and risk of retirement planning fully on employees.](#)

The NPMHU asks that its members take these attacks into consideration when it comes time to cast your vote in November. Not only has President Trump attacked Postal Service, but there have also been many Members of Congress who have targeted USPS: calling for its privatization; denying emergency funding during the current crisis caused by COVID-19; belittling the service that USPS now provides to every American household and business; and, undermining the dedicated men and women of the postal workforce.

Fortunately, there are also postal friends and champions on both sides of the aisle in the House of Representatives and Senate. As NPMHU members recall, the USPS Fairness Act, repealing the mandate for the Postal Service to prefund its retiree healthcare benefits, passed in the House with support from representatives from both political parties. During debate on the House floor, original cosponsor Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-01) commented on H.R. 2382 by saying the following: "This bipartisan bill will restore the USPS' financial health by shoring up that funding and ensure it has the resources to improve the Postal Service for all Americans. And I urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this legislation." Following his remarks, fellow original cosponsor Rep. Xochitl Torres Small (D-NM-02) stated, "I represent one of the most rural districts in the nation. And in Southern New Mexico, post offices and postal workers are an integral part of our communities, connecting businesses to customers, pharmacies to patients, and families to friends. Congress created this prefunding crisis, so I am pleased the House of Representatives took the first step to solve it." It is important that all of these and similar postal friends and champions get our support at the ballot box between today and November 3.

In order to help understand what legislative issues are important to NPMHU and what members of Congress are supportive of our cause, the NPMHU has a new Legislative & Political website, found at www.npmhu.org/legislative. There, all NPMHU members can find a list of supported legislation that contains