

BIDEN NOMINATES NEW MEMBERS TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Katie Maddocks, Legislative and Political Director



In response to repeated messages from several Members of Congress and various postal stakeholders, President Biden has nominated Dan Tangherlini as the next Chairman of the USPS Board of Governors. Mr. Tangherlini will replace former Chairman Ron Bloom, who was losing support due to his continued enthusiasm for certain provisions within the Postal Service's Ten-Year Plan, including closures and consolidations of mail processing facilities; the continued privatization of Surface Transfer Centers and other aspects of mail processing; and the imposition of various policies that have imposed further delays in the mail. The NPMHU had expressed its views on these issues directly to the White House, letting the Biden Administration know of the Union's concern about a simple renomination of Chairman Bloom when his hold-over year expired on December 8, 2021.

After hearing these and similar messages from other postal stakeholders, President Biden decided not to renominate Chairman Bloom and instead nominated Dan Tangherlini to the Board of Governors. Mr. Tangherlini previously served as administrator of the General Services Administration, the chief financial officer at the Department of Treasury, and as city administrator to the District of Columbia. Upon his nomination, President Hogrogian commented, "Dan Tangherlini has a history of providing sound financial guidance to federal agencies, ensuring they will be able to meet mandated missions and goals while still providing much needed services to the American public. The National Postal Mail Handlers Union looks forward to his nomination to the Postal Board of Governors and will work with him to ensure financial stability of the Postal Service that does not come at the expense of customers or employees."

Along with Mr. Tangherlini, President Biden also nominated Derek Kan to the Board of Governors, replacing John Barger whose term also expired on December 8. Mr. Kan served both in the Obama and Trump Administrations on the Amtrak Board of Directors, as Under Secretary of Transportation Policy in the Department of Transportation, and as the Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

At the time of this writing, the nomination hearing for Mr. Tangherlini and Mr. Kan before the Senate Homeland

Security and Governmental Affairs Committee has yet to be scheduled, and it will be difficult to have their nominations confirmed by the full Senate before the end of 2021. We will keep you updated on the process.

INFRASTRUCTURE BILL SIGNED INTO LAW

After months of debate within the House of Representatives, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act has been enacted and signed into law by President Biden. The law, P.L. 117-58, provides for greater funding for the maintenance of roads and bridges; ensures broadband internet access; invests in public transportation and rail; and eliminates lead pipes to provide clean water throughout the country. President Biden commented, "This is a blue-collar blueprint to rebuild America. And it's long overdue." LiUNA General President Terry O'Sullivan, who was present at the bill signing ceremony, stated, "The investment will put Laborers to work in every community, revitalize our nation's economy, and open doors to the middle-class for hundreds of thousands of working men and women."

While the legislation will boost the economy and create almost two million jobs a year over the next ten years, it was held up with debate over a spending bill, known as the Build Back Better Act (H.R. 5376), that members of the Progressive Caucus in the House of Representatives wanted to pass in tandem with the infrastructure bill. However, the cost of the Build Back Better bill raised concerns from moderates and conservatives in the Senate. At the time of this writing, the Build Back Better Act has passed the House along party lines, but moderate Senate Democrats Joe Manchin (WV) and Kyrsten Sinema (AZ) still have concerns about the high price tag. While still subject to change, the bill includes tax deductions for union dues; funding for an electric vehicle fleet for the Postal Service; extending the child tax credit; and reducing prescription drug prices. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) commented that he would like the Senate to vote on the bill by Christmas; however, Senator Manchin replied that he needs more time to review the bill and its costs and currently cannot vote for it. As the Senate is split evenly between the parties, the bill cannot advance without the full support of all Democratic members.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING AND THE DEBT CEILING

Further adding to Congress' end-of-year agenda, the federal government was scheduled to run out of funding on December 3, 2021. Less than 48 hours before that deadline, House and Senate leadership agreed upon funding levels through February 18, 2022 to avoid a government shutdown. Many NPMHU members will recall that, from December 22, 2018 to January 25, 2019, the federal government was shut down and our brothers and sisters of the federal workforce were furloughed due to lack of funding for operations. While this did not directly impact Postal Service employees, it did cost the national economy over \$11 billion.

Also noteworthy is the potential impact on Postal Service employees if Congress is unable in the next few weeks to agree on raising the debt ceiling. The debt ceiling is separate from funding the government, but it would mean the United States is unable to pay the debts that it has already incurred, including the salaries and benefits of postal employees. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's best estimate for when the United States would reach the debt ceiling is mid-December, right at the point of the holiday season when demands on postal employees are at their highest. Because government funding was set to expire before the debt ceiling is reached, Members of Congress addressed that issue first, and thus no real substantial talks have yet to be had on the debt ceiling among congressional leadership. It should also be noted that this would not be the first time the debt ceiling has been raised. On 78 prior occasions, Congress has raised, temporarily extended, or revised the debt limit.

As these issues will be moving quickly and will or will not be resolved by the time of this publication, please visit the NPMHU website for up-to-date information.

POSTAL REFORM

As Members of Congress focus elsewhere, it often feels as though postal employees and the Postal Service Reform Act of 2021 (H.R. 3076/S. 1720) has been forgotten. After its passage back in May by the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, the bill has stalled within the House Ways and Means Committee. Chairman Richie Neal (D-MA-01) has stated he needs to review the language within the bill pertaining to Medicare integration for future retirees to ensure that it will not have any negative effects on the Medicare Trust Fund. However, this has been his repeated response for the past six months, and progress has not been apparent. Additionally, the concept of Medicare integration for retirees is not a new concept for USPS employees and retirees, as it has been discussed since at least 2017.

It also bears noting that the bill has broad bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. As of November 30, 2021, H.R. 3076 has 93 sponsors – 54 Democrats and 39 Republicans.



The Senate version, S. 1720, has 28 sponsors – 14 Republicans, 13 Democrats, and 1 Independent. Passage of bipartisan legislation, which affects all parties, as well as urban, suburban, and rural areas alike, would provide lawmakers a chance to show their constituents how they are working for the common good while in Congress, trying to solve a problem that affects the nation as a whole. It would additionally give assurances to postal employees that they have support on Capitol Hill and are not just getting empty platitudes from Congress.

The NPMHU will continually push for the passage of the Postal Service Reform Act in both the House and Senate.