

# The NPMHU FOCUSES on CAPITOL HILL

**E**ven more than usual, the NPMHU has been focusing its attention in recent months on actions and activities related to the U.S. Congress, where there are both real and threatened attacks on the Postal Service and its unions, on the wages and benefits of postal employees, and on the collective bargaining process that governs the way in which the Postal Service and postal unions seek equitable resolution on these issues. Various bills have been introduced, and while some would help the Postal Service work its way through its current financial difficulties in a rational way, many others are aimed at privatizing or otherwise dismantling the Postal Service, and still others are intended to make direct cuts in the pay and benefits now earned by postal employees, including all mail handlers.

## LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE HELD FOR 112th CONGRESS

In May 2011, more than one hundred mail handlers from across the country gathered in Washington, DC to participate in the NPMHU's Legislative Conference for the 112th Congress. The two-day conference, held on May 10 and May 11, was filled with significant programs and activities. (Read more about the legislative conference on pages 14 to 20, which follow this legislative update.)

## NPMHU SUPPORTS SEVERAL BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

The NPMHU has been urging Members of Congress to cosponsor and otherwise support legislation that would assist and support the Postal Service and postal employees in their efforts to work through the current economic decline.

Of most importance, Members of the House are being urged to cosponsor H.R. 1351, introduced by Representative Stephen F. Lynch (D-MA). This legislation would address issues related to the Postal Service's current overfunding of the Retiree Health Benefits Fund (RHBF), as well as its past overpayments to the CSRS and FERS retirement systems. No private-sector company and no other federal agency are required to pre-fund future retiree health costs, as the Postal Service now does by making more than \$5 billion in annual payments into the RHBF, and no private company or federal agency is required to overpay for its known pension costs. Congress needs to demand that the Office of Personnel Management recalculate the postal pension surplus using actuarial methods that are fair and unbiased, as provided by H.R. 1351; the bill also would require OPM to transfer excess pension monies to the RHBF, and would repeal the pre-funding requirement that was adopted by the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006.

The NPMHU also is supporting H.R. 1262, introduced by Representative Gerald Connolly (D-VA). This legislation would give the Postal Service tools to improve its efficiency, to help it meet its universal service obligation, and to facilitate economic growth. Among other provisions, it would provide support for vote by mail, electric vehicles, and the Postal Service's sale of electronic mail boxes and other new products.

Also supported by the NPMHU is H. Res. 137, a resolution introduced by Representative Sam Graves (R-MO), which urges the Postal Service to take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of its six-day mail delivery service.

Finally, the NPMHU is carefully monitoring several pieces of legislation that would cut workers compensation benefits for injured federal and postal employees. These bills are still in their preliminary stages, but pose significant risks to mail handlers and other employees who may be injured on the job.

## HOUSE REPUBLICANS OFFER MISGUIDED ATTACK ON POSTAL SERVICE AND POSTAL EMPLOYEES

On June 23, 2011, Republican Representatives Darryl Issa (R-CA), who chairs the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and Dennis Ross (R-FL), the chair of the Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service and District of Columbia, introduced their version of a postal reform bill. As introduced, H.R. 2309 would deprive postal employees of the freedom to bargain collectively, would cut the pay and benefits of current and future postal employees, and would hinder (and reduce) USPS service by expediting the closing of postal facilities and establishing a new bureaucracy to oversee the Postal Board of Governors. Within years, the bill likely would lead to privatization, or total collapse of the Postal Service.

The crux of this misguided bill is to blame the workers who provide an invaluable service to the American people, while trying to absolve the Congress from its responsibilities for the recent financial decline of the Postal Service. The principal cause of the USPS deficit over the past four years has been a yearly \$5.5 billion payment mandated by Congress to pre-fund future retirees' health benefits. Without these pay-