

LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE HELD FOR 112th CONGRESS



AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt Baker urges the conference participants to be strong union advocates.



National Secretary-Treasurer Mark Gardner, AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt Baker and National President John Hegarty

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.

The first day included a full training program, with a host of speakers highlighting both the substance of USPS issues now facing Congress and the methods used by successful lobbyists. National President John Hegarty, National Secretary-Treasurer Mark Gardner, and AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt-Baker opened the program by highlighting the importance of the NPMHU's representation on Capitol Hill, noting in particular that year-round legislative and political involvement must be part of the commitment made by all NPMHU activists.

The program also included appearances by a host of experts on the postal issues that currently are being debated in the nation's capital. Among the featured speakers were Congressman Gerald

E. Connolly (D-VA), a key member of the House Oversight & Government Reform Committee, and Marie Therese Dominguez, USPS Vice President of Government Relations and Public Policy. Important presentations also were made by Terry O'Sullivan, General President of LIUNA, the NPMHU's international parent body, and by several key representatives from other unions with whom the NPMHU coordinates its legislative efforts, including Paul Lemmon from the AFL-CIO, Jim Sauber from the National Association of Letter Carriers, and Kevin Talley from the National Rural Letter Carriers Association.

The second day of the Conference provided an opportunity for all mail handlers attending the Legislative Conference to meet with Members of Congress and their professional staff. During those meetings, mail handlers expressed their support for the Postal Service's efforts to eliminate the unjustified pre-funding of the Retirees Health Benefit Fund and to stop USPS overfunding of the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal Employees Retirement System.

Mail handlers urged Members of Congress to co-sponsor legislation that would fix these funds and relieve the Postal Service of its unjustified financial burdens, including particularly H.R. 1351 introduced by Congressman Steven F. Lynch of Massachusetts, which now has more than one hundred and sixty co-sponsors.

The day ended with a reception, held in the Rayburn House Office Building, at which dozens of Members of Congress and staff members stopped by to discuss issues relevant to the NPMHU and all mail handlers in a more relaxed setting. Not only were the NPMHU and hundreds of mail handlers able to share their views on pending issues throughout the day, but relationships forged during the conference will prove helpful during the coming weeks and months as postal issues continue to occupy center stage on the legislative agenda.

Special thanks go to Bob Losi, NPMHU Director of Legislative and Political Affairs, and to Roger Blacklow, Senior Legislative Advisor, for orchestrating a superb legislative program.