



MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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NPMHU FOCUSES ON CAPITOL HILL

Legislative Conference Held for 112th Congress



Mark A. Gardner
Secretary-Treasurer

The two-day May 2011 Legislative Conference 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 com-

mitment made by all NPMHU activists. The program also included appearances by a host of experts on postal issues that are currently 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 NALC, and Kevin Talley from the NRLCA.

The second day of the Conference allowed mail handlers 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. 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.

Kudos must be given to Bob Losi, NPMHU Director of Legislative and Political Affairs, and to Roger Blacklow, Senior Legislative Advisor, for orchestrating a superb program.



Friend to postal and federal workers, U.S. Representative Gerry Connolly (D-VA) speaks to the assembled mail handlers.



(l-r) NPMHU National Secretary-Treasurer Mark Gardner, AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt-Baker and National President John Hegarty following Ms. Holt-Baker's keynote speech to the Legislative Conference attendees.



General President Laborers International Union of North America Terry O'Sullivan exhorts the audience to action.

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 payments, the Postal Service would have operated at a surplus over those four years. The bill introduced by Congressmen Issa and Ross has ignored this problem, as well as billions of dollars in USPS overfunding of the CSRS program (\$50 to \$70 billion) and the FERS program (\$6.9 billion).

Instead, the bill is aimed at the destruction of collective bargaining between the Postal Service and its unions. It would establish a new, politically-appointed governing body, called the Postal Service Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority, each and every time that the Postal Service were late in any payments owed to the federal government for more than 30 days. Under certain circumstances, this "Authority" could require the immediate renegotiation of an existing collective bargaining agreement, and also could reject, modify, or terminate one or more terms of an existing collective bargaining agreement. In particular, the bill as drafted states that, "[n]otwithstanding any other provision of law,"

the Authority could require the renegotiation of an existing collective bargaining agreement "to achieve specific economic savings and workforce flexibility goals." The bill goes on to state that, "after meeting and conferring with the appropriate bargaining representative," the Authority may reject, modify, or terminate the terms or conditions of an existing collective bargaining agreement if the Authority concludes that a prompt and satisfactory agreement is unlikely, and that the rejection, modification, or termination is reasonable and necessary for the Postal Service to be a financially viable provider of universal postal service to the Nation and is designed to achieve the specific economic savings or workforce flexibility goals (as the case may be) that were set by the Authority. In short, the bill would decimate collective bargaining, and replace bargaining with the unilateral imposition of wages, hours, and all other terms and conditions of employment. In addition, if ever adopted, the bill would lead to the wholesale downsizing of the Postal Service. The USPS would reduce to a 5-day delivery schedule, and would require the Postal

Service to close retail and mail processing facilities and thereby force savings of more than \$2 billion per year. The bill also includes a proposal initiated by Senator John McCain (R-AZ), to increase each employee's contribution to the cost of health care and life insurance premiums.

"This bill is not the serious legislative effort that is needed to rescue the Postal Service," said National President Hegarty. "It ignores the major financial issues that have been identified by most postal observers, and instead reads like an anti-worker and anti-union position paper written by ideologues. At a time when bi-partisan support is coalescing around Representative Stephen Lynch's bill (HR 1351), the NPMHU had hoped that committee leaders would stop playing politics with the Postal Service, its workers, and the communications network that is so valuable to the nation."

The NPMHU will be joining with other postal unions and other stakeholders to oppose this misguided effort at "reform," and will continue to press for meaningful changes in the law to allow the Postal Service to prosper through and after the current economic downturn.