



# MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS: 815 16<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W. • Suite 5100 • Washington, D.C. 20006 • (202) 833-9095



**Paul V. Hogrogian**  
National President

## THE NPMHU LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR THE 117<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS



**Michael J. Hora**  
Secretary-Treasurer

Every two years, the Committee on the Future of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union adopts a comprehensive legislative agenda for the new congressional session. For the 117<sup>th</sup> session, NPMHU is focused on protecting the health and safety of our members and our postal brothers and sisters as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our professional and personal lives. Additionally, the NPMHU will remain dedicated to its postal reform work, ensuring the financial sustainability of the Postal Service, while strengthening the universal service obligation for all American households and businesses. NPMHU will also promote protecting the postal workforce's earned benefits and our collective bargaining rights. As the nation saw during the 2020 elections, the United States Postal Service serves a vital part to the country's democratic process. Because of this, the NPMHU will continue to advocate for strengthening vote by mail initiatives.

A more detailed version of this legislative agenda will be available on the NPMHU legislative website, [www.npmhu.org/legislative](http://www.npmhu.org/legislative), and will be published in the Winter 2021 Mail Handler Magazine. If you have any questions about the NPMHU's congressional goals for the 117<sup>th</sup> or how to discuss this agenda with your Representative or Senators, please contact NPMHU Legislative and Political Director Katie Maddocks at [kmaddocks@npmhu.org](mailto:kmaddocks@npmhu.org).

### COVID-19 Relief

In order to protect the USPS from drastic financial losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as protect the essential postal workforce, Congress must do the following:

- › Provide \$25 billion in emergency funding to address pandemic-related revenue losses.
- › Provide \$25 billion in funding for "shovel ready projects."
- › Provide hazard pay for essential workers, which includes all postal employees.
- › Provide an additional 14 weeks of paid leave to postal employees because the employee is unable to work or obtain child or dependent care because of quarantine or isolation orders related to COVID-19
- › Ensure that postal employees are recognized as frontline essential employees and are prioritized in states' COVID-19 vaccine distribution plans.

### Comprehensive Postal Reform

Comprehensive reform, with the input of all stakeholders, needs to be introduced during the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Postal reform legislation must include:

- › Repeal of the 2006 mandate for the USPS to prefund its retiree healthcare benefits.
- › Provide for certain index fund investments for the Retiree Health Benefits Fund, rather than restricting the Fund to low-yielding Treasury bonds.
- › Require Postal Service annuitants 55 and younger as of January 1, 2023 to enroll into Medicare when eligible for healthcare needs during retirement.
- › Utilize postal-only assumptions for calculating pension liabilities.
- › Nonpostal services to grow revenue.
- › Utilize market-dominate rates.

### Fundamentals of the Postal Service

Members of Congress should continue to protect the basic fundamentals of the Postal Service, ensuring that every American household and business, in urban, suburban, and rural areas, has access to the universal service provided by the USPS. The NPMHU endorses resolutions introduced by Members of the House and Senate that express the need to ensure that the Postal Service remains a public entity that can ensure delivery.

- › Expressing the sense that Congress should take all appropriate measures to ensure that the Postal Service remains an independent establishment of the Federal Government and is not subject to privatization.
- › Expressing the sense that the Postal Service should take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of door delivery for all business and residential customers.
- › Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Postal Service should take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of its 6-day mail delivery service.

### Strengthening Service Standards

In the summer of 2020, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy instituted drastic changes to services. The negative impacts on delivery were seen almost immediately, with week-long delays of government and personal correspondence, vital medications, and needed home goods. While these changes in services were temporarily reversed, the Postal Service previously experienced cutbacks in service standards that have never been reinstated, including the virtual elimination of overnight delivery of first-class mail and periodicals. This does nothing but drive away customers and negatively impacts revenue. The NPMHU asks lawmakers in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress to support a resolution that calls for the Postal Service to revert back to its 2012 levels.

### Protecting Earned Retirement and Healthcare Benefits

Unfortunately, it has become common practice to look at the earned retirement and healthcare benefits of postal and federal employees as a means to reduce the deficit. The NPMHU is concerned that the House and Senate will again consider these cuts and will lobby against the following:

- › Moving from a high-3 to a high-5 for annuity calculations;
- › Eliminating FERS Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and reducing CSRS COLAs by 0.5%;
- › Eliminating the FERS retirement supplement plan for those who retire before the age of 65;
- › Reducing the G-Fund interest rates for those under the Thrift Savings Plan; and,
- › Increasing employee retirement and healthcare contributions.

In addition to protecting these benefits, the NPMHU will work with lawmakers to strengthen retirement benefits as well. These measures include:

- › The elimination or curtailing of the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).
- › Providing temporary employees hired after January 1989 with the opportunity to make additional contributions to their retirement plans, allowing eligible employees to retire on time with full retirement benefits.

### Promoting Workers' Rights

In the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, the NPMHU saw positive steps forward in basic workers' rights. The House and Senate introduced the PRO (Protecting the Right to Organize) Act (H.R. 2474/S. 1306), which would strengthen current federal laws by allowing private-sector workers to organize and join a union and bargain for better wages and benefits. Additionally, the House and Senate introduced the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act (H.R. 3463/S. 1970), requiring public employers to recognize employees' rights to join a union and collectively bargain over wages, hours, working conditions, and allowing workers to access arbitration and mediation as a means of dispute resolution. The NPMHU will advocate for these bills again in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Despite the growth of production over the past years, American wages continue to fall behind and the federal minimum wage remains outpaced by inflation. In the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Raise the Wage Act (H.R. 582/S. 150) called to increase federal minimum wage to \$15.00 an hour by 2025, with gradual increases over a five-year period. This measure passed the House, and the NPMHU will continue to push this issue in the 117<sup>th</sup>.

### Strengthen American Elections

During the 2020 elections, there was unprecedented reliance on the Postal Service for the processing and delivery of mail-in ballots. In the November 2020 general election, the Postal Service processed and delivered 135 million ballots (to and from voters), 610 million pieces of election mail, and an additional 4 billion pieces of political mail. The Postal Service delivered 97.9% of ballots within 3 days and 99.7% of ballots within 5 days. In order for this success to occur, constant communication between USPS, postal unions and management associations, and state and local election boards was necessary. As the pandemic continues, putting in-person voting at risk, these joint efforts need to continue. The NPMHU will promote legislation, primarily at the state and local level, to encourage democratic participation through "vote by mail" initiatives, and will support such efforts at the federal level as well.



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