



MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION ON POSTAL REFORM MOVES FORWARD

The National Postal Mail Handlers Union and other postal stakeholders have seen tremendous strides towards sustainable postal reform this May. After dedicated negotiations between House Committee on Oversight and Reform (COR) Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY-12) and Ranking Member James Comer (R-KY-01), they developed a bipartisan bill with actions to address the Postal Service's financial stability. Their negotiations tried to take account of the views of all postal stakeholders, including the NPMHU and other unions.

The mainstay of the Postal Reform Act of 2021, H.R. 3076, would repeal the 2006 mandate for the USPS to prefund its retiree healthcare benefits. This mandate is the cause of an annual loss of \$5 billion over ten years and has been the primary cause of financial deficits since 2013. The bill also would require future USPS retirees to enroll in Medicare, as this would take financial pressure off of the Postal Service Retirement Health Fund's unfunded liability. Postal employees have contributed over \$35 billion to Medicare over the past four decades, while not fully taking advantage of its benefits.

H.R. 3076 also addresses other NPMHU legislative agenda items. First, the bill allows for the Postal Service to enter agreements with state, local, or tribal governments to provide property and services on behalf of such agencies for non-commercial products and services, such as providing fishing and hunting licenses, providing a source of additional revenue growth for the Postal Service. Second, the bill codifies a six-day delivery standard, ensuring postal customers will receive first class mail and parcels as they are accustomed to.

NPMHU members are keenly aware of the issues caused from mail delays due to service standard changes last summer. Union members as well as postal customers saw significant delays that impacted the delivery of medications, caused late fees for bill payments, and generally undermined the reliability of the Postal Service. In order to reassure customers and provide greater transparency, H.R. 3076 calls for the creation of a public-facing dashboard website that informs USPS customers about delays. Furthermore, the bill calls for studies on the financial status of the Postal Service and would provide qualitative data on standards,

providing necessary information on the performance of the Postal Service.

H.R. 3076 quickly passed within the Committee with bipartisan support and now heads to both the House Committee on Ways and Means as well as the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, as both of these bodies have jurisdiction over Medicare issues. Ongoing discussions with these committee members have been promising, and they appear eager to move the bill forward. There is additional support for these bills from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Democratic Leader Steny Hoyer.

Upon its passage in COR, Chairwoman Maloney stated, "We have accomplished something historic today. We moved legislation to put the Postal Service on a more secure financial footing, enhance transparency, and improve service. I am proud that this bill to strengthen the Postal Service was approved by the Oversight Committee on a strong bipartisan basis."

Because H.R. 3076 also needs support in the Senate to become law, it is necessary to see companion language in the upper chamber. To accomplish this, Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Gary Peters (D-MI) and Ranking Member Rob Portman (R-OH) introduced identical language on May 19, as bill number S. 1720. The Senate bill is also cosponsored by Senators Tina Smith (D-MN), Mike Rounds (R-SD), Roy Blunt (R-MO), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Josh Hawley (R-MO), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Dan Sullivan (D-AK), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Susan Collins (R-ME), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Steve Daines (R-MT), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Shelly Capito (R-WV), Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), Thomas Tillis (R-NC), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Richard Burr (R-NC), and Tom Carper (D-DE). With this amount of support, if S. 1720 were to come to the Senate floor for a vote, it would pass.

With the committee passage of H.R. 3076 and the introduction of S. 1720, NPMHU National President Paul Hogrogian commented, "Reforms to the Postal Service are long overdue. By repealing the prefunding mandate and adopting Medicare integration for future retirees, the Postal Service will gain needed financial stability. With bipartisan support from both Republicans and Democrats in the House and Senate, we finally have a chance of passing effective postal reform."

With H.R. 3076 and S. 1720 heavily negotiated to ensure bipartisanship, the Postal Service Improvement Act, H.R. 3077, was introduced separately to address more contentious proposals, and was passed in COR along party lines. This bill initially contained language to provide ballot tracking for those participating in vote by mail and to guarantee paid parental leave for postal employees. The ballot tracking provision also appears in a stand-alone bill, H.R. 1307, the Vote by Mail Tracking Act, which calls for mail-in ballots to be barcoded by the Postal Service for tracking purposes. In a hearing before COR, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy testified in support of the bill. H.R. 3077 also would extend paid parental leave to postal employees, providing for up to 12 weeks for the birth of a child, the adoption of a child, and the fostering of a child, a benefit that already is provided to the rest of the federal workforce.

During the mark-up session of this separate bill, H.R. 3077, amendments were added, including provisions that would fund an electric vehicle fleet for the Postal Service; restore service standards back to January 1, 2021 levels; require financial disclosures from the Postmaster General and the Deputy Postmaster General before they assume duties; and guarantee access to all Members of Congress to enter any postal facility for the purpose of conducting oversight.

Following the passage of the House bills, Representative Jackie Speier (D-CA-14) and Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) introduced the bipartisan USPS Shipping Equity Act as H.R. 3287 and S. 1163. This legislation would allow for the Postal Service to ship alcohol, the same as their private carrier counterparts. Over the past five years, online sales of alcohol have grown by 12 percent, amounting to over \$1 billion. If the USPS had the same access to shipping alcohol, the Congressional Budget Office estimates an additional \$50 million a year in revenue for the Postal Service.

The NPMHU is grateful for the work of the House and Senate to promote legislation that offers solutions to the USPS' financial shortcomings, as well as additional sources of revenue growth, more accountability to customers, and necessary extensions of benefits for the dedicated postal workforce. The NPMHU will continue to work hard to encourage Congress to adopt these bills, and the Union looks forward to the success of these bills.

HAPPY MEMORIAL DAY



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