NALC Bulletin
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Four postal unions express their 'strong opposition' to Senate bill

The four postal unions—the National Association of Letter Carriers, the American Postal Workers Union, the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union—sent on Jan. 27 a joint letter to members of the Senate committee with U.S. Postal Service oversight, expressing "strong opposition" to a revised version of Senate bill S. 1486 and urging senators to oppose the bill, which was considered by the full committee in a mark-up session scheduled for Jan. 29.

The substitute bill was introduced on Jan. 23 by Sens. Tom Carper (D-DE) and Tom Coburn (R-OK), the chairman and ranking member, respectively, of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. The bill retained many of the negative features of their original bill and added new provisions "that are totally unfair and unnecessary," the letter said. One of the new provisions would require the USPS to pre-fund $17 billion in future workers' compensation expenses.

The union presidents noted that the Postal Service posted an operating profit of $623 million in 2013 and is projecting a $1.1 billion operating profit this year, but they acknowledged that "the Postal Service needs serious reform."

The crushing pre-funding burden needs to be addressed, they wrote. The pre-funding mandate, which was imposed by the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act, is directly responsible for more than 80 percent of the deficit since the mandate went into effect in 2007.

Although the substitute bill adopted some reforms the unions have proposed, "It retains the service cuts and employee hits contained in the original bill," the union presidents said.

"The substitute merely delays the proposed service and job cuts, but does not eliminate them," they wrote. "And setting an arbitrary mail-volume trigger of 140 billion pieces for the elimination of Saturday delivery will not make degrading our last-mile delivery network a more sensible business strategy for this most important public service," the letter said.

"At a time when the demand for date-specific marketing and for same-day and next-day delivery service is growing, and at a time when we are introducing Sunday service, legislated service cuts that would eliminate Saturday delivery, slow delivery times and reduce the demand for mail make no sense," the presidents wrote.

"In view of the foregoing, we urge you to vote against the substitute to S. 1486 as drafted at the mark-up," they wrote. "We regret that a more-limited, less-damaging bill is not being considered. But we pledge to work with all of you for postal reform that will strengthen the national treasure that is the U.S. Postal Service."

The full statement, the letter and some activist talking points about the bill are posted at nalc.org.

Committee mark-up

On Jan. 29, the Senate committee with Postal Service oversight, the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, spent nearly three hours in a mark-up meeting to debate a handful of proposed amendments to S. 1486.

One of the first amendments considered after the meeting came to order at 10 a.m., from Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), called for an immediate end to six-day delivery. It was easily defeated on a voice vote.

Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) proposed an amendment calling on the Postal Service to declare bankruptcy and reorganize. In the senator's vision of reorganization, collective-bargaining agreements between USPS and its employee unions would be renegotiated, while existing no-layoff protections and the ability to bargain over wages would be banned. Fortunately, the committee voted down the Paul amendment, 11 to 4.

After some discussion, an amendment offered by Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT), calling for the removal of the bill's unfair provisions regarding injured workers, failed. Later, Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) raised some concerns over the new bill's changes to the Postal Service's rate-setting authority. Following a great deal of back-and-forth chatter on the matter, Baldwin's concerns were noted and her amendment was held over for future consideration.

After working through these and other amendments, committee Chairman Tom Carper (D-DE) declared the meeting in recess shortly before 1 p.m. And as this *NALC Bulletin* was being prepared, there was no word on when—or if—the committee would reconvene to finish its mark-up of S. 1486 and vote on it.

For more in-depth coverage of the hearing, visit nalc.org.

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Stay informed and get the very latest alerts from the NALC via the e-Activist Network. Go to nalc.org today to sign up or to update your e-mail address.

System error forces dues-collection adjustment

Due to a system error effective Pay Period 01-14, NALC members paying less than $23.21 per pay period had their dues reduced to 7 cents per pay period. Such members belonging to branches with local dues should have had their dues increased to $23.44. Members belonging to branches that have no local dues should have had their dues increased by 7 cents.

Affected members will have their dues deduction increased in Pay Period 04-14 and Pay Period 05-14 to the correct amount plus a temporary adjustment to recoup the dues not paid from Pay Period 01-14 through Pay Period 03-14.

Branches affected will receive the adjusted amounts in Pay Period 04-14 and Pay Period 05-14. Affected members' dues will be decreased in Pay Period 06-14 from the adjusted amount to the correct amount.

Any questions should be directed to the NALC Membership Department.

Additionally, Secretary-Treasurer Broendel has announced that due to a separate programming error, the USPS did not deduct Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) contributions from the dues reimbursement in Pay Period 01-14 for almost all NALC full-time officers. The USPS has advised it will make those deductions as well as Pay Period 02-14 deductions together in Pay Period 02-14.

On Jan. 11, hundreds of letter carriers gathered in Manhattan to commemorate the first anniversary of the death of NALC President Emeritus Vincent R. Sombrotto. "All of us are the beneficiaries of Vince's amazing career," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "We are grateful, and many thousands of us have dedicated our lives to doing what we can to advance the cause he dedicated his life to—making life better for America's working families."

Six-day mail preserved in 2014 spending measure

A bipartisan omnibus spending bill signed into law on Jan. 17 retained the language calling for six-day mail delivery service, language that has been part of such bills for more than 30 years.

"We are grateful that Congress recognizes the value of Saturday delivery to millions of American businesses that rely on the most efficient last-mile delivery system in the world," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "As the economy recovers and e-commerce booms, the Postal Service has returned to operational profitability, which would be threatened by cutting the Saturday service on which millions of small businesses and residents rely.

"Letter carriers and other postal employees have sacrificed tremendously to help the Postal Service recover from the Great Recession and adapt to technological changes," he said. "This sacrifice helped the Postal Service realize an operating profit in 2013.

"We are pleased that Congress has rejected the elimination of Saturday delivery as counter-productive," Rolando said. "Now we call on it to enact reform that will allow the Postal Service to innovate and grow—without dismantling the retail, processing and delivery networks that make it a national treasure."

In the cold

Don't put yourself in danger

The Postal Service has issued mandatory safety talks to be given to all employees regarding protection from cold temperatures. If management has not provided these safety talks, advise your supervisor, shop steward, branch officers or, if necessary, your national business agent.

Visit nalc.org to find the documents that management was to provide you through these stand-up talks.

Bottom line: Do not put yourself in danger.

Building on a billion

The 2014 Letter Carriers' Food Drive is Sat., May 10

This year will mark the 22nd national Letter Carriers' Food Drive. We celebrate more than two decades and 1.3 billion pounds of success in our national drive, as we should. But letter carriers never stay still for any length of time, and so we continue to "Build on a Billion!"

The concept behind our food drive couldn't be simpler: We ask our customers to leave non-perishable food donations at their mailboxes—and we take care of the rest.

By now, branch presidents should have received the 2014 Letter Carrier Food Drive registration form and a letter from President Rolando encouraging them to join the drive. Once Headquarters receives the branch registration form, a food drive coordinator's package will be sent to the designated branch food drive coordinator. This includes a new promotional DVD and coordinators manual containing letters of support from our national partners (including the postmaster general and Feeding America); our new Family Circus cartoon; information on ordering posters, shirts, pins and other promotional materials; and many valuable tips.

Also included in the package will be the user name and password for our food drive database, accessible via the link at the upper-right corner of the food drive page at nalc.org. The database will provide important specific branch information on resources being sent, historical data on pounds of food collected and special branch messages. The system is updated regularly and provides immediate feedback to coordinators.

The resource with the single-biggest impact is the promotional bag delivered to each home mailbox. Promotional bags have a dramatic effect on donations, doubling or tripling amounts collected over customers who received only a postcard reminder.

At this stage, there are no national sponsors for bags, so each branch should be out trying to secure a bag partner of its own. And it's not too late to find a willing bag sponsor in your community, so please review your coordinators manual and our online food drive tool kit for great tips.

Nalcrest celebrates 50th birthday

Over the weekend of Jan. 17-19, the NALC celebrated the 50th anniversary of the founding of the union's vibrant retirement community in Lake Wales, FL: Nalcrest.

"The 270,000 members of the National Association of Letter Carriers congratulate Nalcrest for creating and sustaining a special place for retired letter carriers for the past half century," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "We take great pride in its values of community and solidarity and pledge our continued support." Pictured at left, Rolando lights a paper sky lantern as part of the Saturday night festivities.

To find out more about Nalcrest, visit nalc.org.

Notice of private class action lawsuit

NALC has been asked to notify our members of a private class-action lawsuit that may benefit the beneficiaries of certain deceased postal employees.

The lawsuit covers the beneficiaries of deceased Postal Service employees who were covered by the Annuity Protection Plan set forth in the joint collective-bargaining agreements of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, and the National Association of Letter Carriers, AFL-CIO, and in effect during the periods from July 21, 1981, through Nov. 20, 1994.

The beneficiaries of such deceased employees may be entitled to additional life insurance benefits or interest on their benefits. For more information, visit nalc.org. You can also obtain additional details by e-mailing Class Counsel at classaction@steinmitchell.com.

NOTE: All inquiries regarding this matter should be referred to Class Counsel, *not* NALC.

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