



News from Washington

Bipartisan postal relief bill introduced in Senate

On July 2, Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) introduced the Postal Service Emergency Assistance Act (S. 4174) to provide funding to help offset the Postal Service's COVID-19-related financial losses.

The bill would provide \$25 billion in direct relief to USPS through the establishment of a Postal Service COVID-19 Emergency Fund to make up the difference between revenue and expenses during the pandemic, with the fund available through Sept. 30, 2022.

The bill also makes clear that the \$10 billion Treasury Department loan includ-

ed in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, signed into law in March, would be subject to the terms and conditions agreed upon in the note purchase agreement between the Postal Service and Federal Financing Bank from Sept. 29, 2018. These terms would be far more favorable than the conditions that the Treasury reportedly is insisting on, but refusing to make public, for the funds to be secured.

The provisions outlined above are consistent with NALC's immediate priorities related to COVID-19 and are similar to provisions contained in the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, which the House passed in June.

Unlike the House-passed postal provisions contained in the HEROES Act, S. 4174 would direct the Postal Service to report to Congress that funds are being used for the sole purpose of dealing with COVID-19, a requirement acceptable to NALC.

Unfortunately, the bill includes language that cites lost volume as the principal cause for Postal Service losses, which does not reflect the entire picture. The requirement to pre-fund retiree health benefits is the principal cause of the Postal Service's financial condition, leaving it more vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic. In addition, S. 4174 includes unnecessary language regarding a 10-year plan that is already underway. Despite those minor shortcomings, this legislation is an important marker.

While NALC has not endorsed any particular relief package—including S. 4174—the union continues to lobby aggressively for direct financial relief, as well as favorable loan terms and conditions as outlined above. NALC hopes that the bipartisan and bicameral calls for immediate financial relief will be

part of the conversation among House and Senate leadership and the White House when negotiations over the next relief package resume.

NALC members should continue to call on members in the House and Senate to include relief in the next package. Go to the "Government Affairs" page of nalc.org to find our fact sheet and to contact your members of Congress.

House passes Moving America Forward Act with postal infrastructure investment

July 2 also saw House passage of the Moving Forward Act (H.R. 2), a \$1.5 trillion infrastructure bill that invests in roads, rail, public transit, ports, aviation, energy and water.

Of particular note, the final bill included \$25 billion for postal infrastructure modernization, including \$6 billion to upgrade postal vehicles. The bill requires that 75 percent of the new fleet consist of electric or zero-emission vehicles. For medium/heavyweight vehicles, the electric/zero emissions requirement would be 50 percent by 2030 and 100 percent by 2040. The bill would require the Buy America Act provisions with regard to vehicle procurement. The bill also would equip each postal facility with electric charging stations, at least one of which would be made available to the public, officers and employees of USPS.

During House floor consideration, Rep. Jody Hice (R-GA) offered an amendment to strip the infrastructure funding for the Postal Service. To streamline floor debate and the time House members are on the floor in close quarters, that amendment was lumped into a set of completely unrelated amendments and considered *en bloc* (all together). The other Republican-led



Rep. James Comer (R-KY)



amendments dealt with rail, eminent domain, the Bureau of Reclamation and state permitting of dredging.

The *en bloc* amendment failed overwhelmingly by a vote of 179-241. Ten Republicans joined the Democrats in opposing the package of amendments: Reps. John Carter (R-TX), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Kay Granger (R-TX), John Katko (R-NY), Peter King (R-NY), Tom Reed (R-NY), John Rutherford (R-FL), Chris Smith (R-NJ), Elise Stefanik (R-NY) and Jeff Van Drew (R-NJ).

NALC appreciates members of Congress on both sides of the aisle who recognize the need for relief for the Postal Service, including the infrastructure relief that H.R. 2 would provide.

H.R. 2 is not expected to be considered by the Senate, which has its own ideas about how to tackle infrastructure.

Senate Democrats introduce resolution calling on relief for Postal Service

July 2 brought more postal-related activity. This time, it was all 45 members of the Senate Democratic caucus, led by Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), who introduced a resolution (S. Res. 644) calling on Congress to appropriate funds to cover lost revenues due to COVID-19.

The resolution highlights the need to “ensure that the Postal Service maintains its services and remains an accessible, independent establishment of the federal government.”

As justification for relief, the senators highlighted the cost, reliability, efficiency and service to all communities in rural and urban areas. The resolution goes on to pinpoint essentials such as medications that move through the mail, and touts the importance of six-day mail delivery and the value of last-mile delivery. In addition, the resolu-

tion specifically references the 630,000 employees and more than 100,000 military veterans who serve the needs of the \$1.6 trillion national communications industry tied to 7.3 million jobs.

The resolution comes at a pivotal time, with the Senate expected to consider whether another relief package will be coming before Congress departs for August recess. It was expected Aug. 7.

NALC appreciates the intent of the resolution and continues to call on Congress to provide relief in its next package for the Postal Service as we continue through this time of great uncertainty in the economy. NALC members should encourage all senators to join calls for immediate financial relief.

New ranking member on House Oversight and Reform Committee

In other major news from the House Oversight and Reform Committee (COR), Rep. James Comer (R-KY) has been selected as ranking member of the committee, replacing Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH), who recently took over as ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee.

Comer was elected to Congress in 2016 to serve the 1st Congressional District of Kentucky, which is the westernmost part of the state. Comer grew up in Monroe County and studied agriculture at Western Kentucky University, and later bought the first of what would become Comer Farms, which continues to operate in the state.

Comer began his career in public service in 2000, when he was elected to the Kentucky State House. In 2011, he was elected to become Kentucky’s commissioner of agriculture. Throughout his career in the state and in Washington, Comer has touted a record of conservatism and interest in curbing government waste, fraud and abuse.

“I believe our role should be to seek

the truth, and that’s what I’m going to do as ranking member and I’m blessed to have a great committee—that’s a committee filled with a lot of fighters and a lot of institutional knowledge,” said Comer. “I am excited to take the reins as ranking member and take my obligation to pursue legitimate waste, fraud and abuse in government very seriously.”

Comer also serves on the House Agriculture Committee and the House Education and Labor Committee. Prior to his selection as ranking member of COR, he was the ranking member of both COR’s Subcommittee on the Environment, and the Education and Labor Committee’s Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services.

As it relates to the Postal Service, aside from co-sponsoring H. Res. 54, which calls on Congress to maintain six-day mail delivery, there is little information regarding Comer’s postal priorities. He has not co-sponsored House resolutions on door delivery, Postal Service privatization or service standards. In addition, he opposed the USPS Fairness Act (H.R. 2382) when it came up for a vote in February.

“NALC congratulates Ranking Member Comer on his new assignment and looks forward to working with him,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “Now more than ever, and with so much uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic, NALC stands committed to working with Ranking Member Comer and Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) to ensure that the Postal Service continues to serve communities and businesses while providing good middle-class jobs to our people on the front lines.” **PR**