



# News from Washington

## Congress funds government and raises debt limit through Dec. 3; negotiations continue on other priorities

**T**he House of Representatives and the Senate passed legislation to fund the government and increase the country's debt limit until Dec. 3.

Both chambers passed a continuing resolution on Sept. 30 to fund the government until Dec. 3. President Biden signed the continuing resolution into law on Sept. 30, just hours before the midnight deadline to avoid a government shutdown.

This short-term fix includes funding to sustain federal agencies until Dec. 3, as well as \$28.6 billion in aid to respond to recent hurricanes and wildfires and \$6.3 billion to help resettle refugees from Afghanistan.

House members voted 219-206 on Oct. 12 on a rule (H. Res. 716) that cleared a bill that passed in the Senate (S. 1301) on Oct. 7 to raise the debt limit with an extension that expires on Dec. 3. President Biden signed the bill into law on Oct. 15.

The bill raises the nation's borrowing authority by \$480 billion, avoiding a default on the country's debt. This is a temporary bipartisan fix, and it leaves much work to be done on addressing the debt ceiling, which Republican lawmakers have said Democrats must do on their own. The debt limit and government funding will both expire on Dec. 3.

"The Democratic House has taken action to honor our responsibility to address the priority of the debt limit," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) said. "We have done so because this is about protecting families. The failure to lift the debt limit could result in a loss of up to 6 million jobs, the elimination of \$15 trillion in household wealth and drastic increases in the cost of loans, car loans, mortgages,

student loans, credit card bills and other borrowing."

The votes to avoid a government shutdown and to increase the debt limit have allowed lawmakers to temporarily shift their focus back to other priority legislation, including the bipartisan Infrastructure Improvement and Jobs Act (H.R. 3684) and the \$3.5 trillion budget reconciliation package, both critical parts of President Biden's Build Back Better agenda. While negotiations are ongoing, Speaker Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) have said that they plan to hold votes on these bills by Oct. 31.

H.R. 3684 would provide \$1.2 trillion in funding for investments in roads, bridges, airports, transit, rail broadband, electric charging stations, power grid modernization and clean drinking water. That bill passed in the Senate in September and is awaiting a vote in the House, where divisions have prevented action on the bill.

While moderate Democrats are prioritizing H.R. 3684, progressive Democrats have said they will not consider it without parallel consideration of the budget reconciliation package.

The \$3.5 trillion budget reconciliation package includes \$7 billion in proposed funding to electrify the Postal Service vehicle fleet and provide the necessary infrastructure to support those vehicles. This critical funding for the Postal Service will fund new vehicles for letter carriers, help combat climate change, and achieve priorities included in the president's Build Back Better agenda as well as Postmaster General Louis DeJoy's Delivering for America plan.

The package also includes funding for 12 weeks of universal paid leave and additional funding for other mea-

asures that benefit working families, including the continuation of child care tax credits, universal pre-K and free community college tuition for two years. It also would expand Medicare to include hearing, dental and vision coverage, address the Medicare coverage gap in 12 states, and make Affordable Care Act subsidies permanent. Additionally, it would provide funding that would help 8 million people on their path to citizenship and provide funding for job re-training and transitions. The package is expected to create 3.2 million jobs and would supply \$180 billion in tax credits for clean energy jobs as well as tax credits for electric vehicles.

Lawmakers plan to fund this package by increasing the corporate tax rate and raising taxes for the wealthiest Americans, those households that make more than \$400,000 annually.

As this issue was going to print, negotiations were still underway to move these two major pieces of legislation through Congress.

### Kubayanda renominated to serve on Postal Regulatory Commission

President Biden announced on Oct. 6 his intent to renominate Michael Kubayanda to serve as a commissioner of the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC). Kubayanda, who has served as the chairman of the commission since January, has been a member of the PRC since 2019. The renomination of Kubayanda is good news for the PRC and the U.S. Postal Service.

Prior to his service on the PRC, Kubayanda served as a board member and privacy officer for a digital health startup. He also previously worked with the USPS Office of Inspector General and as counsel to the House

# Penalty Overtime Exclusion

As referenced in Article 8, Sections 4 and 5 of the USPS-NALC National Agreement, the December period (during which penalty overtime regulations are not applicable) consists of four consecutive service weeks. This year, the December period begins Pay Period 26-21, Week 1 (Dec. 4, 2021) and ends Pay Period 01-22, Week 2 (Dec. 31, 2021).

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

The PRC is the independent body that exercises regulatory oversight over the Postal Service. Its responsibilities include preventing anticompetitive practices, promoting accountability, adjudicating complaints, setting postal rates and helping oversee delivery service standards. The PRC has five commissioners, who are nominated by the president for six-year terms and confirmed by the Senate.

NALC also has strongly urged President Biden to prioritize the renomination of Ron Bloom to serve a new term on the USPS Board of Governors (BOG). Bloom, the BOG chairman, currently is serving in a holdover year from his partial term that expired in December 2020.

Bloom has been an important leader in helping the Postal Service navigate through one of its most turbulent periods during the COVID-19 pandemic. In his time on the BOG, he called for broad relief for the Postal Service in various COVID-19 recovery bills, led a subcommittee overseeing the Postal Service's national election task force alongside fellow BOG member Lee Moak, and urged the BOG to support and maintain six- and seven-day delivery. Bloom has actively worked with Postmaster General DeJoy to bring wide bipartisan support for postal reform legislation, a top priority for postal workers across the country.

## Update on NALC priority bills/resolutions

NALC remains focused on working with Congress to pass key pieces of legislation that affect letter carriers. A bill needs the support of 218 House members to pass when it comes to the

floor for a vote. The Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82) has surpassed 218 co-sponsors, with 231 co-sponsors at press time. However, other NALC priority resolutions need additional support to surpass the 218-member threshold. Securing 218 co-sponsors as soon as possible is important because it helps solidify the language of a bill. For example, reaching 218 co-sponsors on the Postal Service Reform Act (H.R. 3076) will stop those who are trying to remove important language in the bill that continues six-day delivery.

NALC appreciates our members who have contacted their representatives to advocate for letter carriers' best interests, and we encourage you to continue to reach out to your members of Congress. As many congressional offices continue to function virtually or in a hybrid manner, the best way to reach your representatives is through district outreach emails. NALC encourages all members to contact their representatives to support these critical pieces of legislation:

- Postal Service Reform Act of 2021 (H. Res. 3076/S. 1720)—a bipartisan bill that aims to provide financial and operational stability to the United States Postal Service.
- Door Delivery (H. Res. 109)—calls on Congress to ensure that the United States Postal Service should take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of door delivery for all business and residential customers.
- Anti-privatization (H. Res. 47)—calls on Congress to take all appropriate measures to ensure that the United States Postal Service remains an independent establish-

ment of the federal government and is not subject to privatization.

- Six-day Delivery (H. Res. 114)—calls on Congress to ensure that the United States Postal Service should take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of its six-day mail delivery service.
- Service Standards (H. Res. 119)—expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States Postal Service should take all appropriate measures to restore service standards in effect as of July 1, 2012.

## Freedom to Vote Act introduced in Senate

On Sept. 15, Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) introduced the Freedom to Vote Act (S. 2747), a bill to expand voting rights and reduce the influence of big money in politics. The bill is co-sponsored by Sens. Tim Kaine (D-VA), Angus King (I-ME), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Jon Tester (D-MT) and Raphael Warnock (D-GA).

The bill includes several measures to address voter access and election administration. The bill would ensure that all voters could request a mail-in ballot, improve the delivery of election mail, and apply minimum standards to ensure that ballot drop boxes are available and accessible to all voters. Additionally, the legislation would implement automatic voter registration, make Election Day a federal holiday, allow same-day voter registration and expand early voting.

## News from Washington (continued)

The bill also includes measures to improve election integrity through the protection of election records, infrastructure and ballot tabulation. It also would task the Election Assistance Commission with developing training and recruitment programs for non-partisan election officials. The bill would prohibit partisan gerrymandering and would require super PACs and other organizations that spend money in elections to disclose donors.

“With the Freedom to Vote Act, the entire voting rights working group, including Sens. Manchin and Merkley, is united behind legislation that will set basic national standards to make sure all Americans can cast their ballots in the way that works best for them, regardless of what ZIP code they live in,” Sen. Klobuchar said. “This bill will ensure Americans can request a mail-in ballot, have at least 15 days of early voting, and can register to vote

on Election Day.”

Overall, S. 2747 is a scaled-back, narrower voting rights package than the For the People Act (H.R. 1/S. 1), which passed in the House earlier this year but was blocked by Senate Republicans. The Freedom to Vote Act has Democratic support; however, without the backing of any Republican senators, it would not receive the 60 votes needed to bypass the Senate filibuster. **PR**

## Still time to contribute through CFC

**L**etter carriers, as federal employees, have a convenient way to support charities of their choice by donating through the world’s largest annual workplace giving program, the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC).

Letter carriers may sign up during the CFC campaign season, from Sept. 1, 2021, through Jan. 15, 2022, to make donations during 2022. CFC participants make charitable donations via deductions from their paychecks. Active employees may use payroll deduction, credit or debit cards, or bank accounts to make recurring donations. They also may make a one-time donation using any of these methods except payroll deduction. Employees also may volunteer for the charity and count the value of the hours.

“This year, communities are struggling to recover from the economic crisis and a stubborn COVID-19 virus,” NALC President Fredric Rolando wrote in a letter to members. “The pandemic and the economic difficulties it caused strained the resources of many charitable groups, making your support so much more important. I am asking for your help in ensuring that this year’s campaign is successful, and I invite

you to join me in supporting the Combined Federal Campaign by making a pledge or donation to the charities of your choice.”

NALC is directly involved in three charities eligible for support through the CFC:

- The **Muscular Dystrophy Association** (MDA) is NALC’s only official charity. In addition to supporting MDA through branch fundraising events, letter carriers may support the organization directly through the CFC. MDA is the world’s leading non-profit health organization sponsoring research into the causes of, and effective treatments for, neuromuscular diseases. MDA research grants support research projects worldwide, as well as camps and activities for children who have one of these diseases. For more information, go to [mdausa.org](http://mdausa.org).
- The **Postal Employees’ Relief Fund** (PERF) provides financial support to active and retired postal employees whose primary residence has been destroyed or left uninhabitable by a major natural disaster or an isolated house fire. The charity is run by the four postal employee

unions and three management organizations, whose members support PERF through voluntary donations. Information and applications for PERF assistance can be found at [postalrelief.com](http://postalrelief.com).

- **United Way Worldwide** is the leadership and support organization for the network of nearly 1,800 community-based United Way organizations in 40 countries and territories. United Way focuses on creating community-based and community-led solutions that provide the foundation for a good quality of life. For more information, go to [unitedway.org](http://unitedway.org).

All active letter carriers can participate in the CFC through payroll deduction. The easiest way to sign up is through the CFC Donor Pledging System at [cfcgiving.opm.gov](http://cfcgiving.opm.gov) or through the CFC Giving smartphone app, available on the App Store and Google Play. Retired letter carriers may make a one-time or recurring e-check or credit card contribution to the CFC. These one-time and recurring gifts also can be made through the CFC Donor Pledging System. **PR**