



# News from Washington

## House committee advances bill to expand access for federal workers injured on the job

**O**n July 5, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce reported the Improving Access to Workers' Compensation for Injured Federal Workers Act (H.R. 618). This action follows the June 13 committee markup of the bill.

Under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA), only physicians can treat federal employees, including letter carriers, who are injured on the job. Unfortunately, in many parts of the country, there is a shortage of physicians who will treat these cases, resulting in "provider deserts" for injured letter carriers who are seeking treatment. H.R. 618 would amend FECA to allow nurse practitioners and physician assistants to treat these cases, expanding care options for injured letter carriers.


At the markup, the committee unanimously advanced the legislation, and the bill's leads, Reps. Tim Walberg (R-MI) and Joe Courtney (D-CT), spoke in favor of the bill. Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA), as well as Reps. Lucy McBath (D-GA) and Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), also spoke in support of the bill.

Prior to the markup, NALC submitted comments to the committee for the record.

In the 117th Congress, the House passed the bill with a 325-83 vote, but no action was taken in the Senate.

With 55 bipartisan co-sponsors in the House, if called to the floor it is likely to pass again, but a path in the Senate remains unclear. Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Susan Collins (R-ME) have introduced a companion bill in the Senate (S. 131) that currently has five co-sponsors.

Visit [nalc.org/action](http://nalc.org/action) to ask your members of Congress to co-sponsor H.R. 618/S. 131 and all of NALC's priority legislation. **PR**



# NALC

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June 5, 2024

Dear Chairwoman Foxx, Ranking Member Scott and members of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce,

On behalf of the 280,000 active and retired letter carriers represented by the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), I write in strong support of the Improving Access to Workers' Compensation for Injured Federal Workers Act (H.R. 618). NALC urges the committee to favorably mark up the legislation and advance the bill.

Letter carriers' jobs are extremely physically demanding, and we work outside in all types of conditions. These factors heighten letter carriers' risk of injury on the job. In fact, postal employees account for nearly half of the claims made to the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) each year, and letter carriers file most of these claims. Letter carriers are injured more frequently than nearly all other federal government or private industry workers.

Unfortunately, in many parts of the country, injured letter carriers live in areas where there is a shortage of physicians who will treat federal workers. The Department of Labor (DOL) is aware of this problem and has identified these areas as "provider deserts". Despite there being many nurse practitioners (NPs) and physician assistants/physician associates (PAs) in these areas who are willing to treat injured federal workers, the DOL does not accept medical reports or evidence from them for purposes of accepting and administering claims.

This results in injured letter carriers driving hours from home for an appointment or waiting for months to receive treatment. When a letter carrier is injured on the job it is important that they receive the care they need from the provider of their choice so they can get back to work as quickly and healthily as possible. Amending the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) through H.R. 618 to allow NPs and PAs to treat these cases would support a stronger and healthier federal workforce.

Letter carriers are devoted public servants who provide an essential service that all Americans rely on. We are lifelines for seniors who need medications, ensure our customers receive paychecks and bills on time, safely and securely deliver tens of millions of ballots every election season, and deliver essential packages six and sometimes seven days a week.

Letter carriers keep our nation connected, and with your help, we must ensure they have access to the care they need when they are injured on the job.

NALC strongly urges the committee to stand with the entire federal workforce and advance H.R. 618.

Sincerely,

Brian L. Renfro  
President, National Association of Letter Carriers

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