



News from Washington

Congress moving toward discharging the Social Security Fairness Act

On Sept. 19, the discharge petition for the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82) reached 218 signers, an important step to bring the legislation to the House floor for a vote. The bill would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO), which are parts of Social Security law that unfairly reduce or sometimes eliminate Social Security benefits of federal annuitants, including letter carriers.

The milestone came on the same day NALC participated in a press conference on Capitol Hill to raise awareness about the issue. NALC President Brian L. Renfro spoke at the event that was cohosted by the leads of the bill, Reps. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) and Garret Graves (R-LA).

“You know, this has been going on now for 40 years and the letter carriers serve every community in this country every single day. We do way more than deliver the mail; we look out for people and save lives on a daily basis,” President Renfro said at the rally. “What is most unfair is that the people who are victimized by this grossly unfair provision in the law are those, like my members and others that you have heard from and will hear from this morning, who are dedicated civil servants and public servants who look out for and serve their communities. They’re the very last people who should be impacted by something like this.”

While the discharge petition is closed after reaching 218 signatures, members can still co-sponsor the bill. H.R. 82 is now one of the most co-sponsored bills in Congress, with 327 co-sponsors.

Now, the petition will sit on the House calendar for seven legislative days. After that period, Spanberger and Graves, the filers of the discharge petition, can request a full House vote. According to



NALC President Renfro encourages the House to vote on the Social Security Fairness Act.

House rules, after that request, a vote will be scheduled within two legislative days. Sept. 20 counted as the first legislative day. With the current schedule of legislative days, the soonest action could be taken on the bill is mid-November.

With much in flux, including the House’s schedule and efforts to pass a continuing resolution to fund the government, it is unclear when the two

lawmakers will choose to call for a vote after the allotted time.

NALC will continue closely monitoring this legislation and will inform members when it is called for a vote.

Letter carrier tells White House about working in extreme heat

On Sept. 14, Hattiesburg, MS Branch 938 President **Sam Hill** was a panel-



Hattiesburg, MS Branch 938 President Sam Hill (c) attends the White House Summit on Extreme Heat.

City carriers at the Georgetown, DE rally



ist at the White House Summit on Extreme Heat. He joined White House senior staff, other workers exposed to extreme heat, health care professionals, emergency responders, and researchers and innovators to talk about what it's like to work through the dangers of extreme heat.

The summit comes as the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration is proposing a rule to protect workers in the first-ever U.S. safety standard on heat. The proposed rule includes requirements for identifying heat hazards, emergency response plans, training for supervisors, and work standards, including breaks, access to shade and water, and heat acclimatization for new employees.

City and rural carriers rally for Protect Our Letter Carriers Act

Chanting "Enough is enough," city letter carriers and rural letter carriers held rallies in August and September to raise awareness about crimes against letter carriers and the need to pass the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (POLCA), H.R. 7629 and S. 4356.

On Aug. 26, NALC President Brian L. Renfroe joined National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA) President Don Maston and other delegates to the NRLCA national convention who rallied in Reno, NV. President Renfroe called on members of the community to report any suspicious activity they see involving letter carriers. "You know, your letter carrier is there to serve you every day," he told a reporter from the local NBC affiliate. "If you see anything out of the ordinary, the safe thing to do is contact law enforcement. You never know, that could be the difference in one of these crimes happening or not."

On Sept. 5, Southern Delaware Branch 906 members were joined by rural carriers as they rallied in Georgetown to support H.R. 7629. "What that would do is, basically, any crime committed against a postal employee would be just like a crime committed against law enforcement," Branch 906 President **Shawn Colleran** said. It would result in stiffer penalties, he said, and require that every district have an attorney put in charge of postal crimes. "So, you would have the accountability and the presence, which currently just isn't there."

NALC Director of Retired Members Dan Toth called on residents of Southern Delaware to "look out for us, the way we have always looked out for you."

Like the Reno event, the Delaware rally drew widespread media coverage, from network TV affiliates and radio to newspapers.

"Targeted robberies, assaults, and even murder have become part of our jobs," NALC President Renfroe said on the day the House bill was announced. "Think about that. Today we are here to send a very clear message: Enough is enough is enough."

"The next step is critical," Renfroe added, "and that next step is federal legislation that will deter these attacks from happening, prosecute every criminal who attacks one of our members, and protect letter carriers while doing their jobs."

This bipartisan House legislation and its Senate counterpart would provide \$7 billion in funding for the Postal Service to secure its infrastructure, including the installation of high-security collection boxes and the replacement of Arrow Keys with more secure electronic versions. The funding would be appropriated over five years, \$1.4 billion annually in fiscal years

2025 to 2029. When key infrastructure is improved, letter carriers will be safer on their routes.

Additionally, the legislation would increase prosecution rates for these crimes by requiring the attorney general to designate an assistant U.S. attorney in each judicial district to prioritize cases involving an assault or crime against a letter carrier. Their principal responsibility in the district would be to coordinate and supervise the investigation and prosecution of these crimes.

The bill also would strengthen sentencing guidelines for these crimes, ensuring that they are treated in the same manner as assaults on federal law enforcement officers.

"I urge Congress to pass this bill that would protect the nation's letter carriers who dutifully deliver medications, checks, ballots, packages, and other essential mail that all Americans depend on," President Renfroe said.

Since 2020, there have been more than 2,000 crimes committed against letter carriers on the job, reflecting a mass targeting of letter carriers that previously did not exist. Many of these attacks involve a gun or another weapon. Last year alone, the numbers of carriers injured in robberies doubled from the prior year, according to the United States Postal Inspection Service.

Renfroe called on NALC members to urge their members of Congress to become co-sponsors of H.R. 7629 and S. 4356. As of Sept. 19, there were 125 co-sponsors in the House and two co-sponsors in the Senate.

President Renfroe said that passing POLCA is NALC's legislative priority. He encouraged letter carriers to contact their members of Congress, and to ask supporters within their communities to do the same. Go to nalc.org/action to learn more.

News from Washington (continued)

Biden to nominate Gordon Hartogensis to USPS BOG

On Sept. 9, President Biden announced his intent to nominate Gordon Hartogensis to serve on the United States Postal Service Board of Governors (BOG). If confirmed by the Senate, Hartogensis, a Republican nominee, would serve a term that expires on Dec. 8, 2029.

He started his career on Wall Street. In 1993, he built a supply chain and logistics startup, Petrolsoft Corporation, that was later acquired by Aspen Technology, where Hartogensis served in a leadership role until 2002. He then founded a customer relationship management software company, Auric Technology, which was sold in 2011. Hartogensis then served as an investor and advisor to startups in cybersecu-

riety, immunotherapy, streaming video, fintech and artificial intelligence. Most recently, he served as the director of Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation from 2019 until 2024.

Three other Biden BOG nominees have yet to be considered by the Senate: former House of Representatives member Val Demings, former BOG member William Zollars and former U.S. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh.

Senate introduces bill to allow USPS to ship alcohol

On Sept. 17, Sens. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) introduced the USPS Shipping Equity Act (S. 5069). The bill, which is identical to legislation introduced in the House in May 2023, would allow the Postal Service to ship beer, wine, and other alcoholic

beverages directly from licensed producers and retailers to legal customers.

Current law prohibits the Postal Service from shipping alcoholic goods, making private shippers such as FedEx and UPS the only option for wineries, breweries and other producers to have goods delivered directly to customers. This bill would allow USPS to ship these beverages and would generate an estimated \$190 million annually in new revenue for the Postal Service.

If passed into law, USPS would have two years to develop regulations ensuring that the Postal Service is prepared to safely deliver alcoholic beverages to adult consumers with appropriate identification checks. The bill also would expand access for direct-to-consumer alcoholic shipments.

Unlike private shippers, USPS delivers to every address in the nation. The current ban on the Postal Service from shipping alcohol limits access to these products for many Americans, especially in rural areas.

“NALC applauds Sen. Merkley and Sen. Gillibrand for introducing the USPS Shipping Equity Act,” NALC President Brian L. Renfroe said. “The bill is an important step toward meeting the growing needs of our customers while generating revenue for the Postal Service, expanding the agency’s service opportunities, and supporting small businesses nationwide.”

The House version of the bill (H.R. 3721), introduced by Reps. Dan Newhouse (R-WA) and Jennifer Wexton (D-VA), currently has 22 co-sponsors.

Visit nalc.org/action to ask your members of Congress to co-sponsor the legislation. **PR**



Gordon Hartogensis

President Renfroe and other city carriers join the NRLCA rally in Reno, NV.

