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Punxsutawney Phil
Gobblers Knob, PA

President Bush to
Unveil Fiscal Year
2006 Budget on
Monday

NAPUS will be
evaluating the budget
blueprint to determine
what, if any, impact
the proposal would
have on postmasters
and the USPS.

Postal Groundhog Day in DC

Yesterday, in Gobblers Knob, PA, Punxsutawney Phil scampered back into his hole for six more weeks, meaning that we have to wait awhile for spring – just in time for the NAPUS Leadership Conference. Simultaneously, in Washington, under a high overcast, “Postal Pete” – Phil’s estranged brother – defiantly waddled out of the west side of the U.S. Capitol, wearing Nike sunglasses and a wide-brimmed Stetson. (Postal Pete forecasts the potential for postal legislation.) Pete quickly surveyed the Capitol’s west front lawn and decided to occupy the small tract of land where the NAPUS Legislative Rally podium stood. This is the area where Senators Susan Collins, Hillary Clinton, Tom Carper, and Arlen Specter; and Representatives Tom Davis, John McHugh, Steny Hoyer, and Danny Davis all called for passage of postal reform legislation. So, based on Postal Pete’s action, it appears that the postal community will not have to wait long for a vote on S. 662. However, upon hearing of Postal Pete’s Capitol grounds occupancy, USPS Board of Governors Chairman Jim Miller ordered the Postal Inspection Service to travel the ½ mile from L’Enfant Plaza to the Capitol to chase Postal Pete from the Capitol grounds. However, before the inspectors arrived, Chairman Susan Collins and Senator Tom Carper deployed the U.S. Capitol Police to repel the USPS assault on Postal Pete. As of this morning -- Postal Pete is still lounging on the Capitol lawn, anticipating a Senate vote on S. 662.

Seriously, this week, Chairman Collins and Senator Carper labored to resolve two outstanding issues that have temporarily delayed Senate consideration of S. 662. The first matter deals with defining the membership qualifications for the Postal Service Board of Governors. We understand this issue was resolved last night. The second issue, which has yet to be resolved, is the budget impact of S. 662 (i.e., the cost of eliminating the CSRS escrow and returning CSRS military retirement credit funding to the U.S. Treasury). It is important to note that the White House does not object to Senate passage of S. 662. As other parties, the Administration intends to make its case at a House-Senate Conference. Of course, the escrow and military retirement issue is a *third rail issue* for NAPUS and others. The broad pro-postal reform coalition will oppose the Conference Agreement if it does not include CSRS relief.

In an email sent to employee groups, mailers, and former USPS executives this week, former Deputy PMG John Nolan articulated the USPS fear of a possible House-Senate Conference. He wrote, “This is where Postal Service competitors and special interests have had the greatest success. They are skilled professionals at lobbying.” Excuse me – employee groups and key mailer organizations have some of the most effective legislative advocates in Washington. Moreover, they are not hired guns. They are professional, respected, and highly-successful pro-postal legislative advocates who are full-time employees of the organizations they represent. And, the USPS should not discount the tremendous grassroots effectiveness of postal unions and

management associations to wage a united front against anti-postal forces. Unfortunately, except for a handful of meetings, the USPS has virtually ignored employee groups as postal legislation was being crafted. What the USPS now fears most is irrelevance in Conference. This terror stems from the comments expressed by potential Conferees in the wake of last week's USPS assault on postal reform legislation. Ironically, the USPS may have to rely on those advocates, who Nolan and the USPS seem to ignore or discount, to be the USPS representatives in a possible House-Senate Conference – just as important, to promote necessary postal legislation in the future.

Rep. John Boehner New House Republican Majority Leader



Rep. John Boehner
(R-OH)

On Thursday, the House Republican Conference elected Rep. John Boehner as their new Majority Leader. On the second ballot, Boehner defeated Rep. Roy Blunt (MO) by a vote of 122-109. Rep. Blunt began serving as the interim Majority Leader when Rep. Tom DeLay was compelled to relinquish the post upon his indictment for money laundering. Rep. John Shadegg (AZ) was the third man in the race, but he only garnered 40 votes in the first ballot, so he was forced to drop out. Rep. Blunt will remain part of the GOP leadership team, since he will retreat to his position as Republican Whip. In part, Blunt's defeat is the result of the GOP desire to demonstrate that it is shaking up its leadership in response to the lobbying scandal that has fueled criticism that the Republicans are afflicted with a "culture of corruption." The Majority Leader is the floor captain for his partisans. The role of the majority leader has been defined by history and tradition. This officer is charged with scheduling legislation for floor consideration; planning the daily, weekly, and annual legislative agendas; consulting with Members to gauge party sentiment; and, in general, working to advance the goals of the majority party.

The Democrats also selected a new member of their senior leadership team. Rep. John Larson (CT) defeated Reps. Joseph Crowley (NY) and Janice Schakowsky (IL) for the post of Deputy Whip.

Government Reform Committee to Investigate Service Complaints

The House Committee on Government Reform has scheduled a postal oversight hearing for February 16. NAPUS understands that BoG Chairman Jim Miller, PMG Jack Potter, Inspector General David Williams, and Comptroller General David Walker have been invited to testify.

One of the key issues at the hearing will be mail delivery. As predicted in the December 30, 2005, *e-NAPUS Bulletin*, Congress has become increasingly concerned about how understaffing and transformation-inspired facility consolidations are impacting service. On Monday, Committee Chairman Tom Davis and Ranking Democrat Waxman sent a letter to PMG Potter requesting detailed information about mail problems afflicting California. They have asked for a response prior to the February hearing. It should be expected that other Committee members who have heard constituent complaints will articulate those concerns at the hearing.

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