



# e-NAPUS Legislative & Political Bulletin

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Happy Presidents' Day

## Postal Reform Conference Awaiting House Conferees

Every so often, we have to renew our driver's license. We walk into the Department of Motor Vehicles, where we are confounded by a variety of lengthy lines. One line is for getting the necessary form, another line for the vision exam, another line for the photographer to snap our picture, and finally one to pay the license fee. We are always moving from one line to another.

The next stage in the postal reform queue is waiting for House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) to consult with House Government Reform Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA) over the number of House conferees on H.R. 22, determine the allocation of conferees between Democrats and Republicans, and assign Republican Representatives to the Conference. Once the Republicans set the partisan ratio of the conference, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) will consult with Ranking Government Reform Committee Democrat Henry Waxman (D-CA) to assign Democrats to the conference. In addition, a number of H.R. 22's provisions fall partially under the jurisdiction of the House Judiciary Committee, and the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. It is likely that the Speaker will assign Representatives from these two Committees to serve as conferees – but, only for those sections that would be under those Committees' jurisdiction.

The House has yet to designate its conferees on H.R. 22. Therefore, the conferees will have to wait until the week of February 27, when Congress returns from its Presidents' Day Recess. Nonetheless, it is almost certain that Chairman Tom Davis, Ranking Democrat Henry Waxman, H.R. 22 author John McHugh (R-NY), and Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL) will lead the House conference. Potential additional House conferees include: Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN), the immediate past Chairman of the House Government Reform Committee and the only Republican Committee member who served on the defunct House Post Office and Civil Service Committee; Rep. Christopher Shays (R-CT), Committee Vice-Chairman; Rep. Candice Miller (R-MI), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs; Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY); and Rep. Lacey Clay (D-MO). Of course, the larger the conference committee, the more Representatives.

In addition to the conference delay attributed to the Presidents' Day Recess, Chairman Collins and her Committee have been tasked by Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) with reporting to the Senate floor legislation to strengthen the federal lobbying laws by early March, and the Committee has unfinished business relating to Hurricane Katrina. Consequently, it is likely that a House Senate Conference may not actually convene for a number of weeks. However, committee staff is already preparing for the impending conference.

One of the fundamental issues that must be faced head-on by the conference is the *cost* of the legislation that results from eliminating the CSRS escrow

account and returning the CSRS military retirement credit obligation to the U.S. Treasury. It is noteworthy to remember that the bulk of the cost are due to the mailing public continuing to overpay about \$3 billion per year towards the CSRS escrow. The prospective conferees will recognize the White House threat to veto the Conference Agreement if it is not *cost-neutral*. In addition, the Senate, as part of the Frist motion to pass S. 662, accepted the condition that the bill would be subject to a point-of-order, if the Conference Agreement has a budget impact of over \$5 billion in any one of the four ten-year periods, beginning in 2016 to 2055. Postal employee groups (including NAPUS) and mailers cannot support a Conference Agreement that fails to provide the mailing public with the financial relief that it is entitled to and fairly assigning the military retirement credit obligation.

It is important to note the House-Senate Conference will take up and consider both the House and Senate versions of the Postal Enhancement and Accountability. However, the legislation will make use of the House bill number – H.R. 22. As part of the Senate motion to approve S. 662, the Senate redesignated the bill with the House number. This technical change expedited the move to go to conference.

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## NAPUS Intervenes On Network Realignment

On Wednesday, NAPUS filed a *Notice of Intervention* with the Postal Rate Commission (PRC) regarding the USPS request for an advisory opinion on service changes resulting from its facility and network realignment (Docket Number N2006-1). In part, these USPS plans respond to recommendations included in the *Report of the President's Commission on the United States Postal Service* and the agency's continuing USPS transformation efforts.

Current law (Section 3661 of Title 39, United States Code) requires that when the USPS determines that there should be a change in the nature of postal services that will have a substantial impact on service, the agency must submit its proposal to the PRC for an advisory opinion on the change. The PRC is required to conduct a hearing on the change and then issue its opinion.

NAPUS filed the intervention because the public holds their community postmasters accountable for changes in service that could affect on-time delivery and reliability. In addition, staffing deployment resulting from network and transportation realignment could impact employee productivity and morale. In part, the NAPUS filing states:

NAPUS represents the approximately 27,000 postmasters who manage individual postal facilities throughout the nation. NAPUS members serve as the vital link between postal reliant communities and U.S. postal policy. Moreover, postmasters are directly accountable to postal customers throughout that nation. Actions taken by the Postal Service to alter mail service influence the working conditions of NAPUS members, impact the employees who postmasters supervise, and affect the communities in which postmasters serve.

These are factors that should be considered seriously as the PRC evaluates the USPS plans. Consequently, NAPUS indicated its deep interest in the PRC proceedings of the USPS proposal.

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