



E-NAPUS Legislative Newsletter

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Postal Appropriations Hearing – Dealing for Dollars

While Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Tom Carper (D-DE) put their final touches on S. 662 prior to a Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee vote, and Representative Tom Davis (R-VA) gets his ducks-in-a-row for a floor vote, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury and HUD will host PMG Potter at a hearing on Tuesday, April 26. This hearing will be the first opportunity for the new chairman of the panel, Rep. Joe Knollenberg (R-MI), to query the PMG.

In the recent past, the USPS has requested that the Appropriations Committee help finance an “Emergency Preparedness Account,” which was created to help protect postal employees and the mailing public from bio-terrorism. The USPS has asked for federal funds to deploy strategically located devices to detect mail-borne biological and chemical hazards. In addition, the USPS has requested funds to reimburse it for congressionally-mandated discounts to non-profit mailers, free mail for the blind, and postage for overseas voting. The difference between the actual cost of the acceptance, processing, and delivery of these mail classes, and the congressional appropriations for these products is paid for by the mailing public.

Subcommittee members, however, have not restricted their discussion to the limited amount of money that Congress allocates to the USPS. The appropriations panel has provided subcommittee member Rep. Ann Northup (R-KY) a forum to act as United Parcel Service’s congressional proxy, unfairly attacking the Postal Service. She has also tried to attach amendments to appropriations legislation harmful to the USPS and the mailing public. UPS has a major hub in Louisville which is located in Rep. Northup’s congressional district. According to data compiled by the *Center for Responsive Politics*, Big Brown has deposited approximately \$85,000 in Rep. Northup’s campaign coffers since 1996, when she first ran for Congress. The NAPUS Government Relations Department will be monitoring subcommittee deliberations to ensure that its actions do not derail constructive reform as proposed in H.R. 22 and S. 662, the Postal Enhancement and Accountability Act.



Rep. Brady Introduces WEP Bill

On Wednesday, Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX) introduced H.R. 1714, the Public Servant Retirement Protection Act. The legislation would repeal the Social Security Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). The WEP adversely affects approximately 750,000 federal, state and municipal employees. Upon its introduction, Rep. Brady stated, “The windfall elimination provision unfairly discriminates against public servants who’ve earned two pensions. If you’ve



Tammy Fisher,
Legislative Aide to
Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX),
addresses retired
Postmasters at NAPUS
Leadership Conference



Sen. James Jeffords
(I-VT)

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earned two pensions, you should be able to collect two pensions. It's your hard earned money and you deserve to keep it." In an April 20 press release, Rep. Brady recognized NAPUS for its endorsement of H.R. 1714.

At the recent 2005 NAPUS Leadership Conference, Rep. Brady's Legislative Assistant, Tammy Fisher, gave NAPUS members a preview of the yet-to-be introduced bill. Ms. Fisher explained how the WEP reduces the monthly Social Security benefits of postmasters and other public employees. These individuals earned a Social Security benefit, and a pension as the result of employment not covered by Social Security (e.g. CSRS). The WEP could reduce Social Security benefits up to \$3,600 per year. Tammy pointed out that Rep. Brady's legislation would treat all workers the same. Social Security should be based on work history, not on the source of your pension. As a member of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security, Rep. Brady is well-positioned to push for retirement equity.

Two other pending bills would eliminate or mitigate the unfair impact that the WEP has on postmasters and other public employees. Rep. Buck McKeon (R-CA) introduced H.R. 147, which would repeal the WEP and the Government Pension Offset rule; and Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) introduced H.R. 1690, which would restrict the WEP to individuals whose combined monthly income is over \$2,500 and would phase-in its application for retirees whose monthly income exceed \$2,500.

Ripple Effect of Jeffords Retirement Announcement

On Wednesday, Sen. James Jeffords (I-VT) announced that he would not seek re-election in 2006. In spring 2001, then-Republican Sen. Jeffords, switched parties and declared himself an Independent. His defection gave the Democrats a 1½ year Senate majority. Throughout his three-decade congressional career – as member of the House of Representatives and the Senate, as Republican and as an Independent – Sen. Jeffords has been a supporter of small and rural post offices. Also, he has been an advocate of a firm partnership between communities and their post offices.

Sen. Jeffords' departure may result in a ripple effect that could change the Democratic leadership of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. In 2007, it is possible that Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) could replace Sen. Jeffords as the top Democrat on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. If Sen. Lieberman exercises that option, either Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-HI) or Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE) could fill the vacancy left by Sen. Lieberman. Sen. Akaka, who is facing reelection in 2006, would have to vacate his position as the ranking Democrat on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee to assume the post at Governmental Affairs. In the past, Sen. Akaka was chairman of the Senate Subcommittee with jurisdiction over the USPS and federal employee benefits. Sen. Carper currently does not occupy a ranking slot on any full Senate Committee; however, he serves as the Democratic postal point person on the Governmental Affairs Committee and is the ranking Democrat on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, and International Security Subcommittee.