



# *eNAPUS Legislative & Political Bulletin*

September 8, 2006

Volume 3, Number 28

## Congress Updates NAPUS Convention on Postal Reform

During the 2007 NAPUS Convention, congressional postal leaders briefed over 1,600 delegates on the status of the pending postal reform bill. The Members of Congress addressed the convention via video. Their statements reflected cautious optimism that an H.R. 22 deal was within reach. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Susan Collins, Senator Tom Carper, and Ranking House Government Reform Committee Democrat Henry Waxman were in sync; they firmly believe that the "Postal 4" (Collins, Carper, Waxman and House Government Reform Chairman Tom Davis) could reach an agreement on the limited, though substantive outstanding issues within the waning days of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. The issues that were highlighted in their taped message to postmasters included single-piece parcels, postal rate-making authority, the ability of the USPS to defer a rate adjustment from one year to another and the conditions under which rates may be adjusted beyond the postal index.

Senior House Rules Committee Member Pete Sessions attended the convention. On the first day of the convention, Sessions spoke to postmasters about the postal reform legislation and how the collaborative efforts of NAPUS and others will help to ensure a viable USPS well into the future. In addition, he referenced the impact that a viable universal USPS has on the American business community. House Appropriations Committee member Kay Granger also attended the convention.

The Government Relations Department provided postmaster delegates and NAPUS Chapter Legislative Chairs with a detailed analysis about the prospects of enacting legislation prior to adjournment. The discussion focused on the combination of factors that are impacting H.R. 22's prognosis, including the resolution of outstanding issues and the desire to leave DC to campaign.

In 3 weeks, Congress will adjourn for its pre-election recess. This leaves scant time – about 13 legislative days – to close the deal on postal reform. From the vantage point of many, this may be an elusive goal. The Congressional Republican Leadership and the White House are intent on focusing attention on national security, or the lack thereof. Consequently, President Bush is seeking expedited consideration of legislation that would enable military tribunals to try alleged terrorists, who may have been held in secret CIA prisons for the past few years. In addition, there is considerable Congressional attention that is being aimed at whether or not the federal government ought to be reined in regarding warrantless wiretapping. Finally, Congress will have to finalize the fiscal year 2007 appropriations bills or enact legislation to fund federal agencies on a temporary basis, beyond the November 7 general election.

## Voters Culling the Herd in MD & RI

On Tuesday, Democratic voters in Maryland and Republican voters in Rhode Island may have a large voice in what party controls the Senate next year. The Democrats would have to achieve a net gain of six seats to win control of the Senate. A five seat pickup would result in a tie, meaning that VP Cheney's status as presiding officer of the Senate would keep the Senate in GOP hands.

In MD, eighteen Democrats are vying to replace Senator Paul Sarbanes, as the party's standard-bearer. However, the race is really between Rep. Ben Cardin and former Rep. Kwasi Mfume. Both Senate candidates are from Baltimore and have staked out similar, if not identical, positions on a host of issues. The chief distinction between the two candidates is their image. Rep. Cardin is promoted as a legislative workhorse, evidenced by his work on the key House Ways and Means Committee, on which he championed pension and health issues. Former Rep. Mfume adherents point to his remarkable story, emerging from poverty to being a leading member of the African American community, and his passion on a variety of issues which are important to the Democratic base. The uncontested GOP candidate for Senate is MD Lt. Gov. Michael Steele. He is a formidable candidate, who will be well-funded by the national GOP. Current polling seems to indicate that Cardin would go into the general election campaign with a reasonable lead against Steele. However, the contest between Mfume and Steele would be a real horserace.

In RI, on Tuesday, all the action is on the GOP side of the equation. Although the state has only a 10% GOP enrollment, general election voters in RI tend to vote for centrist candidates, irrespective of party affiliation. Consequently, 6 years ago, Sen. Lincoln Chafee won his first general election bid. His father, late Sen. John Chafee, served 4 terms in the Senate. This year, however, much to the chagrin of the RI GOP establishment and national GOP leaders, RI Republican activists have circled the wagon around Cranston Mayor Steve Laffey. Laffey is an unabashed and outspoken conservative. Establishment Republicans are prepared to concede the general election race to Democratic candidate, RI Attorney General Sheldon Whitehouse, should Laffey win the GOP primary. A Chafee win would result in a highly competitive general election. An interesting facet of the RI primary is that non-affiliated voters may vote in the primary. Consequently, these voters will hold the key to Chafee's political fortunes and whether the GOP can hold onto this seat.

## Congress Interested in Jaffer?

In June, the USPS OIG published a report that cited former USPS VP Azeezaly Jaffer for more than \$46,000 in questionable spending and sexual harassment of postal employees. Jaffer resigned his position within 2 weeks of the report's release. The OIG alleged that Jaffer's expenses were not subject to review. Jaffer asserted in a written defense that his expenses were, in fact, reviewed and approved by the USPS. The USPS is not seeking reimbursement for these expenses.

Historically, Congress has been concerned about expenses incurred by senior postal executives. For example, 6 years ago, Rep. John McHugh expressed alarm over a quarter-million dollars in relocation expenses paid to former USPS CFO Richard Porras and Controller John Ward. Therefore, it appears likely that Congress will be taking a closer look at the Jaffer affair.

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