



# eNAPUS Legislative & Political Bulletin

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## Postal Legislation on the Ropes

Today, the *eNAPUS Legislative & Political Bulletin* celebrates its 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary. The lead story of the first issue, posted in October 2004, carried the headline “Postal Reform – Wait ‘Til Next Year.” Indeed, the more things change, the more they remain the same. Though postal reform advocates have not tossed in the towel, prospects for a new postal statute are on the ropes.

The NALC’s midnight decision to oppose postal reform legislation has thrown the legislative endgame into chaos. The importance with which the union assigned its reason for opposition was never clearly expressed to Congress or to the NALC’s coalition partners. So, it caught everyone off guard. The stated reason for the NALC objection to the Senate postal bill is relatively minor. The offending provision would require postal employees who are injured-on-the-job and miss work for less than 14 days to use sick leave, annual leave, or leave without pay for the first 3 days of their absence. The *original* Senate bill included Office of Workers Compensation Program (OWCP) changes that would have reduced benefits to retirement-eligible beneficiaries and their surviving spouses. These payment reductions were dropped by Senators Collins and Carper in a futile attempt to appease the NALC. Consequently, when Congress reconvenes for its post-election session, if the OWCP provision remains, it is unlikely the Senate will schedule the revised bill for a floor vote.

However, even if the Senate is able to move the bill, the House does not appear to be ready to rubberstamp the Senate product. For example, House Government Reform Ranking Democrat Henry Waxman has expressed concerns about the rate-making process. Therefore, as the result time restrictions and the dangerous political crosscurrents of a lame-duck session, the House would have to act expeditiously – an unlikely scenario. The House must appoint conferees – a step that the House has been evading for the past 14 months – and then reconcile the differences between the July 2005 House-passed bill with the recently modified Senate bill. Saying that this is an intimidating task would be a major understatement.

Although obstacles to enacting comprehensive reform are formidable, the effort must continue. Little has changed in the postal world and the situation is deteriorating. First class mail is continuing to plunge into oblivion, and is being replaced by discounted mail. The postal infrastructure is being squeezed to its limits by the exploding number of delivery points and its universal service obligations. Mailers are questioning their commitment to the USPS, furious over the USPS’ tepid support of reform – or, at times, opposition. (Some believe that the USPS swayed the NALC decision to oppose the bill.) In addition, mailers fear the pending rate case. Consequently, mailers may divert mail volume to other means of communications. Finally, the USPS may be forced to realize its retiree health care liability. Consequently, post offices, secure universal mail service, 6-day delivery continue to be in dire jeopardy.





Former NAPUS  
Legislative Chair Buzz  
Snyder Introduces  
Senate Candidate Amy  
Klobuchar in St.  
Cloud, MN

## If The Election Were Held Today ...

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) would replace Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA) as Chair of the House Committee on Government Reform. It is less certain, but possible, that Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) would succeed Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) as Chair of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. This observation reflects the most recent polling data, which reflects a preference for Democratic candidates over Republican ones.

Last week, a series of polls asked voters: "If the election for Congress were held today, would you vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate from your district?" The results are sobering for the GOP. The research found a 15% to 23% Democratic advantage, depending on the poll. In addition, a *CNN* survey found that 63% of those surveyed disapproved of the way Congress is doing its job. *Newsweek* reported that Americans believed that Democrats would do a better job handling the Iraq War by a 13-point margin, the economy by a 22-point margin, health care by a 33-point margin, and immigration by a 9-point margin. Amazingly, the poll also found that Democrats would do a better job combating terrorism by a 7-point margin, and protecting moral values by a 6-point margin. These last 2 numbers are stunning, since the GOP has made the war on terror and moral conduct its central issues. Another telling piece of data is a CNN survey question posed in October 1994 (1 month prior to the 54-seat Democratic loss in the House) and again last week: "Do you believe that **your** Representative should be re-elected?" In 1994, 29% answered NO; last week, 31% answered NO.

Clearly, part of the GOP free-fall stems from the revelations of former Rep. Mark Foley's (R-FL) inappropriate contact with House pages, and the ongoing investigation into whether the GOP Leadership attempted a cover-up. However, the GOP problems, particularly in the Senate races where 7 Republican-held seats are considered toss-ups, seem to be grounded in Iraq-fatigue and economic uncertainty. To help hold onto control of Congress, the GOP will redirect its resources, financial and manpower, to shore up endangered incumbents. The three weeks until the election is a lifetime in politics. Everything can change, so fasten your seat belts.

## Era Ending on Capitol Hill

On Thursday, the NALC announced the retirement of the dean of postal lobbyists, George Gould. George has been intimately involved in postal and federal employee legislative issues for well over three decades. His views and counsel are respected, and sought by Members of Congress and their staff members, employee organizations, the USPS and postal-impacted groups. George has addressed NAPUS members on a number of occasions. Mr. Gould was a staff member of the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee when the Postal Reorganization Act was enacted, and has served as the chief legislative and political advocate for the NALC for the past 27 years.

George has left an indelible imprint on numerous pieces of legislation critical to the postal community and the federal workforce. However, his most important legacy may be the young people that he trained, mentored and inspired, enabling them to excel in legislative and political affairs. I personally have benefited from his friendship, advice and example. NAPUS wishes George all the best in his upcoming retirement.

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