



# *e-NAPUS Legislative Newsletter*

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## Trick or Treat – Senate Opening for S. 662

The combination of the two pre-Halloween factors creates a new opportunity for the full Senate to consider the Postal Enhancement and Accountability Act, S. 662. Consequently, postmaster legislative activists will need to read the *e-NAPUS Legislative Newsletter*, carefully monitor email communications, and stay in touch with NAPUS Headquarters over the next few weeks. The NAPUS Government Relations Department is in close contact with key Senators and Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee staff as the legislation continues its winding way towards a House-Senate Conference.

The first factor contributing to Senate consideration is time. Yesterday, President Bush withdrew the Supreme Court nomination of White House Counsel Harriet Miers. The Senate Republican Leadership had set aside a considerable amount of floor time to debate and vote on her nomination. The time vacuum created by the Miers withdrawal permits the Senate Leadership to schedule legislation that has widespread bipartisan support. S. 662 is one such measure.

The second factor contributing to consideration is that the growing number of interest groups and influential Senators who are dismayed by the failure of Senator Chris Bond (R-MO) to reach accommodation with Chairman Susan Collins over language he is advancing on behalf of Hallmark Cards. In fact, Senator Bond has rejected numerous attempts by Collins to offer compromise provisions. Consequently, it appears likely that Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) will request that the Senate take up S. 662 and an amendment to be offered by Senator Bond under “unanimous consent.” In this way, Senator Bond would get an up or down vote on the Hallmark Amendment – something he always could have requested. In addition and more important, the tactic would clear the way for a Senate vote on S. 662. The Majority Leader’s plan would be to apportion three hours of debate on S. 662, two hours on the Bond/Hallmark Amendment and one hour of general debate on the bill itself.

NAPUS believes that Chairman Collins and Senator Tom Carper (D-DE) are entitled to a Senate vote on S. 662, legislation for which these Senators and members of their staff have spent countless hours crafting. Senator Bond and Hallmark ought not to have independent veto authority over a bill that has such a broad impact on the U.S. economy.

Nonetheless, Senator Bond could decide that the Hallmark issue is so “vital” to his political agenda that he could exploit an array of dilatory tactics to obstruct Senate consideration of S. 662, including a filibuster. He may also request a sympathetic colleague to pinch-hit for him, if he feels undue political pressure to acquiesce. The question is how much political and legislative capital Bond is willing to spend on behalf of Hallmark. Many Senate observers believe that he

would be better served by deferring the Hallmark issue to a House-Senate Conference, since the House bill includes language more to the liking of Hallmark.

Though S. 662 may be imperfect, it is a product of compromise and negotiation among all the postal interests who participated constructively in the process. Should the Senate approve S. 662, NAPUS will be working with its allies to improve it during a House-Senate Conference. Clearly, there are provisions in the House-passed bill and SW. 662 that NAPUS would like changed. Postmasters are ready, willing, and able to work through the legislative process to win these changes because that is how our democratic system of government is designed.

The next two to three weeks will be the defining period, since Congress does not intend to remain in the Capitol beyond Thanksgiving.

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## Bad Week for the White House and the GOP

As previously mentioned, President Bush withdrew the nomination of his chief counsel as the result of a rebellion from his conservative base. Consequently, he will have to submit a new name to the Senate for its consideration. To add insult to injury, the week ended on a continued low note with the indictment of Scooter Libby, Vice President Cheney's Chief of Staff, on five counts of obstruction of justice, making false statements, and perjury. On Friday afternoon, Libby resigned. The charge relates to the allegations that White House personnel leaked the name of a CIA operative whose spouse was critical of U.S. intelligence gathering in Iraq. This indictment may not be the end of the White House nightmare, because President Bush's Chief of Staff Karl Rove is subject to an ongoing investigation over the leaking of the CIA operative.

The unfavorable press concerning the White House developments could have political repercussions for the 2006 Congressional elections, which is now one year away. While it is still doubtful that the Republicans could lose their House and Senate majorities, it is very conceivable that the combination of the President's problems and the indictment of former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX) could yield a considerably weaker Congressional majority. Moreover, some of the most vulnerable House Republicans tend to be moderates who represent swing districts. Their potential loss could create a more homogenously conservative House GOP further pushing it to the right of the political spectrum.

In addition to the political fallout from the persistent dripping of bad news, is how the events have distracted the White House and the Congressional GOP from pursuing their stated legislative agenda (e.g., tax cuts, and social security health). Some political pundits have mused that the White House and the Republican Leadership will need to re-energize a base that is disenchanted with recent Administration and Congressional missteps, and lack of ideological clarity – particularly on budget cutting. Postmasters should note that NAPUS is opposing efforts to jump start conservative fiscal dogma, with its collateral damage to active and retired postmaster benefits. We will meet such a challenge with aggressive grassroots opposition and a concerted legislative effort.

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