



eNAPUS Legislative & Political Bulletin

July 27, 2007

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Congressional Postal Hearings – No Sparks, But Small Fire



NAPUS President Goff and Subcommittee Chairman Tom Carper Prior to Hearing

On Wednesday, at a Senate subcommittee hearing that was abbreviated by a small fire in one of the Senate office buildings, NAPUS and other postal employee groups discussed the implementation of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act, PL 109-435. Speaking on behalf of the 40,500 members of NAPUS, President Goff focused his comments on the necessity of training and adequate resources for the Postal Service to adjust to the operational and financial challenges required under the new law. Dale indicated that NAPUS and the USPS are currently discussing these issues; however, staffing deficiencies continue to plague the system. NAPUS testimony can be viewed on http://www.napus.org/govrelations/testimony_pdfs/7.25.07.pdf.

President Goff pointed out that it is crucial that NAPUS, in conjunction with the USPS, develop an appropriate instructional program. The competitive assumptions made under the new law require that USPS management empower Postmasters to make necessary local Post Office decisions without micro-management. Consequently, the USPS should equip Postmasters with the tools, including personnel, to operate in the new competitive postal world. For example, NAPUS mentioned the importance of timely retail software updates that will ensure that Post Offices are able to keep pace with new legally-authorized periodic rate adjustments for market dominant postal products. Moreover, it is imperative that USPS effectively and clearly communicate the new processes and expectations to frontline managers. Telecoms, manuals and DVDs are inadequate substitutes for quality interactive training. In addition, Goff referenced the postal stakeholders must recognize that there may be times at which the USPS may be compelled to file an exigent rate case that would adjust postage beyond the consumer price index. Finally, Dale suggested that the postal paradigm should be altered to encourage value in the mail stream, rather than simply volume.



Pres. Goff and NAPS VP Louis Atkins Testifying

Senate Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Subcommittee Chairman Tom Carper (D-DE) queried President Goff on providing incentives for postal personnel to expand the reach of new postal products. Goff explained how his Post Office, in Covington, LA, was a trial area for *Customer Connect*[®], and how he encouraged the product. In addition, Carper asked a question on out-sourcing mail deliveries. "You get what you pay for" continues to be NAPUS' position.

The Senate Subcommittee hearing kicked off with a panel of the 4 postal union presidents. The primary focus of the testimony and questioning concerned out-sourcing core postal functions. The union presidents cautioned the Senate panel that USPS actions were leading towards postal privatization, and the degradation of universal mail service. Sen. Daniel Akaka alerted the witnesses

Hearings Scheduled
for August 2, 2007

Senate Subcommittee
on Federal Financial
Management,
Government
Information, Federal
Services, and
International Security

*"Postal Service
Standards"*

House Subcommittee
Federal Workforce,
Postal Service, and
the District of
Columbia

*"Are Federal
Employee and
Retirement Benefits
Meeting
Expectations?"*

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that the Subcommittee that he chairs is conducting a major investigation into the federal government's contracting-out activities. Also, Chairman Carper mentioned an APWU-filed lawsuit against the USPS for failing to comply with the government *Sunshine Act*. Currently, employee representatives are excluded from Mailers Technical Advisory Committee meetings. Carper suggested that MTAC would benefit from employee input.

On Thursday, the House Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia conducted a hearing on infrastructure realignment and mail delivery standards. The Government Accountability Office, the USPS Office of Inspector General, the USPS, the Postal Regulatory Commission, and major mailers presented testimony. Two areas of inquiry involved community and employee input in plant consolidations, and measuring the impact of realignment on mail service. Based upon the testimony and questioning it remains unclear how the opinions of communities and employees are integrated in realignment decision-making, or how realignment affects mail service. While the mailers were receptive to realignment, they expressed fear that closing decisions could increase their mailing costs, and adversely impact mail standards. The USPS testified that it was committed to work with postal stakeholders to address these issues.

One of the final questions posed by Subcommittee Chairman Danny Davis (D-IL) to the mailers was their view on mail delivery out-sourcing. The mailers did not take a position on the issue, other than to indicate that labor and management needs to resolve their disagreement.

Ways and Means Chairman Requests GPO/WEP Hearing

Before the July 4th Recess, House Ways and Means Chairman Charlie Rangel (D-NY) requested that Social Security Subcommittee Chairman Michael McNulty (D-NY) schedule a hearing on the impact of the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision. In a June 27th letter to Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA), sponsor of legislation to eliminate the two provisions, Chairman Rangel noted widespread Congressional interest in the issue; however, he also noted that repeal would cost \$62 billion over the next decade, and the Committee is not considering a tax increase to pay for the legislation. Therefore, Congress must offset the cost with budget savings.

eNAPUS Legislative and Political Bulletin readers will recall that in the June 22 issue of this bulletin, I referenced a June 19th NAPUS meeting with Chairman Rangel, where we expressed our support of GPO/WEP relief. In that *eNAPUS* issue, we alerted Postmasters that, during the July 4th Congressional Recess, Legislative Chairs would be targeting members of Chairman McNulty's Subcommittee, urging them to pass GPO/WEP legislation. Indeed, our grassroots effort was well-conceived, in light of a prospective Subcommittee hearing. Moreover, NAPUS is continuing to work with NARFE Headquarters on this issue and in support of their August campaign for corrective legislation.

In July, NAPUS has communicated with Chairman McNulty to determine when a GPO/WEP hearing would occur and our deep interest in the issue. The earliest it could occur would be sometime in the fall.