



Rep. Susan Davis
(D-CA)

No Excuse Absentee Balloting Clears First Hurdle

On Wednesday, the House Administration Committee passed H.R. 281, the Universal Right to Vote By Mail Act, by voice vote. 79 Members of Congress have cosponsored H.R. 281. This NAPUS-supported measure would effectively permit any eligible voter to vote by mail in a federal election. The bill would lift certain restrictions to absentee voting. Ordinarily, such ballots are mailed to the voter weeks prior to the election, and are returned to the election board prior to election day, via first class mail.

Rep. Susan Davis, the bill's author, remarked that H.R. 281 "would simply give any eligible voter the option of voting by absentee ballot." She continued, "No longer would an antiquated patchwork of state laws prevent voters from voting because they have work, family, or other commitments."

Presently, over half of U.S. states (28) permit "no excuse absentee ballots," while 22 states restrict an eligible voters' access to absentee ballots. These limitations may include requiring voters to document the specific reasons that preclude them from appearing at their established polling place on election day. In fact, some states, exclude work schedule conflict, childcare, or even jury duty as a valid excuse for voting by absentee ballot. In fact, some states compel the absentee ballot applicant to provide a notarized document requesting the absentee ballot.

With the exception of Committee member Dan Lungren (R-CA), the House Administration panel members were supportive of the measure. The Committee adopted 2 Republican promoted amendments, by voice vote. One amendment would delay the implementation of the bill until the 2010 election. This modification would provide states with the greater opportunity to adapt their election procedures to comply with the measure. The second amendment would require states to implement a signature verification system. This state obligation would help to prevent voter fraud. Many states already have such systems in place.

NAPUS believes that voting by mail provides states and localities with a cost-effective opportunity to increase voter participation and enhance ballot accessibility. In fact, voting by mail is less expensive than traditional modes of voting. Moreover, municipalities and states that have adopted voting by mail have demonstrated that the procedure is safe, secure and accurate.

It is unclear when H.R. 281 will be considered on the floor of the House of Representatives. NAPUS members should request their Representative to vote in favor of H.R. 281, when it reaches the House floor. Additionally, at this point, there is not a companion bill being considered in the Senate.

Moran Introduces Leave Equity Bill

In mid-March, Rep. James Moran introduced his long-awaited bill that would narrow the inequity of the treatment of unused sick-leave under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), as compared to the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). The legislation, H.R. 5573, would provide a lump-sum payment to FERS employees who retire with a substantial amount of unused sick leave for which they are not currently entitled to any compensation or benefit. The legislation had been referred to the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service and District of Columbia. As of today, a bipartisan group of 9 Members of Congress have cosponsored the measure.

Generally, CSRS employees credit unused sick towards years of service for the purpose of calculating their annuity. No such benefit exists under FERS – FERS employees must use their sick leave or lose it. As a result, FERS employees, with a substantial sick-leave balance, have a greater tendency to use “terminal leave” as they approach retirement. That is, these employees have a strong incentive to burn their unused sick leave in the waning months of their career. This phenomenon presents Postmasters with major staffing problems, particularly in post offices that are already gravely understaffed. H.R. 5573 would provide FERS postal employees with a limited lump sum payout for unused sick leave. The legislation would entitle FERS employees to a lump-sum payment of 15% of the amount of their accumulated sick leave exceeding 500 hours, not to surpass \$10,000. Although this proposal does not provide full leave equity and would not resolve postal staffing shortages, it is a measured attempt to assist Postmasters in managing their post offices. Consequently, Postmasters should contact their Representatives to cosponsor H.R. 5573.



CA Legislative Chair
Gary Greenhalgh and
Cand. Doug Ose

**National Association of
Postmasters of the U.S.**

8 Hebert Street
Alexandria, VA 22305

Tel. 703-683-9027
Fax. 703-683-0923

We are on the Web!

www.napus.org

Postmasters on the Campaign Trail

The old political adage goes, “if you support me in the general election, you’ll get a good Congressman; however, if you support me in the primary, you’ll get a good friend.” Postmasters are out-and-about making friends with Members of Congress who are facing stiff primary challenges, and also identifying key primaries, in both parties, where we can make a difference and make friends.

In California, NAPUS is helping to elect Doug Ose (R) to the 111th Congress, in the seat vacated by Rep. John Doolittle (R-CA). Doug served 3 terms in House of Representatives, before deciding to take time off to work in the private sector. Now, he wants to return to Congress. Doug is being challenged in the GOP primary by a off-the main stream conservative who is being supported by the radical right-wing Club for Growth. As a Member of Congress, Mr. Ose served on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee and worked closely with NAPUS and California Postmasters.

In Louisiana, NAPUS is helping to elect State Rep. Don Cazayoux (D) to the House of Representatives seat vacated by Rep. Richard Baker (R-LA). Cazayoux finished first in the March 8 primary; however, since he did not receive over 50% of the Democratic votes, he must face a runoff against the 2nd top vote getter on Saturday. In late February, NAPUS President Goff had the opportunity to discuss Postmaster issues with Don, and was impressed by his commitment to our issues and his electoral viability in a marginal congressional district.