

## NAPUS Urges Congress to Safeguard Universal Service



Pres. Goff Presents  
Chairman Davis the  
June Cover of  
*Postmasters Gazette*,  
on which the  
Congressman accepts  
the 2008 NAPUS  
Champion Award

Rep. Eleanor Holms  
Norton is in background

On Thursday afternoon, the House Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia conducted its second postal oversight hearing of the year. The Subcommittee held the forum as part of its ongoing review of Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act implementation. Witnesses included: Postmaster General Jack Potter, Postal Regulatory Commission Chairman Dan Blair, Postal Inspector General David Williams and representatives of postal management and craft organizations. Dale Goff presented the views of NAPUS Postmasters at the hearing.

In his oral testimony, President Goff focused on three key areas: universal service, economic viability and adequate staffing. The testimony can be viewed on the NAPUS Website, <http://www.napus.org/govrelations/5.08.08.pdf> Goff stressed that "Congress, the President and the PRC must view universal service in a broad social and political context." President Goff also referenced how universal service defines the USPS and adds tremendous value to postal products. NAPUS cautioned that postal deregulation of certain postal functions would undermine confidence in the postal system. In fact, earlier in the hearing PMG Potter declared, responding to a question about the importance of universal service: "that's what we're all about!"

Universal postal service and what it means has emerged as a pivotal regulatory issue. Section 702 of the Postal Reform law tasks the PRC with submitting to Congress and the President a comprehensive report regarding universal service by December 20; this report may include legislative recommendations. As part of this congressionally-mandated study, the PRC has invited stakeholders, including NAPUS, to participate via workshops, 3 field hearings and submissions. In fact, a week prior to Thursday's hearing, PRC Chairman Blair agreed to meet with postal employee groups about the process. Nonetheless, there is considerable controversy over the objectivity of some of the PRC-retained consultants, and to what degree their alleged bias may influence the PRC's report. For example, one of the outside experts has longstanding pro-deregulation ties, and another has published material minimizing the value of the USPS mail monopoly. During the hearing, Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-MA) and 3 employee-organization witnesses raised consultant bias as an issue. This being said, the PRC is still charged with protecting an affordable and accessible mail service; and the report is the PRC's not the consultants'. Therefore, it will be instructive to monitor the PRC process, and imperative to take part in it. And, as this dialogue continues, the PRC is cognizant of the fear among key postal stakeholders and Members of Congress that economists with preconceived notions about universal service may play a role in the preparation of the PRC's report.

NAPUS also addressed in its testimony Postal staffing shortfalls and how such

deficiencies impact service to the American public. In addition, President Goff referenced the effect that staff shortages have on Postmaster managerial obligations.

*Postmasters are forced to put aside their managerial functions to offset staffing inadequacies. This phenomenon devastates Postmaster morale, diminishes product quality, and undermines compliance with a variety of [headquarters] management directives.*

Goff went on to remind the Subcommittee about a provision inserted in the "Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008," which directs the USPS "to solicit and take into consideration the views of local postal management in the development of appropriate staffing levels to ensure that postal customers receive the quality mail service they expect and demand." (PL 110-161). The USPS is required to submit the report to Congress no later than June 23.

The final issue addressed by NAPUS concerned postal economics and the fiscal challenges confronting the USPS. President Goff advised the Subcommittee that NAPUS has pledged to work with the Postal Service to expand offered services at rural Post Offices. The lack of financial and service-oriented institutions presents the USPS with a tremendous opportunity to fill the void and generate revenue at the same time. Goff identified rural automatic teller machines (ATMs) and government licensing as ripe for Postal involvement. The USPS' "retail footprint is wide and deep" and should be leveraged to bring much-needed services to outlying and isolated communities. In addition, NAPUS alerted Congress to the threat posed by state-initiated "Do Not Mail" bills, which erodes necessary postal revenue and volume. The PMG testified that such legislation puts at-risk \$6 billion in postal revenue and suggested that legislatures should give the mailing the opportunity "to police itself." NAPUS also urged that Congress enact H.R. 281, legislation to authorize "no excuse absentee" voting in Federal election. And, finally, we urged Congress to pressure the Administration to permit the USPS to access the Medicare Part D employer subsidy.

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## "Congresswoman from UPS" – She's Back!

Well, maybe. On May 20, twice-defeated former Rep. Ann Northup (R-KY) will face UPS employee Bob Devore in the GOP primary for Kentucky's 3<sup>rd</sup> CD. (The irony is remarkable.) Corley Everett is the third GOP candidate in the race.

As NAPUS members may recall, during her 5-term Congressional tenure, Northup was a knee-jerk advocate for UPS against the Postal Service and its employees. From her post on the House Appropriations Committee, Northup tirelessly attempted to undermine postal operations and finances, to advantage her premier benefactor— United Parcel Service. Collectively, over those years, the postal community worked vigorously in efforts to defeat her. Finally, in the 2006 Congressional elections, Rep. John Yarmouth (D-KY) defeated her by a 3-point margin. Not to be deterred, in 2007, Northup challenged the incumbent Kentucky GOP governor and lost in the gubernatorial primary. Although NAPUS is not participating financially in the KY GOP congressional primary, we will pull out all the stops to ensure that Northup enjoys watching the thoroughbreds in Louisville – not in DC.

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Postmasters of the U.S.**

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