

While Congress is on Recess in August, Urge Reps: Support Crucial Postal Bills

The union is asking APWU members to give their U.S. representatives an important “welcome home” message during Congress’ August recess: Support H.R. 5746, a bill to restore financial stability to the Postal Service.

“This crucial legislation is a vital step toward returning the USPS to solvency,” said APWU President William Burrus. The bill, introduced July 15 by Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-MA), would alter the methodology for allocating the Postal Service’s share of pension costs for employees whose careers spanned the former Post Office Department and the USPS. Under current law, the costs are disproportionately split between the two, to the disadvantage of the Postal Service.

“Members of Congress will be at home in their districts during Congress’ August break,” said APWU Legislative and Political Director Myke Reid. “We urge union members to contact their U.S. representatives and ask them to co-sponsor this important legislation.”

The bill cleared its first hurdle July 21, when it was approved by the House postal oversight subcommittee. While the 8-1 vote in favor of the legislation was an important first step, it still has a long way to go: It must be approved by the full Oversight and Government Reform Committee before it can be voted on in the House.

Finances Can Be Fixed

The Postal Service’s financial difficulties have garnered headlines in recent months, but two recent reports concluded that – as the result of an improper funding formula – the agency overpaid the Civil Service Retirement System billions of dollars. A study by the USPS Office of Inspector General, conducted in January 2010, found the USPS overpaid \$75 billion; a study commissioned by the Postal Regulatory Commission concluded in July that the USPS overpaid \$50 billion to \$55 billion.

H.R. 5746 directs the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to determine if there has been an overpayment and to transfer any surplus to the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund. This transfer of funds would alleviate a major source of the Postal Service’s economic

problems: The obligation to pre-fund future retiree health benefits, which was created by a provision of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006, costs the USPS \$5 billion annually. No other federal agency or private company bears this burden.

The pre-funding requirement, combined with the economic downturn, has prompted the Postal Service to propose severe cutbacks in service, such as closing stations and branches, consolidating installations, and eliminating Saturday mail delivery.

Easing Our Pain

“This bill could go a long way to alleviating the Postal Service’s financial difficulties,” Reid said. “It would relieve much of the pressure on the USPS – and on us. We urge union members to get active right away in support of this legislation.”

H.R. 5746 currently has 41 co-sponsors.

When contacting their U.S. Representatives, members should also continue to encourage them to support six-day mail delivery. The fight to retain Saturday service gained momentum on July 29 when two congressional panels voted to approve spending bills – one in the House and one in the Senate – that would require the USPS to continue to provide mail delivery six days per week.

However, before they could become law, the two bills must still be approved by the full House and Senate, and then the two versions would have to be reconciled to resolve any differences.

For information about the fight to fix USPS finances and to *Save Saturday Service*, visit www.apwu.org.



Contact Your Congressman Today

Ask him – or her – to support crucial bills to Fix Postal Finances (H.R. 5746) and to Save Saturday Service.

- Request a meeting in your district. Local contact information for U.S. reps can be found on their House of Representatives Web pages at www.house.gov.
- Call the Capitol switchboard at 202-225-3121.
- Send an e-mail message via www.apwu.org. Click on the *Contact Your Legislators* shortcut.