

Senate Action on Postal Bill Expected in Mid-April

Use This Time to Advocate Union's Position, APWU Says

The Senate is expected to vote on postal legislation in mid-April, following a congressional recess, APWU Legislative and Political Director Myke Reid has reported. The postal bill, S. 1789, is expected to be the Senate's first order of business when lawmakers return to the Capitol on April 16.

The APWU has been sharply critical of the bill in its current form. "This legislation will provide short-term relief but inflict long-term damage on the USPS," APWU President Cliff Guffey said. "It will force the Postal Service to dismantle its network and impose severe cuts in service to the American people," he said.

Numerous lawmakers, led by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), have been advocating changes to the bill that would address many of the union's concerns. The APWU is urging senators to support several changes that would address the underlying cause of the Postal Service's financial crisis and prevent devastating cuts in service and the elimination of tens of thousands of jobs. (See below.)

Guffey is calling on locals and state organizations to take advantage of the congressional recess to press the union's case with legislators. "Locals and state

organizations should begin contacting senators' offices immediately to request meetings to discuss the bill," he said. "We should involve as many members as possible in these activities," he said. More information and material will be forthcoming.

"The clock is ticking," Guffey said. "We are approaching the end of the six-month moratorium on the closing and consolidation of mail processing plants and post offices, so it is crucial that our members impress upon their senators the importance of passing legislation that gets it right." The moratorium, which is intended to give Congress time to address the Postal Service's financial crisis without severe cutbacks in service and jobs, expires May 15. Postal managers have announced that they intend to begin implementing closures as soon as the moratorium expires, and to complete as many as possible by the end of August.

"The union's national officers have been working non-stop to get our message across to legislators," Guffey continued. "We realize, however, that members of Congress are most receptive to input from voters in their districts. For that reason, it is essential that locals and state organizations reach out to their senators during the congressional recess."

APWU Seeks Changes to Senate Bill

The APWU is endorsing amendments to:

- Maintain current service standards. (This is crucial, because the Postal Service plans to degrade standards in order to eliminate hundreds of mail processing facilities.)
- Allow the USPS to recover overpayments the Postal Service made to its retiree pension funds.
- Adequately address the requirement that forces the USPS to pre-fund future retiree health benefits. (This mandate is the primary cause of the agency's financial crisis. No other government agency or private company bears this burden.)
- Establish new ways to generate revenue.
- Prevent the closing of small post offices by giving the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) binding authority to prevent closures based on the effect on the community and employees.
- Protect six-day delivery.
- Eliminate the provision that would drastically reduce the compensation of workers who are injured on duty once they reach retirement age.
- Delete the provision that would require arbitrators in postal contract negotiations to "consider the financial health" of the USPS. (Postal unions note that arbitrators routinely do so, and criticize the provision as an attempt to skew contract negotiations in favor of management.)