

Postal Jobs, Pay, Benefits Threatened by Congress

The Postal Service is in danger of financial collapse, and could close its doors as early as July 2012. A battle is raging on Capitol Hill over what to do about it, and one thing is clear: Our jobs, our pay, and our benefits are in jeopardy! Two very different plans are under consideration in the House of Representatives.

House Resolution 1351

A bill introduced by Rep. Stephen Lynch (MA), the ranking Democrat on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, would address the cause of the USPS financial crisis without cutting pay and benefits, eliminating collective bargaining rights, or slashing service. H.R. 1351 would:

- Allow the USPS to use billions of dollars in pension overpayments to meet its financial obligations – including the congressional mandate to pre-fund the healthcare benefits of future retirees.
- Leave workers' collective bargaining rights intact. It would make no changes to wages, benefits, or protection against layoffs.

It's Time to Act!

"The choices are clear," said APWU President Cliff Guffey. "But the word on Capitol Hill is that Chairman Issa won't allow Rep. Lynch's bill to come up for a vote!

"APWU members must let their U.S. representatives know that we adamantly oppose H.R. 2309 and that we urgently support H.R. 1351.

"We must demand that Rep. Issa stop blocking H.R. 1351," he added.

"We can't win the battle to defend the Postal Service and protect jobs without you! We are asking local union officers to organize APWU members to visit their U.S. representatives to discuss our concerns with them," Guffey said. "If you don't hear from your local officers, ask them why.

"In the meantime, I urge you to call Congress to voice your opposition to H.R. 2309 and your support for H.R. 1351." The phone number for the Capitol Hill switchboard is (202) 224-3121.

House Resolution 2309

H.R. 2309, introduced by Rep. Darrell Issa (CA), the Republican chairman of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and co-sponsored by Rep. Dennis Ross (FL), the Republican chairman of the Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service and Labor Policy, would:

- Do nothing to correct USPS overpayments to its pension accounts.
- Do nothing to correct the congressional mandate that requires the USPS to pre-fund the healthcare benefits of future retirees. (No other government agency or private company bears this burden, which costs the USPS \$5 billion annually.)
- Force postal workers to make up the difference:
 - Ensure that Postal wages are "comparable" to the private sector.
(Rep. Ross claims postal employees enjoy a "compensation premium" of 34%.)
 - Empower a board to unilaterally cut wages, abolish benefits, and end protection against layoffs.
- Create a commission that would order:
 - \$1 billion worth of post office closures in the first year, and
 - \$1 billion worth of facility closures in the second year.
*Would that include your office or your facility?
Would that wipe out your job?*
- Increase employees' costs for healthcare and life insurance, and eliminate the right to bargain over these crucial benefits.

Rep. Issa says his bill is designed to avoid a "bailout," but the USPS doesn't rely on taxpayer funding, and doesn't need a bailout. As noted above, the federal government is holding billions of dollars in excess postal payments to FERS (the Federal Employees Retirement System) and CSRS (the Civil Service Retirement System).

For more information, visit www.apwu.org.