

UPDATE

NAPS Leg/Reg Update - September 17, 2014

Plant Moratorium Misses the CR Train

Hopes for a delay in the closure of 82 mail processing plants dimmed this week as Congressional lawmakers refrained from including the delay in a government catchall spending bill. House and Senate proponents of the one-year delay, however, refused to give up and remained optimistic about inclusion of the moratorium in the next government spending bill that Congress will take up during the lame duck session in December. The closures and consolidations are set to begin in January, 2015.

"During the coming weeks we will continue to educate Congress on why widespread plant closures will result in degraded service to our customers and negligible cost savings," NAPS President Louis Atkins said.

House lawmakers are expected to vote on Wednesday to approve the spending bill, [the FY 2015 Continuing Resolution](#), or "CR," which averts a government shutdown and continues government funding until December 11. The Senate is expected to approve the same measure on Thursday, after which Congress will head home for a six-week campaign stint. The shape of the lame duck session following the elections is uncertain at this point and heavily dependent on the outcome of the mid-term elections.

Earlier a majority of Senators and 160 House representatives wrote to their respective appropriations committees asking that any spending bill delay the processing plant closures for one year. Congressional leaders, however, sought to avoid unrest by keeping controversial matters, like the plant moratorium, out of the CR.

NAPUS, NAPS Urge PRC to Consider Employee, Retiree Benefits as Necessary Costs

NAPS joined with the National Association of Postmasters of the United States (NAPUS) today in urging the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) to reject the Postal Service's suggestion that the PRC, in assessing USPS costs, regard employee benefits as unnecessary and only required by law. NAPUS and NAPS communicated their views through a filing with the PRC in its inquiry into public service costs.

The USPS advised the PRC in August that it considered a range of current employee benefits and activities as those it would not undertake but for the Congressional mandate to provide them. The Postal Service recommended that the PRC consider postal employee and retiree health benefits, postal retirement benefits, and MSPB and EEOC appeals as costs USPS would not otherwise provide. The issue arises in an PRC study, annually required by Congress, assessing the costs of Postal Service public services. In addition, the Postal Service has urged Congress to trim retirement benefits made available to future-hired employees as part of comprehensive action on postal reform.

In their joint comments opposing the Postal Service's views, NAPUS and NAPS stated, *"There is no suggestion ... that Congress envisioned that postal employee benefit costs, resulting from collective bargaining, management consultations or an employee appeal process, should be part of this required cost projection ... [P]ostal health and retirement benefits do not conform to the definition of a public service or activity of the character required under the statute, and the Postal Service has failed to demonstrate that the only reason it provides such benefits is because it is legally required."* To read the NAPUS-NAPS comments, [click here](#).

NAPS Supports Legislation for Leave Advances to Wounded Warriors

NAPS this week endorsed legislation that would provide sick leave on an advanced basis to qualified disabled veterans serving in their first year of

employment as federal and postal employees. [Rep. Stephen Lynch \(D-MA\)](#) is the sponsor of the measure, the [Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2014, H.R. 5229](#).

The legislation assures that federally-employed disabled veterans possess an adequate leave balance early in their tenure to permit them to consult with their physicians and receive ongoing medical treatment. Because federal and postal employees begin their service with a zero balance of sick leave and accumulate four hours of leave in each succeeding pay period, it is difficult for disabled veterans to possess a sufficient leave balance at the beginning of their tenure to accommodate their medical needs.

In a [letter](#) to Congressman Lynch, NAPS President Louis Atkins said, "The U.S. Postal Service is one of the largest employers of veterans in the nation. Approximately one-third of its employees served in the military, and some have made sacrifices that have brought about long-lasting disabilities. Your legislation will provide rightful attention and assistance to these wounded veterans who continue to serve their nation employment with the U.S. Postal Service or the federal government."

The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee approved the legislation by voice vote on Wednesday.

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Bruce Moyer
NAPS Counsel
bruce@moyergroup.net