

# UPDATE

NAPS Leg/Reg Update - November 7, 2014

## **What the GOP Takeover of Congress Means**

The Republican takeover of the Senate and expansion of seats in the House will fundamentally realign power dynamics in Washington. It means that the Republicans in January will control both chambers of Congress, likely leading to more bills over the next two years, both good and bad, landing on President Obama's desk for signature, or veto. This could include postal legislation, as well as bills affecting federal health and retirement benefits.

Previously Republicans controlled only the House of Representatives, causing many House-passed bills that could be dangerous to feds to die in the Senate. Now, House-passed bills may find an easier path to the finish line in the Senate, although the Democratic filibusters [could forestall](#) Senate passage of many bills, with Republicans able to muster only 55 party-line votes, short of the 60 votes required to break a filibuster.

### **A Stronger GOP Influence on Policy**

Most definitely, Republican governance of the House and Senate agendas and committees for the next two years will give the GOP a stronger hand in shaping legislation and influencing policy. This new alignment will potentially affect the Postal Service and the shape of federal pay and workforce benefits, to the likely detriment of postal workers and civil servants.

Because legislative proposals spring from committees, the Senate and House postal and civil service panels could produce legislation unfriendly to postal and civil service employees and the federal workplace. These developments will begin with the chairmanships of the committees. In the upcoming 114th Congress, the chairmanships of both the Senate and House postal oversight committees will shift.

### **Postal Oversight Changes in the Senate and the House**

With government waste-buster Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) retiring, Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE) will likely pass the gavel of the postal oversight committee, called the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, to Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI). Senator Johnson is a Tea Party favorite with a business background, and has been a frequent critic of the federal workforce and the Postal Service. He has proposed significant federal budget cuts through reductions in federal employee and retiree benefits, including the realignment of the “high-three” federal retirement annuity formula. Johnson also has been a reluctant supporter of the Carper-Coburn postal legislation, S. 1486, and has preferred that the Postal Service undergo bankruptcy. He has fought with his home-state paper industry and mailers over raising postage rates.

Also, the membership of the Senate oversight committee will shift from nine Democrats and seven Republicans to nine Republicans and seven Democrats, a dramatic shift in power.

In addition, several of NAPS’ best friends on the Senate postal oversight committee will depart at the end of this Congress. Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI) will retire after six terms as the longest-serving Senator in Michigan history. Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR) was defeated by Republican House Member Tom Cotton in November. Sen. Pryor championed legislation that would extend MSPB appeal rights over adverse actions and secured its inclusion in the Carper-Coburn postal reform bill, S. 1486. The political fate of two more endangered allies on the Senate committee remains uncertain. The victor in the reelection race of Sen. Mark Begich (D-AK) had not yet been declared, and Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-LA) faced a difficult runoff election on December 6.

In the House, a contentious race is shaping up to succeed Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) to chair the Oversight and Government Reform Committee. Rep. Issa is term-limited to continue at the helm of the Committee, opening up that chairmanship, with at least four members vying for the post: Jason Chaffetz (R-UT), Michael Turner (R-OH), Jim Jordan (R-OH) and John Mica (R-FL).

## **Postal Reform’s Future?**

The future of postal reform legislation remains in doubt. While Senate Chairman Carper continues to champion the reform package his committee approved earlier this year, several other Democratic members of the committee have begun to turn their support to a smaller, alternative set of reforms championed by the postal unions and the mailing industry. Many are pessimistic, however, that a deal can be reached during the brief lame-duck legislative session, throwing postal reform into the 114th Congress, where new Senate and House leaders will be in charge.

Meanwhile, NAPS and others continue to urge Congress to establish a one-year moratorium on the consolidation of 82 mail processing facilities, scheduled to

begin in January. The Postal Service has kept its foot on the consolidation-preparation pedal in recent weeks, declining to provide affected communities with up-to-date information on how these changes will affect service delivery in their area. The Office of Inspector General in an October 6 management alert said the Postal Service was required by the 2006 postal law to undertake these Phase II consolidation impact studies before beginning consolidations.

Fifty-one Senators and a 160 House Members favor the inclusion of the moratorium in the omnibus government funding legislation that Congress is expected to pass during the lame duck session.

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